

SELECTIONS FROM

V.I. LENIN AND J.V. STALIN

ON

NATIONAL COLONIAL QUESTION

CALCUTTA BOOK HOUSE

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## INTRODUCTION

We are bringing together in this volume some of the important writings of Lenin and Stalin on the national and colonial question. The selection of the extracts from their writings has been made with a view to helping the study and understanding of the Marxist-Leninist approach to and teachings on this very important question.

Two of the basic works on the question, which have been included in this volume, are Lenin's *Right of Nations to Self-Determination* and Stalin's *Marxism and the National Question* which sum up the essentials of the Marxist-Leninist approach to the national question.

*The Right of Nations to Self-Determination as also the Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up*, was written in the background of an international discussion on the subject in which certain erroneous views were put forward by the Polish, Dutch and German Left-Socialists who were all opposed to national self-determination.

Mainly written in reply to Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin in *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination* explains the economic and political basis for the rise of nations and stresses that the right of nations to self-determination means primarily the right of political separation of these nations from alien national bodies, the right to the formation of independent national states; that the working class party must resolutely defend the right of all nations to self-determination; but while always supporting the right of nations to self-determination, the working class opposes every striving for national exceptionalism and bourgeois nationalism. The national question in every case has to be approached and solved in the light of the particular circumstances of the case and in this connection Lenin examines the question in relation to Norway, Sweden, Poland and Ireland. A very important point which Lenin stresses is that to uphold the right of secession does not mean advocating secession in every case. While recognising the right, each concrete question of secession has to be examined from "the point of view of removing all inequality, all privileges, all exceptionalism."

Finally, Lenin emphasises, for the working class, national demands are subordinate to the interests of the class struggle, the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination entails for the working class the establishment of the strongest international unity and solidarity between the working class of different nations.

"Complete equality of rights for all nations; the right of nations to self-determination; the unity of the workers of all nations—such is the national programme that Marxism, the experience of the whole world, and the experience of Russia, teach the workers", Lenin writes concluding the book.

In *The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up*, Lenin explains that under imperialism national self-determination can be achieved only by overcoming immense difficulties. But that does not at all imply that revolutionary socialists should reject an immediate and most resolute struggle for this demand—that would only play into the hands of the bourgeoisie and the reactionaries. On the contrary, what they should do is to rouse the oppressed peoples against every variety of national and colonial oppression, for full implementation of the right of nations to political self-determination.

Lenin held that the internationalist education of the proletariat of the oppressor nations should centre around the demand for the right of

colonies and oppressed nations to secession. On the other hand, the socialists of the oppressed nations must advocate and implement unity of the workers of the oppressed and oppressor nations. Without that it would be impossible to uphold an independent proletarian policy and class solidarity with the proletariat of other countries. The socialists of the oppressed nations must under all circumstances combat national narrow-mindedness, egoism, insulation and aloofness.

In *The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Lenin deals with the national question as an inseparable, component part of the question of socialist revolution, its reserves and allies and declares the socialist revolution's direct support of the anti-imperialist struggles of the colonial and oppressed nations.

Of exceptional importance today when all sorts of revisionist theories about the non-capitalist path are being spread in the name of Marxism-Leninism is Lenin's formulation in his *Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Question* to the Second Congress of the Communist International: "It is unquestionable that the proletariat of the advanced countries can and should give help to the working masses of the backward countries, and that the backward countries can emerge from their present stage of the development when the victorious proletariat of the Soviet Republics extends a helping hand to these masses and is in a position to give them support." Instead of assisting the "working masses of the backward countries" as clearly directed by Lenin, the modern revisionists concentrate their efforts on helping the building of capitalism in these countries calling it the non-capitalist path. Lenin visualised the Soviet power giving aid to the masses in the backward countries holding power and enabling them to reach socialism without going through the stage of capitalism; the revisionists have substituted for this the giving of aid to the capitalist governments of newly liberated countries and describing it as the non-capitalist path to socialism.

Stalin's *Marxism and the National Question* (first published in 1913) develops the Marxist teachings on the national question on the basis of the entire experience of the national movement to that date. Stalin here gives the basic Marxist definition of a nation, demarcates the policy of the working class on the national question from bourgeois nationalism, and while stressing that the working class supports the right of every nation to self-determination, strongly opposes national separatist tendencies which can lead to the destruction of the unity of the working class movement.

In the articles and speeches made by Stalin after the Great October Revolution, and included in this volume, Stalin develops the Marxist-Leninist teachings on the national question further, in the light of the new situation and shows how a victorious socialist revolution correctly applies these teachings.

Some of the other extracts selected for inclusion in the volume deal with various deviations on the national question, a study of which arms the working class and its party to keep to the right path on this question.

It is with the hope that the readers will find it helpful for their study of the national question and to equip themselves with the necessary essentials to apply these teachings to their own concrete conditions that we present this volume to them.

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## PART I

# Critical Remarks on the National Question<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Liberals and Democrats on the Language Question\*

On several occasions the newspapers have mentioned the report of the Governor of the Caucasus, a report that is noteworthy, not for its Black-Hundred<sup>2</sup> spirit, but for its timid "liberalism". Among other things, the Governor objects to artificial Russification of non-Russian nationalities. Representatives of non-Russian nationalities in the Caucasus are *themselves* striving to teach their children Russian; an example of this is the Armenian church schools, in which the teaching of Russian is not obligatory.

*Russkoye Slovo*<sup>3</sup> (No. 198), one of the most widely circulating liberal newspapers in Russia, points to this fact and draws the correct conclusion that the hostility towards the Russian language in Russia "stems exclusively from" the "artificial" (it should have said "forced") implanting of that language.

"There is no reason to worry about the fate of the Russian language. It will itself win recognition throughout Russia," says the newspaper. This is perfectly true, because the requirements of economic exchange will always compel the nationalities living in one state (as long as they wish to live together) to study the language of the majority. The more democratic the political system in Russia becomes, the more powerfully, rapidly and extensively capitalism will develop, the more urgently will the requirements of economic exchange impel various nationalities to study the language most convenient for general commercial relations.

The liberal newspaper, however, hastens to slap itself in the face and demonstrate its liberal inconsistency.

"Even those who oppose Russification," it says, "would hardly be likely to deny that in a country as huge as Russia there must be one single official language, and that this language can be only Russian."

Logic turned inside out! Tiny Switzerland has not lost anything, but has gained from having not *one single* official language, but three—German, French and Italian. In Switzerland 70 per cent of the population are Germans (in Russia 43 per cent are Great Russians), 22 per cent French (in Russia 17 per cent are Ukrainians) and 7 per cent Italians (in Russia 6 per cent are Poles and 4.5 per cent Byelorussians). If Italians in Switzerland often speak French in their common parliament they do not do so because they are menaced by some savage police law (there are none such in Switzerland), but because the civilised citizens of a democratic state themselves prefer a language that is understood by a majority. The French language does not instil hatred in Italians

\* See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 19, pp. 354-57.—Ed.

because it is the language of a free civilised nation, a language that is not imposed by disgusting police measures.

Why should "huge" Russia, a much more varied and terribly backward country, *inhibit* her development by the retention of any kind of privilege for any one language? Should not the contrary be true, liberal gentlemen? Should not Russia, if she wants to overtake Europe, put an end to every kind of privilege as quickly as possible, as completely as possible and as vigorously as possible?

If all privileges disappear, if the imposition of any one language ceases, all Slavs will easily and rapidly learn to understand each other and will not be frightened by the "horrible" thought that speeches in different languages will be heard in the common parliament. The requirements of economic exchange will themselves *decide* which language of the given country it is to the *advantage* of the majority to know in the interests of commercial relations. The decision will be all the firmer because it is adopted voluntarily by a population of various nationalities, and its adoption will be the more rapid and extensive the more consistent the democracy and, as a consequence of it, the more rapid the development of capitalism.

The liberals approach the language question in the same way as they approach all political questions—like hypocritical hucksters, holding out one hand (openly) to democracy and the other (behind their backs) to the feudalists and police. We are against privileges, shout the liberals, and under cover they haggle with the feudalists for first one, then another, privilege.

Such is the nature of *all* liberal-bourgeois nationalism—not only Great-Russian (it is the worst of them all because of its violent character and its kinship with the Purishkeviches), but Polish, Jewish, Ukrainian, Georgian and every other nationalism. Under the slogan of "national culture" the bourgeoisie of *all* nations, both in Austria and in Russia, are *in fact* pursuing the policy of splitting the workers, emasculating democracy and haggling with the feudalists over the sale of the people's rights and the people's liberty.

The slogan of working-class democracy is not "national culture" but the international culture of democracy and the world-wide working-class movement. Let the bourgeoisie deceive the people with various "positive" national programmes. The class-conscious worker will answer the bourgeoisie—there is only one solution to the national problem (insofar as it can, in general, be solved in the capitalist world, the world of profit, squabbling and exploitation), and that solution is consistent democracy.

The proof—Switzerland in Western Europe, a country with an old culture, and Finland in Eastern Europe, a country with a young culture.

The national programme of working-class democracy is: absolutely no privileges for any one nation or any one language; the solution of the problem of the political self-determination of nations, that is, their separation as states by completely free, democratic methods; the promulgation of a law for the whole state by virtue of which any measure (rural, urban or communal, etc., etc.) introducing any privilege of any kind for one of the nations and militating against the equality of nations or the rights of a national minority, shall be declared illegal and ineffective, and any citizen of the state shall have the right to demand that such a measure be annulled as unconstitutional, and that those who attempt to put it into effect be punished.

Working-class democracy contraposes to the nationalist wrangling of the various bourgeois parties over questions of language, etc., the demand for the unconditional unity and complete amalgamation of workers of *all* nationalities in *all* working-class organisations—trade union, co-operative, consumers', educational and all others—in contradistinction to any kind of bourgeois nationalism. Only this type of unity and amalgamation can uphold democracy and defend the interests of the workers against capital—which is already international and is becoming more so—and promote the development of mankind towards a new way of life that is alien to all privileges and all exploitation.

## 2. Is A Compulsory Official Language Needed?

The liberals differ from the reactionaries in that they recognise the right to have instruction conducted in the native language, at least in the *elementary* schools. But they are completely at one with the reactionaries on the point that a compulsory official language is necessary.

What does a compulsory official language mean? In practice, it means that the language of the Great Russians, who are a *minority* of the population of Russia, is imposed upon all the rest of the population of Russia. In every school the teaching of the official language must be *obligatory*. All official correspondence must be conducted in the official language, not in the language of the local population.

On what grounds do the parties who advocate a compulsory official language justify its necessity?

The "arguments" of the Black Hundreds are curt, of course. They say: All non-Russians should be ruled with a rod of iron to keep them from "getting out of hand". Russia must be indivisible, and all the peoples must submit to Great-Russian rule, for it was the Great Russians who built up and united the land of Russia. Hence, the language of the ruling class must be the compulsory official language. The Purishkeviches would not mind having the "local lingo" banned altogether, although they are spoken by about 60 per cent of Russia's total population.

The attitude of the liberals is much more "cultured" and "refined". They are for permitting the use of the native languages within certain limits (for example, in the elementary schools). At the same time they advocate an obligatory official language, which, they say, is necessary in the interests of "culture", in the interests of a "united" and "indivisible" Russia, and so forth.

"Statehood is the affirmation of cultural unity.... An official language is an essential constituent of state culture.... Statehood is based on unity of authority, the official language being an instrument of that unity. The official language possesses the same compulsory and universally coercive power as all other forms of statehood....

"If Russia is to remain united and indivisible, we must firmly insist on the political expediency of the Russian literary language."

This is the typical philosophy of a liberal on the necessity of an official language.

We have quoted the above passage from an article by Mr. S. Patrashkin in the liberal newspaper *Dyen*<sup>4</sup> (No. 7). For quite understandable reasons, the Black-Hundred *Novoye Vremya* rewarded the author of these ideas with a resounding kiss. Mr. Patrashkin expresses "very sound ideas", Menshikov's newspaper stated (No. 13588). Another

paper the Black Hundreds are constantly praising for such very "sound" ideas is the national-liberal *Russkaya Mysl*.<sup>5</sup> And how can they help praising them when the liberals, with the aid of "cultured" arguments, are advocating things that please the *Novoye Vremya* people so much?

Russian is a great and mighty language, the liberals tell us. Don't you want everybody who lives in the border regions of Russia to know this great and mighty language? Don't you see that the Russian language will enrich the literature of the non-Russians, put great treasures of culture within their reach, and so forth?

That is all true, gentlemen, we say in reply to the liberals. We know better than you do that the language of Turgenev, Tolstoy, Dobrolyubov and Chernyshevsky is a great and mighty one. We desire more than you do that the closest possible intercourse and fraternal unity should be established between the oppressed classes of all the nations that inhabit Russia, without any discrimination. And we, of course, are in favour of every inhabitant of Russia having the opportunity to learn the great Russian language.

What we do not want is the element of *coercion*. We do not want to have people driven into paradise with a cudgel; for no matter how many fine phrases about "culture" you may utter, a *compulsory* official language involves coercion, the use of the cudgel. We do not think that the great and mighty Russian language needs anyone having to study it by *sheer compulsion*. We are convinced that the development of capitalism in Russia, and the whole course of social life in general, are tending to bring all nations closer together. Hundreds of thousands of people are moving from one end of Russia to another; the different national populations are intermingling; exclusiveness and national conservatism must disappear. People whose conditions of life and work make it necessary for them to know the Russian language will learn it without being forced to do so. But coercion (the cudgel) will have only one result: it will hinder the great and mighty Russian language from spreading to other national groups, and, most important of all, it will sharpen antagonism, cause friction in a million new forms, increase resentment, mutual misunderstanding, and so on.

Who wants that sort of thing? Not the Russian people, not the Russian democrats. They do not recognise national oppression in *any form*, even in "the interests of Russian culture and statehood".

That is why Russian Marxists say that there must be *no compulsory official language*, that the population must be provided with schools where teaching will be carried on in all the local languages, that a fundamental law must be introduced in the constitution declaring invalid all privileges of any one nation and all violations of the rights of national minorities.

### 3. "National Culture"

...The *elements* of democratic and socialist culture are present, if only in rudimentary form, in *every* national culture, since in *every* nation there are toiling and exploited masses, whose conditions of life inevitably give rise to the ideology of democracy and socialism. But *every* nation also possesses a bourgeois culture (and most nations a reactionary and clerical culture as well) in the form, not merely of "elements", but of the *dominant* culture. Therefore, the general "national culture" is the culture of the landlords, the clergy and the bourgeoisie. This fundamental and, for a Marxist, elementary truth was kept in the background by the

Bundist, who "drowned" it in his jumble of words, i.e., *instead of* revealing and clarifying the class gulf to the reader, he in fact obscured it. *In fact*, the Bundist acted like a bourgeois, whose every interest requires the spreading of a belief in a non-class national culture.

In advancing the slogan of "the international culture of democracy and of the world working-class movement", we take *from each* national culture *only* its democratic and socialist elements; we take them *only* and *absolutely* in opposition to the bourgeois culture and the bourgeois nationalism of *each* nation. No democrat, and certainly no Marxist, denies that all languages should have equal status, or that it is necessary to polemise with one's "native" bourgeoisie in one's native language and to advocate anti-clerical or anti-bourgeois ideas among one's "native" peasantry and petty bourgeoisie. That goes without saying, but the Bundist uses these indisputable truths to obscure the point in dispute, i.e., the real issue.

The question is whether it is permissible for a Marxist, directly or indirectly, to advance the slogan of national culture, or whether he should *oppose* it by advocating, in all languages, the slogan of workers' *internationalism* while "adapting" himself to all local and national features.

The significance of the "national culture" slogan is not determined by some petty intellectual's promise or good intention, to "interpret" it as "meaning the development through it of an international culture". It would be puerile subjectivism to look at it in that way. The significance of the slogan of national culture is determined by the objective alignment of all classes in a given country, and in all countries of the world. The national culture of the bourgeoisie is a *fact* (and, I repeat, the bourgeoisie everywhere enters into deals with the landed proprietors and the clergy). Aggressive bourgeois nationalism, which drugs the minds of the workers, stultifies and disunites them in order that the bourgeoisie may lead them by the halter—such is the fundamental fact of the times.

Those who seek to serve the proletariat must unite the workers of all nations, and unswervingly fight bourgeois nationalism, *domestic* and foreign. The place of those who advocate the slogan of national culture is among the nationalist petty bourgeois, not among the Marxists.

Take a concrete example. Can a Great-Russian Marxist accept the slogan of national, Great-Russian, culture? No, he cannot. Anyone who does that should stand in the ranks of the nationalists, not of the Marxists. Our task is to fight the dominant, Black-Hundred and bourgeois national culture of the Great Russians, and to develop, exclusively in the internationalist spirit and in the closest alliance with the workers of other countries, the rudiments also existing in the history of our democratic and working-class movement. Fight your own Great-Russian landlords and bourgeoisie, fight their "culture" in the name of internationalism, and, in so fighting, "adapt" yourself to the special features of the Purishkeviches and Struves—that is your task, not preaching or tolerating the slogan of national culture.

The same applies to the most oppressed and persecuted nation—the Jews. Jewish national culture is the slogan of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie, the slogan of our enemies. But there are other elements in Jewish culture and in Jewish history as a whole. Of the ten and a half million Jews in the world, somewhat over a half live in Galicia and Russia, backward and semi-barbarous countries, where the Jews are *forcibly* kept in the status of a caste. The other half lives in the civilised world,

and there the Jews do not live as a segregated caste. There the great world-progressive features of Jewish culture stand clearly revealed: its internationalism, its identification with the advanced movements of the epoch (the percentage of Jews in the democratic and proletarian movements is everywhere higher than the percentage of Jews among the population).

Whoever, directly or indirectly, puts forward the slogan of Jewish "national culture" is (whatever his good intentions may be) an enemy of the proletariat, a supporter of all that is *outmoded* and connected with *caste* among the Jewish people; he is an accomplice of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, those Jewish Marxists who mingle with the Russian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and other workers in international Marxist organisations, and make their contribution (both in Russian and in Yiddish) towards creating the international culture of the working-class movement—those Jews, despite the separatism of the Bund, uphold the best traditions of Jewry by fighting the slogan of "national culture".

Bourgeois nationalism and proletarian internationalism—these are the two irreconcilably hostile slogans that correspond to the two great class camps throughout the capitalist world, and express the two policies (nay, the two world outlooks) in the national question. In advocating the slogan of national culture and building up on it an entire plan and practical programme of what they call "cultural-national autonomy", the Bundists are *in effect* instruments of bourgeois nationalism among the workers.

#### 4. The Nationalist Bogey of "Assimilation"

The question of assimilation, i.e., of the shedding of national features, and absorption by another nation, strikingly illustrates the consequences of the nationalist vacillations of the Bundists and their fellow thinkers. ...

Developing capitalism knows two historical tendencies in the national question. The first is the awakening of national life and national movements, the struggle against all national oppression, and the creation of national states. The second is the development and growing frequency of international intercourse in every form, the break-down of national barriers, the creation of the international unity of capital, of economic life in general, of politics, science, etc.

Both tendencies are a universal law of capitalism. The former predominates in the beginning of its development, the latter characterises a mature capitalism that is moving towards its transformation into socialist society. The Marxists' national programme takes both tendencies into account, and advocates, firstly, the equality of nations and languages and the impermissibility of all *privileges* in this respect (and also the right of nations to self-determination, with which we shall deal separately later); secondly, the principle of internationalism and uncompromising struggle against contamination of the proletariat with bourgeois nationalism, even of the most refined kind. ...

...What is left is capitalism's world-historical tendency to break down national barriers, obliterate national distinctions, and to *assimilate* nations—a tendency which manifests itself more and more powerfully with every passing decade, and is one of the greatest driving forces transforming capitalism into socialism.

Whoever does not recognise and champion the equality of nations

and languages, and does not fight against all national oppression or inequality, is not a Marxist; he is not even a democrat. That is beyond doubt. But it is also beyond doubt that the pseudo-Marxist who heaps abuse upon a Marxist of another nation for being an "assimilator" is simply a *nationalist philistine*. In this unhandsome category of people are all the Bundists and (as we shall shortly see) Ukrainian nationalist-socialists such as L. Yurkevich, Dontsov and Co. ...

A rough idea of the scale which the general process of assimilation of nations is assuming under the present conditions of advanced capitalism may be obtained, for example, from the immigration statistics of the United States of America. During the decade between 1891-1900, Europe sent 3,700,000 people there, and during the nine years between 1901 and 1909, 7,200,000. The 1900 census in the United States recorded over 10,000,000 foreigners. New York State, in which, according to the same census there were over 78,000 Austrians, 136,000 Englishmen, 20,000 Frenchmen, 480,000 Germans, 37,000 Hungarians, 425,000 Irish, 182,000 Italians, 70,000 Poles, 166,000 people from Russia (mostly Jews), 43,000 Swedes, etc., grinds down national distinctions. And what is taking place on a grand, international scale in New York is also to be seen in *every* big city and industrial township.

No one unobsessed by nationalist prejudices can fail to perceive that this process of assimilation of nations by capitalism means the greatest historical progress, the breakdown of hidebound national conservatism in the various backwoods, especially in backward countries like Russia.

Take Russia and the attitude of Great Russians towards the Ukrainians. Naturally, every democrat, not to mention Marxists, will strongly oppose the incredible humiliation of Ukrainians, and demand complete equality for them. But it would be a downright betrayal of socialism and a silly policy *even* from the standpoint of the bourgeois "national aims" of the Ukrainians to *weaken* the ties and the alliance between the Ukrainian and Great-Russian proletariat that now exist within the confines of a single state.

...Even from the point of view of the bourgeois nationalists, some of whom stand for complete equality and autonomy for the Ukraine, while others stand for an independent Ukrainian state, this argument will not wash. The Ukrainians' striving for liberation is opposed by the Great-Russian and Polish landlord class and by the bourgeoisie of these two nations. What social force is capable of standing up to these classes? The first decade of the twentieth century provided an actual reply to this question: that force is none other than the working class, which rallies the democratic peasantry behind it. By striving to divide, and thereby weaken, the genuinely democratic force, whose victory would make national oppression impossible, Mr. Yurkevich is betraying, not only the interests of democracy in general, but also the interests of his own country, the Ukraine. Given united action by the Great-Russian and Ukrainian proletarians, a free Ukraine *is possible*; without such unity, it is out of the question.

But Marxists do not confine themselves to the bourgeois-national standpoint. For several decades a well-defined process of accelerated economic development has been going on in the South, i.e., the Ukraine, attracting hundreds of thousands of peasants and workers from Great Russia to the capitalist farms, mines, and cities. The "assimilation"—within these limits—of the Great-Russian and *Ukrainian* proletariat is an



indisputable fact. And this fact is *undoubtedly* progressive. Capitalism is replacing the ignorant, conservative, settled muzhik of the Great-Russian or Ukrainian backwoods with a mobile proletariat whose conditions of life break down specifically national narrow-mindedness, both Great-Russian and Ukrainian. Even if we assume that, in time, there will be a state frontier between Great Russia and the Ukraine, the historically progressive nature of the "assimilation" of the Great-Russian and Ukrainian workers will be as undoubted as the progressive nature of the grinding down of nations in America. The freer the Ukraine and Great Russia become, the *more extensive and more rapid* will be the development of capitalism, which will still more powerfully attract the workers, the working masses of *all* nations from all regions of the state and from all the neighbouring states (should Russia become a neighbouring state in relation to the Ukraine) to the cities, the mines, and the factories.

Mr. Lev Yurkevich acts like a real bourgeois, and a short-sighted, narrow-minded, obtuse bourgeois at that, i.e., like a philistine, when he dismisses the benefits to be gained from the intercourse, amalgamation and assimilation of the *proletariat* of the two nations, for the sake of the momentary success of the Ukrainian national cause (*sprava*). The national cause comes first and the proletarian cause second, the bourgeois nationalists say, with the Yurkeviches, Dontsovs and similar would-be Marxists repeating it after them. The proletarian cause must come first, we say, because it not only protects the lasting and fundamental interests of labour and of humanity, but also those of democracy; and without democracy neither an autonomous nor an independent Ukraine is conceivable. . . .

Contraposing Ukrainian culture as a whole to Great-Russian culture as a whole, when speaking of the proletariat, is a gross betrayal of the proletariat's interests for the benefit of bourgeois nationalism.

There are two nations in every modern nation—we say to all nationalist-socialists. There are two national cultures in every national culture. There is the Great-Russian culture of the Purishkeviches, Guchkovs and Struves—but there is also the Great-Russian culture typified in the names of Chernyshevsky and Plekhanov. There are *the same two* cultures in the Ukraine as there are in Germany, in France, in England, among the Jews, and so forth. If the majority of the Ukrainian workers are under the influence of Great-Russian culture, we also know definitely that the ideas of Great-Russian democracy and Social-Democracy operate parallel with the Great-Russian clerical and bourgeois culture. In fighting the latter kind of "culture", the Ukrainian Marxist will always bring the former into focus, and say to his workers: "We must snatch at, make use of, and develop to the utmost every opportunity for intercourse with the Great-Russian class-conscious workers, with their literature and with their range of ideas; the fundamental interests of *both* the Ukrainian and the Great-Russian working-class movements demand it."

If a Ukrainian Marxist allows himself to be swayed by his *quite legitimate and natural* hatred of the Great-Russian oppressors to such a degree that he transfers even a particle of this hatred, even if it be only estrangement, to the proletarian culture and proletarian cause of the Great-Russian workers, then such a Marxist will get bogged down in bourgeois nationalism. Similarly, the Great-Russian Marxist will be bogged down, not only in bourgeois, but also in Black-Hundred nationalism, if

he loses sight, even for a moment, of the demand for complete equality for the Ukrainians, or of their *right* to form an independent state. . . .

## 5. "Cultural-National Autonomy"

...Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism, be it even of the "most just", "purest", most refined and civilised brand. In place of all forms of nationalism Marxism advances internationalism, the amalgamation of all nations in the higher unity, a unity that is growing before our eyes with every mile of railway line that is built, with every international trust, and every workers' association that is formed (an association that is international in its economic activities as well as in its ideas and aims).

The principle of nationality is historically inevitable in bourgeois society and, taking this society into due account, the Marxist fully recognises the historical legitimacy of national movements. But to prevent this recognition from becoming an apologia of nationalism, it must be strictly limited to what is progressive in such movements, in order that this recognition may not lead to bourgeois ideology obscuring proletarian consciousness.

The awakening of the masses from feudal lethargy, and their struggle against all national oppression, for the sovereignty of the people, of the nation, are progressive. Hence, it is the Marxist's *bounden* duty to stand for the most resolute and consistent democratism on all aspects of the national question. This task is largely a negative one. But this is the limit the proletariat can go to in supporting nationalism, for beyond that begins the "positive" activity of the *bourgeoisie* striving to *fortify* nationalism.

To throw off the feudal yoke, all national oppression, and all privileges enjoyed by any particular nation or language, is the imperative duty of the proletariat as a democratic force, and is certainly in the interests of the proletarian class struggle, which is obscured and retarded by bickering on the national question. But to go *beyond* these strictly limited and definite historical limits in helping bourgeois nationalism means betraying the proletariat and siding with the bourgeoisie. There is a border-line here, which is often very slight and which the Bundists and Ukrainian nationalist-socialists completely lose sight of.

Combat all national oppression? Yes, of course! Fight *for* any kind of national development, *for* "national culture" in general?—Of course not. The economic development of capitalist society presents us with examples of immature national movements all over the world, examples of the formation of big nations out of a number of small ones, or to the detriment of some of the small ones, and also examples of the assimilation of nations. The development of nationality in general is the principle of bourgeois nationalism; hence the exclusiveness of bourgeois nationalism, hence the endless national bickering. The proletariat, however, far from undertaking to uphold the national development of every nation, on the contrary, warns the masses against such illusions, stands for the fullest freedom of capitalist intercourse and welcomes every kind of assimilation of nations, except that which is founded on force or privilege.

Consolidating nationalism within a certain "justly" de-limited sphere, "constitutionalising" nationalism, and securing the separation of all nations from one another by means of a special state institution—such is the ideological foundation and content of cultural-national autonomy.

This idea is thoroughly bourgeois and thoroughly false. The proletariat cannot support any consecration of nationalism; on the contrary, it supports everything that helps to obliterate national distinctions and remove national barriers; it supports everything that makes the ties between nationalities closer and closer, or tends to merge nations. To act differently means siding with reactionary nationalist philistinism.

When, at their Congress in Brünn<sup>6</sup> (in 1899), the Austrian Social-Democrats discussed the plan for cultural-national autonomy, practically no attention was paid to a theoretical appraisal of that plan. It is, however, noteworthy that the following two arguments were levelled against this programme: (1) it would tend to strengthen clericalism; "its result would be the perpetuation of chauvinism, its introduction into every small community, into every small group" (p. 92 of the official report of the Brünn Congress, in German. A Russian translation was published by the Jewish nationalist party, the J.S.L.P.)<sup>7</sup>

There can be no doubt that "national culture", in the ordinary sense of the term, i.e., schools, etc., is at present under the predominant influence of the clergy and the bourgeois chauvinists in all countries in the world. When the Bundists, in advocating "cultural-national" autonomy, say that the constituting of nations will keep the class struggle within them *clean* of all extraneous considerations, then that is manifest and ridiculous sophistry. It is primarily in the economic and political sphere that a serious class struggle is waged in any capitalist society. To separate the sphere of education *from this* is, firstly, absurdly utopian, because schools (like "national culture" in general) cannot be separated from economics and politics; secondly, it is the economic and political life of a capitalist country that *necessitates* at every step the smashing of the absurd and outmoded national barriers and prejudices, whereas separation of the school system and the like would only perpetuate, intensify and strengthen "pure" clericalism and "pure" bourgeois chauvinism. ...

## 6. The Equality of Nations and the Rights of National Minorities

...Switzerland's special features lie in her history, her geographical and other conditions. Russia's special features lie in the strength of her proletariat, which has no precedent in the epoch of bourgeois revolutions, and in her shocking general backwardness, which objectively necessitates an exceptionally rapid and resolute advance, under the threat of all sorts of drawbacks and reverses. ...

In Switzerland there are *three* official languages, but bills submitted to a referendum are printed in *five languages*, that is to say, in two Romansh dialects, in addition to the three official languages. According to the 1900 census, these two dialects are spoken by 38,651 out of the 3,315,443 inhabitants of Switzerland, i.e., by a little over *one per cent*. In the army, commissioned and non-commissioned officers "are given the fullest freedom to speak to the men in their native language". In the cantons of Graubünden and Wallis (each with a population of a little over a hundred thousand) both dialects enjoy complete equality. ...

Guaranteeing the rights of a national minority is inseparably linked up with the principle of complete equality. In my article in *Severnaya Pravda* this principle was expressed in almost the same terms as in the later, official and more accurate decision of the conference of Marxists.<sup>8</sup> That decision demands "the incorporation in the constitution of a fundamental law which shall declare null and void all privileges enjoyed by any one nation and all infringements of the rights of a national minority"...

## 7. Centralisation and Autonomy

...Marxists are, of course, opposed to federation and decentralisation, for the simple reason that capitalism requires for its development the largest and most centralised possible states. *Other conditions being equal*, the class-conscious proletariat will always stand for the larger state. It will always fight against medieval particularism, and will always welcome the closest possible economic amalgamation of large territories in which the proletariat's struggle against the bourgeoisie can develop on a broad basis.

Capitalism's broad and rapid development of the productive forces *calls for* large, politically compact and united territories, since only here can the bourgeois class—together with its inevitable antipode, the proletarian class—unite and sweep away all the old, medieval, caste, parochial, petty-national, religious and other barriers.

The right of nations to self-determination, i.e., the right to secede and form independent national states, will be dealt with elsewhere. But while, and insofar as, different nations constitute a single state, Marxists will never, under any circumstances, advocate either the federal principle or decentralisation. The great centralised state is a tremendous historical step forward from medieval disunity to the future socialist unity of the whole world, and only *via* such a state (*inseparably* connected with capitalism), can there be any road to socialism.

It would, however, be inexcusable to forget that in advocating centralism we advocate exclusively *democratic* centralism. On this point all the philistines in general, and the nationalist philistines in particular (including the late Dragomanov), have so confused the issue that we are obliged again and again to spend time clarifying it.

Far from precluding local self-government, with *autonomy* for regions having special economic and social conditions, a distinct national composition of the population, and so forth, democratic centralism necessarily demands *both*. In Russia centralism is constantly confused with tyranny and bureaucracy. This confusion has naturally arisen from the history of Russia, but even so it is quite inexcusable for a Marxist to yield to it.

This can best be explained by a concrete example.

In her lengthy article "The National Question and Autonomy",\* Rosa Luxemburg, among many other curious errors (which we shall deal with below), commits the exceptionally curious one of trying to *restrict* the demand for autonomy to Poland alone.

But first let us see *how* she defines autonomy.

Rosa Luxemburg admits—and being a Marxist she is of course bound to admit—that all the major and important economic and political questions of capitalist society must be dealt with exclusively by the central parliament of the whole country concerned, not by the autonomous Diets of the individual regions. These questions include tariff policy, laws governing commerce and industry, transport and means of communication (railways, post, telegraph, telephone, etc.), the army, the taxation system, civil\*\* and criminal law, the general principles of educa-

\**Przegląd Socjaldemokratyczny*,<sup>9</sup> Krakow 1908 and 1909.

\*\* In elaborating her ideas Rosa Luxemburg goes into details, mentioning, for example—and quite rightly—divorce laws (No. 12, p. 162 of the above-mentioned journal).

tion (for example, the law on purely secular schools, on universal education, on the minimum programme, on democratic school management, etc.), the labour protection laws, and political liberties (right of association), etc., etc.

The autonomous Diets—on the basis of the general laws of the country—should deal with questions of purely local, regional, or national significance. Amplifying this idea in great—not to say excessive—detail, Rosa Luxemburg mentions, for example, the construction of local railways (No. 12, p. 149) and local high ways (No. 14-15, p. 376), etc.

Obviously, one cannot conceive of a modern, truly democratic state that did *not* grant such autonomy to every region having any appreciably distinct economic and social features, populations of a specific national composition, etc. The principle of centralism, which is essential for the development of capitalism, is not violated by this (local and regional) autonomy, but on the contrary is applied by it *democratically*, not *bureaucratically*. The broad, free and rapid development of capitalism would be impossible, or at least greatly impeded, by the *absence* of such autonomy, which *facilitates* the concentration of capital, the development of the productive forces, the unity of the bourgeoisie and the unity of the proletariat on a *country-wide* scale; for bureaucratic interference in *purely* local (regional, national, and other) questions is one of the greatest obstacles to economic and political development in general, and an obstacle to *centralism* in serious, important and fundamental matters in particular. ...

It is ridiculous to talk about the conditions and demands of modern capitalism while at the same time taking not the “modern”, not the “capitalist”, but the medieval, feudal and official-bureaucratic administrative divisions of Russia, and in their crudest form at that (gubernias instead of uyezds). Plainly, there can be no question of any serious local reform in Russia until these divisions are abolished and superseded by a *really* “modern” division that really meets the requirements, *not* of the Treasury, *not* of the bureaucracy, *not* of routine, *not* of the landlords, *not* of the priests, but of capitalism; and one of the modern requirements of capitalism is undoubtedly the greatest possible national uniformity of the population, for nationality and language identity are an important factor making for the complete conquest of the home market and for complete freedom of economic intercourse. ...

We would mention that the Brünn Social-Democratic national programme is based entirely on national-territorial autonomy; it proposes that Austria should be divided into “nationally distinct” areas “instead of the historical crown lands” (Clause 2 of the Brünn programme). We would not go as far as that. A uniform national population is undoubtedly one of the most reliable factors making for free, broad and really modern commercial intercourse. It is beyond doubt that not a single Marxist, and not even a single firm democrat, will stand up for the Austrian crown lands and the Russian gubernias and uyezds (the latter are not as bad as the Austrian crown lands, but they are very bad nevertheless), or challenge the necessity of replacing these obsolete divisions by others that will conform as far as possible with the national composition of the population. Lastly, it is beyond doubt that in order to eliminate all national oppression it is very important to create autonomous areas, however small, with entirely homogeneous populations, towards which members of the respective nationalities scattered all over the country, or even all over the world, could gravitate, and with which they could

enter into relations and free associations of every kind. All this is indisputable, and can be argued against only from the hidebound, bureaucratic point of view.

The national composition of the population, however, is *one* of the very important economic factors, *but not the sole and not the most* important factor. Towns, for example, play an *extremely important* economic role under capitalism, and everywhere, in Poland, in Lithuania, in the Ukraine, in Great Russia, and elsewhere, the towns are marked by mixed populations. To cut the towns off from the villages and areas that economically gravitate towards them, for the sake of the “national” factor, would be absurd and impossible. That is why Marxists must not take their stand entirely and exclusively on the “national-territorial” principle.

The solution of the problem proposed by the last conference of Russian Marxists is far more correct than the Austrian. On this question, the conference advanced the following proposition:

“...must provide for wide regional autonomy [not for Poland alone, of course, but for all the regions of Russia]\* and fully democratic local self-government, and the boundaries of the self-governing and autonomous regions must be determined [not by the boundaries of the present gubernias, uyezds, etc., but] by the local inhabitants themselves on the basis of their economic and social conditions, national make-up of the population, etc.”

Here the national composition of the population is placed on *the same level* as the other conditions (economic first, then social, etc.) which must serve as a basis for determining the new boundaries that will meet the needs of modern capitalism, not of bureaucracy and Asiatic barbarism. The local population alone can “assess” those conditions with full precision, and on that basis the central parliament of the country will determine the boundaries of the autonomous regions and the powers of autonomous Diets.

## The Right Of Nations To Self-Determination

### 1. What Is Meant by the Self-Determination of Nations?

Naturally, this is the first question that arises when any attempt is made at a Marxist examination of what is known as self-determination. What should be understood by that term? Should the answer be sought

\*Interpolations in square brackets (within passages quoted by Lenin) are by Lenin, unless otherwise indicated.—Ed.

in legal definitions deduced from all sorts of "general concepts" of law? Or is it rather to be sought in a historico-economic study of the national movements? ...

A precise formulation of this question, which no Marxist can avoid, would at once destroy nine-tenths of Rosa Luxemburg's arguments. This is not the first time that national movements have arisen in Russia, nor are they peculiar to that country alone. Throughout the world, the period of the final victory of capitalism over feudalism has been linked up with national movements. For the complete victory of commodity production, the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, and there must be politically united territories whose population speak a single language, with all obstacles to the development of that language and to its consolidation in literature eliminated. Therein is the economic foundation of national movements. Language is the most important means of human intercourse. Unity and unimpeded development of language are the most important conditions for genuinely free and extensive commerce on a scale commensurate with modern capitalism, for a free and broad grouping of the population in all its various classes and, lastly, for the establishment of a close connection between the market and each and every proprietor, big or little, and between seller and buyer.

Therefore, the tendency of every national movement is towards the formation of *national states*, under which these requirements of modern capitalism are best satisfied. The most profound economic factors drive towards this goal, and, therefore, for the whole of Western Europe, nay, for the entire civilised world, the national state is *typical* and normal for the capitalist period.

Consequently, if we want to grasp the meaning of self-determination of nations, not by juggling with legal definitions, or "inventing" abstract definitions, but by examining the historico-economic conditions of the national movements, we must inevitably reach the conclusion that the self-determination of nations means the political separation of these nations from alien national bodies, and the formation of an independent national state.

Later on we shall see still other reasons why it would be wrong to interpret the right to self-determination as meaning anything but the right to existence as a separate state. At present, we must deal with Rosa Luxemburg's efforts to "dismiss" the inescapable conclusion that profound economic factors underlie the urge towards a national state.

Rosa Luxemburg is quite familiar with Kautsky's pamphlet *Nationality and Internationality*. (Supplement to *Die Neue Zeit*<sup>10</sup> No. 1, 1907-08; Russian translation in the journal *Nauchnaya Mysl*,<sup>11</sup> Riga, 1908.) She is aware that after carefully analysing the question of the national state in §4 of that pamphlet, Kautsky arrived at the conclusion that Otto Bauer "underestimates the strength of the urge towards a national state" (p. 23 of the pamphlet). Rosa Luxemburg herself quotes the following words of Kautsky's: "The national state is the form *most suited* to present-day conditions [i.e., capitalist, civilised, economically progressive conditions, as distinguished from medieval, pre-capitalist, etc.]; it is the form in which the state can best fulfil its tasks" (i.e., the tasks of securing the freest, widest and speediest development of capitalism). To this we must add Kautsky's still more precise concluding remark that states of mixed national composition (known as multi-national states, as distinct from national states) are "always those whose internal constitution has for some reason or other remained abnormal or underdeveloped" (back-

ward). Needless to say, Kautsky speaks of abnormality exclusively in the sense of lack of conformity with what is best adapted to the requirements of developing capitalism. ...

... There follow arguments [by Rosa Luxemburg] to the effect that the "right to self-determination" of small nations is made illusory by the development of the great capitalist powers and by imperialism. "Can one seriously speak," Rosa Luxemburg exclaims, "about the 'self-determination' of the formally independent Montenegrins, Bulgarians, Rumanians, Serbs, Greeks, partly even the Swiss, whose independence is itself a result of the political struggle and the diplomatic game of the 'concert of Europe'?" (P. 500). The state that best suits these conditions is "not a national state, as Kautsky believes, but a predatory one". Some dozens of figures are quoted relating to the size of British, French and other colonial possessions.

After reading such arguments, one cannot help marvelling at the author's ability to misunderstand *the how and the why of things*. To teach Kautsky, with a serious mien, that small states are economically dependent on big ones, that a struggle is raging among the bourgeois states for the predatory suppression of other nations, and that imperialism and colonies exist—all this is a ridiculous and puerile attempt to be clever, for none of this has the slightest bearing on the subject. Not only small states, but even Russia, for example, is entirely dependent, economically, on the power of the imperialist finance capital of the "rich" bourgeois countries. Not only the miniature Balkan states, but even nineteenth-century America was, economically, a colony of Europe, as Marx pointed out in *Capital*.<sup>12</sup> Kautsky, like any Marxist, is, of course, well aware of this, but that has nothing whatever to do with the question of national movements and the national state.

For the question of the political self-determination of nations and their independence as states in bourgeois society, Rosa Luxemburg has substituted the question of their economic independence. This is just as intelligent as if someone, in discussing the programmatic demand for the supremacy of parliament, i.e., the assembly of people's representatives, in a bourgeois state, were to expound the perfectly correct conviction that big capital dominates in a bourgeois country, whatever the regime in it.

There is no doubt that the greater part of Asia, the most densely populated continent, consists either of colonies of the "Great Powers", or of states that are extremely dependent and oppressed as nations. But does this commonly-known circumstances in any way shake the undoubted fact that in Asia itself the conditions for the most complete development of commodity production and the freest, widest and speediest growth of capitalism have been created only in Japan, i.e., only in an independent national state? The latter is a bourgeois state, and for that reason has itself begun to oppress other nations and to enslave colonies. We cannot say whether Asia will have had time to develop into a system of independent national states, like Europe, before the collapse of capitalism, but it remains an undisputed fact that capitalism, having awakened Asia, has called forth national movements everywhere in that continent, too; that the tendency of these movements is towards the creation of national states in Asia; that it is such states that ensure the best conditions for the development of capitalism. The example of Asia speaks *in favour* of Kautsky and *against* Rosa Luxemburg.

The example of the Balkan states likewise contradicts her, for anyone can now see that the best conditions for the development of capital-

ism in the Balkans are created precisely in proportion to the creation of independent national states in that peninsula.

Therefore, Rosa Luxemburg notwithstanding, the example of the whole of progressive and civilised mankind, the example of the Balkans and that of Asia prove that Kautsky's proposition is absolutely correct: the national state is the rule and the "norm" of capitalism; the multinational state represents backwardness, or is an exception. From the standpoint of national relations, the best conditions for the development of capitalism are undoubtedly provided by the national state. This does not mean, of course, that such a state, which is based on bourgeois relations, can eliminate the exploitation and oppression of nations. It only means that Marxists cannot lose sight of the powerful *economic* factors that give rise to the urge to create national states. It means that "self-determination of nations" in the Marxists' Programme *cannot*, from a historico-economic point of view, have any other meaning than political self-determination, state independence, and the formation of a national state. ...

## 2. The Historically Concrete Presentation of the Question

The categorical requirement of Marxist theory in investigating any social question is that it be examined within *definite* historical limits, and, if it refers to a particular country (e.g., the national programme for a given country), that account be taken of the specific features distinguishing that country from others in the same historical epoch.

What does this categorical requirement of Marxism imply in its application to the question under discussion?

First of all, it implies that a clear distinction must be drawn between the two periods of capitalism, which differ radically from each other as far as the national movement is concerned. On the one hand, there is the period of the collapse of feudalism and absolutism, the period of the formation of the bourgeois-democratic society and state, when the national movements for the first time become mass movements and in one way or another draw *all* classes of the population into politics through the press, participation in representative institutions, etc. On the other hand, there is the period of fully formed capitalist states with a long-established constitutional regime and a highly developed antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie—a period that may be called the eve of capitalism's downfall.

The typical features of the first period are: the awakening of national movements and the drawing of the peasants, the most numerous and the most sluggish section of the population, into these movements, in connection with the struggle for political liberty in general, and for the rights of the nation in particular. Typical features of the second period are: the absence of mass bourgeois-democratic movements and the fact that developed capitalism, in bringing closer together nations that have already been fully drawn into commercial intercourse, and causing them to intermingle to an increasing degree, brings the antagonism between internationally united capital and the international working-class movement into the forefront.

Of course, the two periods are not walled off from each other; they are connected by numerous transitional links, the various countries differing from each other in the rapidity of their national development, in the national make-up and distribution of their population, and so on. There

can be no question of the Marxists of any country drawing up their national programme without taking into account all these general historical and concrete state conditions.

...But Rosa Luxemburg always passes on imperceptibly to the conclusion that among the factors that unite Russia and Poland, the purely economic factors of modern capitalist relations now predominate.

Then our Rosa proceeds to the question of autonomy, and though her article is entitled "The National Question and Autonomy" *in general*, she begins to argue that the Kingdom of Poland has an *exclusive* right to autonomy (see *Prosveshcheniye*, 1913, No. 12). To support Poland's right to autonomy, Rosa Luxemburg evidently judges the state system of Russia by her economic, political and sociological characteristics and everyday life—a totality of features which, taken together, produce the concept of "Asiatic despotism". (*Przeglad* No. 12, p. 137.)

It is generally known that this kind of state system possesses great stability whenever completely patriarchal and pre-capitalist features predominate in the economic system and where commodity production and class differentiation are scarcely developed. However, if in a country whose state system is distinctly *pre-capitalist* in character there exists a nationally demarcated region where capitalism is *rapidly* developing, then the more rapidly that capitalism develops, the greater will be the antagonism between it and the *pre-capitalist* state system, and the more likely will be the separation of the progressive region from the whole—with which it is connected, not by "modern capitalistic", but by "Asiatically despotic" ties. ...

## 3. The Concrete Features of the National Question in Russia, and Russia's Bourgeois-Democratic Reformation

...The epoch of bourgeois-democratic revolutions in Western continental Europe embraces a fairly definite period, approximately between 1789 and 1871. This was precisely the period of national movements and the creation of national states. When this period drew to a close, Western Europe had been transformed into a settled system of bourgeois states, which, as a general rule, were nationally uniform states. Therefore, to seek the right to self-determination in the programmes of West-European socialists at this time of day is to betray one's ignorance of the ABC of Marxism.

In Eastern Europe and Asia the period of bourgeois-democratic revolutions did not begin until 1905. The revolutions in Russia, Persia, Turkey and China, the Balkan wars—such is the chain of world events of *our* period in our "Orient". And only a blind man could fail to see in this chain of events the awakening of a *whole series* of bourgeois-democratic national movements which strive to create nationally independent and nationally uniform states. It is precisely and solely because Russia and the neighbouring countries are passing through this period that we must have a clause in our programme on the right of nations to self-determination. ...

The peculiar conditions in Russia with regard to the national question are just the reverse of those we see in Austria. Russia is a state with a single national centre—Great Russia. The Great Russians occupy a vast, unbroken stretch of territory, and number about 70,000,000. The specific features of this national state are: first, that "subject peoples"



(which, on the whole, comprise the majority of the entire population—57 per cent) inhabit the border regions; secondly, the oppression of these subject peoples is much stronger here than in the neighbouring states (and not even in the European states alone); thirdly, in a number of cases the oppressed nationalities inhabiting the border regions have compatriots across the border, who enjoy greater national independence (suffice it to mention the Finns, the Swedes, the Poles, the Ukrainians and the Rumanians along the western and southern frontiers of the state); fourthly, the development of capitalism and the general level of culture are often higher in the non-Russian border regions than in the centre. Lastly, it is in the neighbouring Asian states that we see the beginning of a phase of bourgeois revolutions and national movements which are spreading to some of the kindred nationalities within the borders of Russia.

Thus, it is precisely the special concrete, historical features of the national question in Russia that make the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination in the present period a matter of special urgency in our country. ...

#### 4. "Practicality" in the National Question

Rosa Luxemburg's argument that §9 of our Programme contains nothing "practical" has been seized upon by the opportunists. Rosa Luxemburg is so delighted with this argument that in some parts of her article this "slogan" is repeated eight times on a single page.

She writes: §9 "gives no practical lead on the day-by-day policy of the proletariat, no practical solution of national problems".

Let us examine this argument, which elsewhere is formulated in such a way that it makes §9 look quite meaningless, or else commits us to support all national aspirations.

What does the demand for "practicality" in the national question mean?

It means one of three things: support for all national aspirations; the answer "yes" or "no" to the question of secession by any nation; or that national demands are in general immediately "practicable".

Let us examine all three possible meanings of the demand for "practicality".

The bourgeoisie, which naturally assumes the leadership at the start of every national movement, says that support for all national aspirations is practical. However, the proletariat's policy in the national question (as in all others) supports the bourgeoisie only in a certain direction, but it never coincides with the bourgeoisie's policy. The working class supports the bourgeoisie only in order to secure national peace (which the bourgeoisie cannot bring about completely and which can be achieved only with *complete* democracy), in order to secure equal rights and to create the best conditions for the class struggle. Therefore, it is *in opposition to the practicality* of the bourgeoisie that the proletarians advance their *principles* in the national question; they always give the bourgeoisie *only conditional* support. What every bourgeoisie is out for in the national question is either privileges for its *own* nation, or exceptional advantages for it; this is called being "practical". The proletariat is opposed to all privileges, to all exclusiveness. To demand that it should be "practical" means following the lead of the bourgeoisie, falling into opportunism.

The demand for a "yes" or "no" reply to the question of secession in the case of every nation may seem a very "practical" one. In reality it is absurd; it is metaphysical in theory, while in practice it leads to subordinating the proletariat to the bourgeoisie's policy. The bourgeoisie always places its national demands in the forefront, and does so in categorical fashion. With the proletariat, however, these demands are subordinated to the interests of the class struggle. Theoretically, you cannot say in advance whether the bourgeois-democratic revolution will end in a given nation seceding from another nation, or in its equality with the latter; *in either case*, the important thing for the proletariat is to ensure the development of its class. For the bourgeoisie it is important to hamper this development by pushing the aims of its "own" nation before those of the proletariat. That is why the proletariat confines itself, so to speak, to the negative demand for recognition of the *right* to self-determination, without giving guarantees to any nation, and without undertaking to give *anything at the expense* of another nation.

This may not be "practical", but it is in effect the best guarantee for the achievement of the most democratic of all possible solutions. The proletariat needs *only* such guarantees, whereas the bourgeoisie of every nation requires guarantees for *its own* interest, regardless of the position of (or the possible disadvantages to) other nations.

The bourgeoisie is most of all interested in the "feasibility" of a given demand—hence the invariable policy of coming to terms with the bourgeoisie of other nations, to the detriment of the proletariat. For the proletariat, however, the important thing is to strengthen its class against the bourgeoisie and to educate the masses in the spirit of consistent democracy and socialism.

This may not be "practical" as far as the opportunists are concerned, but it is the only real guarantee, the guarantee of the greater national equality and peace, despite the feudal landlords and the *nationalist* bourgeoisie.

The whole task of the proletarians in the national question is "unpractical" from the standpoint of the *nationalist* bourgeoisie of every nation, because the proletarians, opposed as they are to nationalism of every kind, demand "abstract" equality; they demand, as a matter of principle, that there should be no privileges, however slight. Failing to grasp this, Rosa Luxemburg, by her misguided eulogy of practicality, has opened the door wide for the opportunists, and especially for opportunist concessions to Great-Russian nationalism.

Why Great-Russian? Because the Great Russians in Russia are an oppressor nation, and opportunism in the national question will of course find expression among oppressed nations otherwise than among oppressor nations.

On the plea that its demands are "practical", the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations will call upon the proletariat to support its aspirations unconditionally. The most practical procedure is to say a plain "yes" in favour of the secession of a *particular* nation rather than in favour of all nations having the *right* to secede!

The proletariat is opposed to such practicality. While recognising equality and equal rights to a national state, it values above all and places foremost the alliance of the proletarians of all nations, and assesses any national demand, any national separation, *from the angle* of the workers' class struggle. This call for practicality is in fact merely a call for uncritical acceptance of bourgeois aspirations.

By supporting the right to secession, we are told, you are supporting the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nations. This is what Rosa Luxemburg says, and she is echoed by Semkovsky, the opportunist, who incidentally is the only representative of liquidationist ideas on this question, in the liquidationist newspaper!

Our reply to this is: No, it is to the bourgeoisie that a "practical" solution of this question is important. To the workers the important thing is to distinguish the *principles* of the two trends. *Insofar as* the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights the oppressor, we are always, in every case, and more strongly than anyone else, *in favour*, for we are the staunchest and the most consistent enemies of oppression. But insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for *its own* bourgeois nationalism, we stand against. We fight against the privileges and violence of the oppressor nation, and do not in any way condone strivings for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation.

If, in our political agitation, we fail to advance and advocate the slogan of the *right* to secession, we shall play into the hands, not only of the bourgeoisie, but also of the feudal landlords and the absolutism of the *oppressor* nation. Kautsky long ago used this argument against Rosa Luxemburg, and the argument is indisputable. When, in her anxiety not to "assist" the nationalist bourgeoisie of Poland, Rosa Luxemburg rejects the *right* to secession in the programme of the Marxists in *Russia*, she is *in fact* assisting the Great-Russian Black Hundreds. She is in fact assisting opportunist tolerance of the privileges (and worse than privileges) of the Great Russians.

Carried away by the struggle against nationalism in Poland, Rosa Luxemburg has forgotten the nationalism of the Great Russians, although it is *this* nationalism that is the most formidable at the present time. It is a nationalism that is more feudal than bourgeois, and is the principal obstacle to democracy and to the proletarian struggle. The bourgeois nationalism of *any* oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed *against* oppression, and it is this content that we *unconditionally* support. At the same time we strictly distinguish it from the tendency towards national exclusiveness; we fight against the tendency of the Polish bourgeois to oppress the Jews, etc., etc.

This is "unpractical" from the standpoint of the bourgeois and the philistine, but it is the only policy in the national question that is practical, based on principles, and really promotes democracy, liberty and proletarian unity.

The recognition of the right to secession for all; the appraisal of each concrete question of secession from the point of view of removing all inequality, all privileges, and all exclusiveness.

Let us consider the position of an oppressor nation. Can a nation be free if it oppresses other nations? It cannot. The interests of the freedom of the Great-Russian population\* require a struggle against such oppression. The long, centuries-old history of the suppression of the movements of the oppressed nations, and the systematic propaganda in favour of such suppression coming from the "upper" classes have created

enormous obstacles to the cause of freedom of the Great-Russian people itself, in the form of prejudices, etc.

The Great-Russian Black Hundreds deliberately foster these prejudices and encourage them. The Great-Russian bourgeoisie tolerates or condones them. The Great-Russian proletariat cannot achieve *its own* aims or clear the road to its freedom without systematically countering these prejudices.

In Russia, the creation of an independent national state remains, for the time being, the privilege of the Great-Russian nation alone. We, the Great-Russian proletarians, who defend no privileges whatever, do not defend this privilege either. We are fighting on the ground of a definite state; we unite the workers of all nations living in this state; we cannot vouch for any particular path of national development, for we are marching to our class goal along *all* possible paths.

However, we cannot move towards that goal unless we combat all nationalism, and uphold the equality of the various nations. Whether the Ukraine, for example, is destined to form an independent state is a matter that will be determined by a thousand unpredictable factors. Without attempting idle "*guesses*", we firmly uphold something that is beyond doubt: the right of the Ukraine to form such a state. We respect this right; we do not uphold the privileges of Great Russians with regard to Ukrainians; we *educate* the masses in the spirit of recognition of that right, in the spirit of rejecting *state* privileges for any nation.

In the leaps which all nations have made in the period of bourgeois revolutions, clashes and struggles over the right to a national state are possible and probable. We proletarians declare in advance that we are *opposed* to Great-Russian privileges, and this is what guides our entire propaganda and agitation.

In her quest for "practicality" Rosa Luxemburg has lost sight of the *principal* practical task both of the Great-Russian proletariat and of the proletariat of other nationalities: that of day-by-day agitation and propaganda against all state and national privileges, and for the right, the equal right of all nations, to their national state. This (at present) is our principal task in the national question, for only in this way can we defend the interests of democracy and the alliance of all proletarians of all nations on an equal footing. ...

##### 5. The Liberal Bourgeoisie and the Socialist Opportunists in the National Question

...To clear up this question, which has been so confused by the liberals (and by those who are so misguided as to echo them), we shall cite a very simple example. Let us take the question of divorce. In her article Rosa Luxemburg writes that the centralised democratic state, while conceding autonomy to its constituent parts, should retain the most important branches of legislation, including legislation on divorce, under the jurisdiction of the central parliament. The concern that the central authority of the democratic state should retain the power to allow divorce can be readily understood. The reactionaries are opposed to freedom of divorce; they say that it must be "handled carefully", and loudly declare that it means the "disintegration of the family". The democrats, however, believe that the reactionaries are hypocrites, and that they are actually defending the omnipotence of the police and the bureaucracy, the privileges of one of the sexes, and the worst kind of oppression of

\* A certain L. VI. in Paris considers this word un-Marxist. This L. VI. is amusingly "*superklug*" (too clever by half). And "this too-clever-by half" L. VI. apparently intends to write an essay on the deletion of the words "population", "nation", etc., from our minimum programme (having in mind the class struggle!).

women. They believe that in actual fact freedom of divorce will not cause the "disintegration" of family ties, but, on the contrary, will strengthen them on a democratic basis, which is the only possible and durable basis in civilised society.

To accuse those who support freedom of self-determination, i.e., freedom to secede, of encouraging separatism, is as foolish and hypocritical as accusing those who advocate freedom of divorce of encouraging the destruction of family ties. Just as in bourgeois society the defenders of privilege and corruption, on which bourgeois marriage rests, oppose freedom of divorce, so, in the capitalist state, repudiation of the right to self-determination, i.e., the right of nations to secede, means nothing more than defence of the privileges of the dominant nation and police methods of administration, to the detriment of democratic methods.

No doubt, the political chicanery arising from all the relationships existing in capitalist society sometimes leads members of parliament and journalists to indulge in frivolous and even nonsensical twaddle about one or another nation seceding. But only reactionaries can allow themselves to be frightened (or pretend to be frightened) by such talk. Those who stand by democratic principles, i.e., who insist that questions of state be decided by the mass of the population, know very well that there is a "tremendous distance"<sup>13</sup> between what the politicians prate about and what the people decide. From their daily experience the masses know perfectly well the value of geographical and economic ties and the advantages of a big market and a big state. They will, therefore, resort to secession only when national oppression and national friction make joint life absolutely intolerable and hinder any and all economic intercourse. In that case, the interests of capitalist development and of the freedom of the class struggle will be best served by secession. ...

The liberals' hostility to the principle of political self-determination of nations can have one, and only one, real class meaning: national-liberalism, defence of the state privileges of the Great-Russian bourgeoisie. And the opportunists among the Marxists in Russia, who today, under the Third of June regime, are against the right of nations to self-determination—the liquidator Semkovsky, the Bundist Liebman, the Ukrainian petty-bourgeois Yurkevich—are *actually* following in the wake of the national-liberals, and corrupting the working class with national-liberal ideas.

The interests of the working class and of its struggle against capitalism demand complete solidarity and the closest unity of the workers of all nations; they demand resistance to the nationalist policy of the bourgeoisie of every nationality. Hence, Social-Democrats would be deviating from proletarian policy and subordinating the workers to the policy of the bourgeoisie if they were to repudiate the right of nations to self-determination, i.e., the right of an oppressed nation to secede, or if they were to support all the national demands of the bourgeoisie of oppressed nations. It makes no difference to the hired worker whether he is exploited chiefly by the Great-Russian bourgeoisie rather than the non-Russian bourgeoisie, or by the Polish bourgeoisie rather than the Jewish bourgeoisie, etc. The hired worker who has come to understand his class interests is equally indifferent to the state privileges of the Great-Russian capitalists and to the promises of the Polish or Ukrainian capitalists to set up an earthly paradise when they obtain state privileges. Capitalism is developing and will continue to develop, anyway, both in integral states with a mixed population and in separate national states.

In any case the hired worker will be an object of exploitation. Successful struggle against exploitation requires that the proletariat be free of nationalism, and be absolutely neutral, so to speak, in the fight for supremacy that is going on among the bourgeoisie of the various nations. If the proletariat of any one nation gives the slightest support to the privileges of its "own" national bourgeoisie, that will inevitably rouse distrust among the proletariat of another nation; it will weaken the international class solidarity of the workers and divide them, to the delight of the bourgeoisie. Repudiation of the right to self-determination or to secession inevitably means, in practice, support for the privileges of the dominant nation. ...

#### 6. The Resolution of the London International Congress, 1896

This resolution reads:

"This Congress declares that it stands for the full right of all nations to self-determination [*Selbstbestimmungsrecht*] and expresses its sympathy for the workers of every country now suffering under the yoke of military, national or other absolutism. This Congress calls upon the workers of all these countries to join the ranks of the class-conscious [*Klassenbewusste*—those who understand their class interests] workers of the whole world in order jointly to fight for the defeat of international capitalism and for the achievement of the aims of international Social-Democracy."\* ...

The debate turned on the question of Poland's independence. Three points of view were put forward:

1. That of the "Fracy", in whose name Haecker spoke. They wanted the International to include in *its own* programme a demand for the independence of Poland. The motion was not carried and this point of view was defeated in the International.

2. Rosa Luxemburg's point of view, viz., the Polish socialists should not demand independence for Poland. This point of view entirely precluded the proclamation of the right of nations to self-determination. It was likewise defeated in the International.

3. The point of view which was elaborated at the time by K. Kautsky, who opposed Rosa Luxemburg and proved that her materialism was extremely "one-sided"; according to Kautsky, the International could not at the time make the independence of Poland a point in its programme; but the Polish socialists were fully entitled to put forward such a demand. From the socialists' point of view it was undoubtedly a mistake to ignore the tasks of national liberation in a situation where national oppression existed.

The International's resolution reproduces the most essential and fundamental propositions in this point of view: on the one hand, the absolutely direct, unequivocal recognition of the full right of all nations to self-determination; on the other hand, the equally unambiguous appeal to the workers for *international* unity in their class struggle.

We think this resolution is absolutely correct, and that, to the coun-

\* See the official German report of the London Congress: *Verhandlungen und Beschlüsse des internationalen sozialistischen Arbeiter- und Gewerkschafts-Kongresses zu London, vom 27. Juli bis 1. August 1896*, Berlin, 1897, S. 18. A Russian pamphlet has been published containing the decisions of international congresses in which the word "self-determination" is wrongly translated as "autonomy".

tries of Eastern Europe and Asia at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is this resolution, with both its parts being taken as an integral whole, that gives the only correct lead to the proletarian class policy in the national question.

Let us deal with the three above-mentioned viewpoints in somewhat greater detail.

As is known, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels considered it the bounden duty of the whole of West-European democracy, and still more of Social-Democracy, to give active support to the demand for Polish independence. For the period of the 1840s and 1860s, the period of the bourgeois revolutions in Austria and Germany, and the period of the "Peasant Reform" in Russia,<sup>14</sup> this point of view was quite correct and the only one that was consistently democratic and proletarian. So long as the masses of the people in Russia and in most of the Slav countries were still sunk in torpor, so long as *there were no* independent, mass, democratic movements in those countries, the liberation movement of the *gentry* in Poland assumed an immense and paramount importance from the point of view, not only of Russian, not only of Slav, but of European democracy as a whole.\*

But while Marx's standpoint was quite correct for the forties, fifties and sixties or for the third quarter of the nineteenth century, it has ceased to be correct by the twentieth century. Independent democratic movements, and even an independent proletarian movement, have arisen in most Slav countries, even in Russia, one of the most backward Slav countries. Aristocratic Poland has disappeared, yielding place to capitalist Poland. Under such circumstances Poland could not but lose her *exceptional* revolutionary importance.

The attempt of the P.S.P. (the Polish Socialist Party, the present-day "Fracy") in 1896 to "establish" for all time the point of view Marx had held in a *different epoch* was an attempt to use the *letter* of Marxism against the *spirit* of Marxism. The Polish Social-Democrats were therefore quite right in attacking the extreme nationalism of the Polish petty bourgeoisie and pointing out that the national question was of secondary importance to Polish workers, in creating for the first time a purely proletarian party in Poland and proclaiming the extremely important principle that the Polish and the Russian workers must maintain the closest alliance in their class struggle.

But did this mean that at the beginning of the twentieth century the International could regard the principle of political self-determination of nations, of the right to secede, as unnecessary to Eastern Europe and Asia? This would have been the height of absurdity, and (theoretically) tantamount to admitting that the bourgeois-democratic reform of the Turkish, Russian and Chinese states had been consummated; indeed it

\*It would be a very interesting piece of historical research to compare the position of a noble Polish rebel in 1863 with that of the all-Russia revolutionary democrat, Chernyshevsky, who (like Marx) was able to appreciate the importance of the Polish movement, and with that of the Ukrainian petty bourgeois Dragomanov, who appeared much later and expressed the views of a peasant, so ignorant and sluggish, and so attached to his dung heap, that his legitimate hatred of the Polish gentry blinded him to the significance which their struggle had for all-Russia democracy. (Cf. *Dragomanov, Historical Poland and Great-Russian Democracy*.) Dragomanov richly deserved the fervent kisses which were subsequently bestowed on him by Mr. P. B. Struve, who by that time had become a national-liberal.

would have been tantamount (in practice) to opportunism towards absolutism.

No. At a time when bourgeois-democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe and Asia have begun, in this period of the awakening and intensification of national movements and of the formation of independent proletarian parties, the task of these parties with regard to national policy must be twofold: recognition of the right of all nations to self-determination, since bourgeois-democratic reform is not yet completed and since working-class democracy consistently, seriously and sincerely (and not in a liberal, Kokoshkin fashion) fights for equal rights for nations; then, a close, unbreakable alliance in the class struggle of the proletarians of all nations in a given state, throughout all the changes in its history, irrespective of any reshaping of the frontiers of the individual states by the bourgeoisie.

It is this twofold task of the proletariat that the 1896 resolution of the International formulates. That is the substance, the underlying principle, of the resolution adopted by the Conference of Russian Marxists held in the summer of 1913. Some people profess to see a "contradiction" in the fact that while point 4 of this resolution, which recognises the right to self-determination and secession, seems to "concede" the maximum to nationalism (in reality, the recognition of the *right of all* nations to self-determination implies the maximum of *democracy* and the minimum of nationalism), point 5 warns the workers against the nationalist slogans of the bourgeoisie of any nation and demands the unity and amalgamation of the workers of all nations in internationally united proletarian organisations. But this is a "contradiction" only for extremely shallow minds, which, for instance, cannot grasp why the unity and class solidarity of the Swedish and the Norwegian proletariat *gained* when the Swedish workers upheld Norway's freedom to secede and form an independent state.

## 7. The Utopian Karl Marx and the Practical Rosa Luxemburg

...The conclusion that follows from all these critical remarks of Marx's is clear: the working class should be the last to make a fetish of the national question, since the development of capitalism does not necessarily awaken *all* nations to independent life. But to brush aside the mass national movements once they have started, and to refuse to support what is progressive in them means, in effect, pandering to *nationalistic* prejudices, that is, recognising "one's own nation" as a model nation (or, we would add, one possessing the exclusive privilege of forming a state).\*

But let us return to the question of Ireland.

Marx's position on this question is most clearly expressed in the following extracts from his letters:

"I have done my best to bring about this demonstration of the English workers in favour of Fenianism<sup>16</sup> .... I used to think the separation of Ireland from England impossible. I now think it inevitable, although

\* Cf. also Marx's letter to Engels of June 3, 1867: "...I have learned with real pleasure from the Paris letters to *The Times*<sup>15</sup> about the pro-Polish exclamations of the Parisians against Russia...Mr. Proudhon and his little doctrinaire clique are not the French people."

after the separation there may come federation." This is what Marx wrote to Engels on November 2, 1867.

In his letter of November 30 of the same year he added:

"...what shall we advise the *English* workers? In my opinion they must make the *Repeal of the Union* [Ireland with England, i.e., the separation of Ireland from England] (in short, the affair of 1783, only democratised and adapted to the conditions of the time) an article of their *pronunziamento*. This is the only legal and therefore only possible form of Irish emancipation which can be admitted in the programme of an *English* party. Experience must show later whether a mere personal union can continue to subsist between the two countries....

"...What the Irish need is:

"(1) Self-government and independence from England;

"(2) An agrarian revolution...."

Marx attached great importance to the Irish question and delivered hour-and-a-half lectures on this subject at the German Workers' Union (letter of December 17, 1867).

In a letter dated November 20, 1868, Engels spoke of "the hatred towards the Irish found among the English workers", and almost a year later (October 24, 1869), returning to this subject, he wrote:

"*Il n'y a qu'un pas* [it is only one step] from Ireland to Russia... Irish history shows what a misfortune it is for one nation to have subjugated another. All the abominations of the English have their origin in the Irish Pale. I have still to plough my way through the Cromwellian period, but this much seems certain to me, that things would have taken another turn in England, too, but for the necessity of military rule in Ireland and the creation of a new aristocracy there."

Let us note, in passing, Marx's letter to Engels of August 18, 1869:

"The Polish workers in Posen have brought a strike to a victorious end with the help of their colleagues in Berlin. This struggle against Monsieur le Capital—even in the lower form of the strike—is a more serious way of getting rid of national prejudices than peace declamations from the lips of bourgeois gentlemen."

The policy on the Irish question pursued by Marx in the International may be seen from the following:

On November 18, 1869, Marx wrote to Engels that he had spoken for an hour and a quarter at the Council of the International on the question of the attitude of the British Ministry to the Irish Amnesty, and had proposed the following resolution:<sup>17</sup>

"Resolved,

"that in his reply to the Irish demands for the release of the imprisoned Irish patriots Mr. Gladstone deliberately insults the Irish nation;

"that he clogs political amnesty with conditions alike degrading to the victims of misgovernment and the people they belong to;

"that having, in the teeth of his responsible position, publicly and enthusiastically cheered on the American slave-holders' rebellion, he now steps in to preach to the Irish people the doctrine of passive obedience;

"that his whole proceeding with reference to the Irish Amnesty question are the true and genuine offspring of that '*policy of conquest*', by the fiery denunciation of which Mr. Gladstone ousted his Tory rivals from office;

"that the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association express their admiration of the spirited, firm and high-souled manner in which the Irish people carry on their Amnesty movement;

"that this resolution be communicated to all branches of, and workmen's bodies connected with, the International Workingmen's Association in Europe and America."

On December 10, 1869, Marx wrote that his paper on the Irish question to be read at the Council of the International would be couched as follows:

"Quite apart from all phrases about 'international' and 'humane' justice for Ireland—which are taken for granted in the International Council—it is in the direct and absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of their present connexion with Ireland. And this is my fullest conviction, and for reasons which in part I can not tell the English workers themselves. For a long time I believed that it would be possible to overthrow the Irish regime by English working-class ascendancy. I always expressed this point of view in the *New York Tribune*<sup>18</sup> [an American paper to which Marx contributed for a long time]. Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will never accomplish anything until it has got rid of Ireland... The English reaction in England had its roots in the subjugation of Ireland." (Marx's italics.)<sup>19</sup>

Marx's policy on the Irish question should now be quite clear to our readers.

Marx, the "utopian", was so "unpractical" that he stood for the separation of Ireland, which half a century later has not yet been achieved.

What gave rise to Marx's policy, and was it not mistaken?

At first Marx thought that Ireland would not be liberated by the national movement of the oppressed nation, but by the working-class movement of the oppressor nation. Marx did not make an Absolute of the national movement, knowing, as he did, that only the victory of the working class can bring about the complete liberation of all nationalities. It is impossible to estimate beforehand all the possible relations between the bourgeois liberation movements of the oppressed nations and the proletarian emancipation movement of the oppressor nation (the very problem which today makes the national question of Russia so difficult).

However, it so happened that the English working class fell under the influence of the Liberals for a fairly long time, became an appendage to the Liberals, and by adopting a liberal-labour policy left itself leaderless. The bourgeois liberation movement in Ireland grew stronger and assumed revolutionary forms. Marx reconsidered his view and corrected it. "What a misfortune it is for a nation to have subjugated another." The English working class will never be free until Ireland is freed from the English yoke. Reaction in England is strengthened and fostered by the enslavement of Ireland (just as reaction in Russia is fostered by her enslavement of a number of nations!).

And, in proposing in the International a resolution of sympathy with "the Irish nation", "the Irish people" (the clever L. VI. would probably have berated poor Marx for forgetting about the class struggle!), Marx advocated the separation of Ireland from England, "although after the separation there may come federation".

What were the theoretical grounds for Marx's conclusion? In England the bourgeois revolution had been consummated long ago. But it had not yet been consummated in Ireland; it is being consummated only now, after the lapse of half a century, by the reforms of the English Liberals. If capitalism had been overthrown in England as quickly as Marx had at first expected, there would have been no room for a bour-



geois-democratic and general national movement in Ireland. But since it had arisen, Marx advised the English workers to support it, give it a revolutionary impetus and see it through in the interests of *their own* liberty.

The economic ties between Ireland and England in the 1860s were, of course, even closer than Russia's present ties with Poland, the Ukraine, etc. The "unpracticality" and "impracticability" of the separation of Ireland (if only owing to geographical conditions and England's immense colonial power) were quite obvious. Though, in principle, an enemy of federalism, Marx in this instance granted the possibility of federation, as well,\* *if only* the emancipation of Ireland was achieved in a revolutionary, not reformist way, through a movement of the mass of the people of Ireland supported by the working class of England. There can be no doubt that only such a solution of the historical problem would have been in the best interests of the proletariat and most conducive to rapid social progress.

Things turned out differently. Both the Irish people and the English proletariat proved weak. Only now, through the sordid deals between the English Liberals and the Irish bourgeoisie, is the Irish problem *being solved* (the example of Ulster shows with what difficulty) through the land reform (with compensation) and Home Rule (not yet introduced). Well then? Does it follow that Marx and Engels were "utopians", that they put forward "impracticable" national demands, or that they allowed themselves to be influenced by the Irish petty-bourgeois nationalists (for there is no doubt about the petty-bourgeois nature of the Fenian movement), etc.?

No. In the Irish question, too, Marx and Engels pursued a consistently proletarian policy, which really educated the masses in a spirit of democracy and socialism. Only such a policy could have saved both Ireland and England half a century of delay in introducing the necessary reforms, and prevented these reforms from being mutilated by the Liberals to please the reactionaries.

The policy of Marx and Engels on the Irish question serves as a splendid example of the attitude the proletariat of the oppressor nations should adopt towards national movements, an example which has lost none of its immense *practical* importance. It serves as a warning against that "servile haste" with which the philistines of all countries, colours and languages hurry to label as "utopian" the idea of altering the frontiers of states that were established by the violence and privileges of the landlords and bourgeoisie of one nation.

If the Irish and English proletariat had not accepted Marx's policy and had not made the secession of Ireland their slogan, this would have been the worst sort of opportunism, a neglect of their duties as democrats

\* By the way, it is not difficult to see why, from a Social-Democratic point of view, the right to "self-determination" means *neither* federation *nor* autonomy (although, speaking in the abstract, both come under the category of "self-determination"). The right to federation is simply meaningless, since federation implies a bilateral contract. It goes without saying that Marxists cannot include the defence of federalism in general in their programme. As far as autonomy is concerned, Marxists defend, not the "right" to autonomy, but autonomy *itself*, as a general universal principle of a democratic state with a mixed national composition, and a great variety of geographical and other conditions. Consequently, the recognition of the "right of nations to autonomy" is as absurd as that of the "right of nations to federation".

and socialists, and a concession to *English* reaction and the *English* bourgeoisie. ...

## 8. Conclusion

To sum up.

As far as the theory of Marxism in general is concerned, the question of the right to self-determination presents no difficulty. No one can seriously question the London resolution of 1896, or the fact that self-determination implies only the right to secede, or that the formation of independent national states is the tendency in all bourgeois-democratic revolutions.

A difficulty is to some extent created by the fact that in Russia the proletariat of both the oppressed and the oppressor nations are fighting, and must fight, side by side. The task is to preserve the unity of the proletariat's class struggle for socialism, and to resist all bourgeois and Black-Hundred nationalist influences. Where the oppressed nations are concerned, the separate organisation of the proletariat as an independent party sometimes leads to such a bitter struggle against local nationalism that the perspective becomes distorted and the nationalism of the oppressor nation is lost sight of.

But this distortion of perspective cannot last long. The experience of the joint struggle waged by the proletarians of various nations has demonstrated all too clearly that we must formulate political issues from the all-Russia, not the "Cracow" point of view. And in all-Russia politics it is the Purishkeviches and the Kokoshkins who are in the saddle. Their ideas predominate, and their persecution of non-Russians for "separatism", for *thinking* about secession, is being preached and practised in the Duma, in the schools, in the churches, in the barracks, and in hundreds and thousands of newspapers. It is this Great-Russian nationalist poison that is polluting the entire all-Russia political atmosphere. This is the misfortune of one nation, which, by subjugating other nations, is strengthening reaction throughout Russia. The memories of 1849 and 1863 form a living political tradition, which, unless great storms arise, threatens to hamper every democratic and *especially* every Social-Democratic movement for decades to come.

There can be no doubt that however natural the point of view of certain Marxists belonging to the oppressed nations (whose "misfortune" is sometimes that the masses of the population are blinded by the idea of their "own" national liberation) may appear at times, *in reality* the objective alignment of class forces in Russia makes refusal to advocate the right to self-determination tantamount to the worst opportunism, to the infection of the proletariat with the ideas of the Kokoshkins. And these ideas are, essentially, the ideas and the policy of the Purishkeviches.

Therefore, although Rosa Luxemburg's point of view could at first have been excused as being specifically Polish, "Cracow" narrow-mindedness,\* it is inexcusable today, when nationalism and, above all, govern-

\* It is not difficult to understand that the recognition by the Marxists of the *whole* of *Russia*, and first and foremost by the Great Russians, of the *right* of nations to secede in no way precludes *agitation* against secession by Marxists of a particular *oppressed* nation, just as the recognition of the right to divorce does not preclude agitation against divorce in a particular case. We think, therefore, that there will be an inevitable increase in the number of Polish Marxists who laugh at the non-existent "contradiction" now being "encouraged" by Semkovsky and Trotsky.

mental Great-Russian nationalism, has everywhere gained ground, and when policy is being shaped by this *Great-Russian nationalism*. In actual fact, it is being seized upon by the opportunists of *all* nations, who fight shy of the idea of "storms" and "leaps", believe that the bourgeois-democratic revolution is over, and follow in the wake of the liberalism of the Kokoshkins.

Like any other nationalism, Great-Russian nationalism passes through various phases, according to the classes that are dominant in the bourgeois country at any given time. Up to 1905, we almost exclusively knew national-reactionaries. After the revolution, *national-liberals* arose in our country.

In our country this is virtually the stand adopted both by the Octobrists and by the Cadets (Kokoshkin), i.e., by the whole of the present-day bourgeoisie.

Great-Russian national-democrats will *cnevitably* appear later on. Mr. Peshekhonov, one of the founders of the "Popular Socialist" Party,<sup>19</sup> already expressed this point of view (in the issue of *Russkoye Bogatstvo*<sup>20</sup> for August 1906) when he called for caution in regard to the peasants' nationalist prejudices. However much others may slander us Bolsheviks and accuse us of "idealising" the peasant, we always have made and always will make a clear distinction between peasant intelligence and peasant prejudice, between peasant strivings for democracy and opposition to Purishkevich, and the peasant desire to make peace with the priest and the landlord.

Even now, and probably for a fairly long time to come, proletarian democracy must reckon with the nationalism of the Great-Russian peasants (not with the object of making concessions to it, but in order to combat it). \* The awakening of nationalism among the oppressed nations, which became so pronounced after 1905 (let us recall, say, the group of "Federalist-Autonomists" in the First Duma, the growth of the Ukrainian movement, of the Moslem movement, etc.), will inevitably lead to greater nationalism among the Great-Russian petty bourgeoisie in town and countryside. The slower the democratisation of Russia, the more persistent, brutal and bitter will be the national persecution and bickering among the bourgeoisie of the various nations. The particularly reactionary nature of the Russian Purishkeviches will simultaneously give rise to (and strengthen) "separatist" tendencies among the various oppressed nationalities, which sometimes enjoy far greater freedom in neighbouring states.

In this situation, the proletariat of Russia is faced with a twofold or, rather, a two-sided task: to combat nationalism of every kind, above all,

\* It would be interesting to trace the changes that take place in Polish nationalism, for example, in the process of its transformation from gentry nationalism into bourgeois nationalism, and then into peasant nationalism. In his book *Das polnische Gemeinwesen im preussischen Staat* (*The Polish Community in the Prussian State*; there is a Russian translation); Ludwig Bernhard, who shares the view of a German Kokoshkin, describes a very typical phenomenon: the formation of a sort of "peasant republic" by the Poles in Germany in the form of a close alliance of the various co-operatives and other associations of *Polish* peasants in their struggle for nationality, religion, and "Polish" land. German oppression has welded the Poles together and segregated them, after first awakening the nationalism of the gentry, then of the bourgeoisie, and finally of the peasant masses (especially after the campaign the Germans launched in 1873 against the use of the Polish language in schools). Things are moving in the same direction in Russia, and not only with regard to Poland.

Great-Russian nationalism; to recognise, not only fully equal rights for all nations in general, but also equality of rights as regards polity, i.e., the right of nations to self-determination, to secession. And at the same time, it is their task, in the interests of a successful struggle against all and every kind of nationalism among all nations, to preserve the unity of the proletarian struggle and the proletarian organisations, amalgamating these organisations into a close-knit international association, despite bourgeois strivings for national exclusiveness.

Complete equality of rights for all nations; the right of nations to self-determination; the unity of the workers of all nations—such is the national programme that Marxism, the experience of the whole world, and the experience of Russia, teach the workers.

## The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination

### Theses

#### 1. Imperialism, Socialism and the Liberation of Oppressed Nations

Imperialism is the highest stage in the development of capitalism. In the foremost countries capital has outgrown the bounds of national states, has replaced competition by monopoly and has created all the objective conditions for the achievement of socialism. In Western Europe and in the United States, therefore, the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat for the overthrow of capitalist governments and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie is on the order of the day. Imperialism forces the masses into this struggle by sharpening class contradictions on a tremendous scale, by worsening the conditions of the masses both economically—trusts, high cost of living—and politically—the growth of militarism, more frequent wars, more powerful reaction, the intensification and expansion of national oppression and colonial plunder. Victorious socialism must necessarily establish a full democracy and, consequently, not only introduce full equality of nations but also realise the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination, i.e., the right to free political separation. Socialist parties which did not show by all their activity, both now, during the revolution, and after its victory, that they would liberate the enslaved nations and build up relations with them on the basis of a free union—and free union is a false phrase without the right to secede—these parties would be betraying socialism.

Democracy, of course, is also a form of state which must disappear when the state disappears, but that will only take place in the transition

from conclusively victorious and consolidated socialism to full communism.

## 2. The Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Democracy

The socialist revolution is not a single act, it is not one battle on one front, but a whole epoch of acute class conflicts, a long series of battles on all fronts, i.e., on all questions of economics and politics, battles that can only end in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. It would be a radical mistake to think that the struggle for democracy was capable of diverting the proletariat from the socialist revolution or of hiding, overshadowing it, etc. On the contrary, in the same way as there can be no victorious socialism that does not practise full democracy, so the proletariat cannot prepare for its victory over the bourgeoisie without an all-round, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy.

It would be no less a mistake to remove one of the points of the democratic programme, for example, the point on the self-determination of nations, on the grounds of it being "impracticable" or "illusory" under imperialism. The contention that the right of nations to self-determination is impracticable within the bounds of capitalism can be understood either in the absolute, economic sense, or in the conditional, political sense.

In the first case it is radically incorrect from the standpoint of theory. First, in that sense, such things as, for example, labour money, or the abolition of crises, etc., are impracticable under capitalism. It is absolutely untrue that the self-determination of nations is *equally* impracticable. Secondly, even the one example of the secession of Norway from Sweden in 1905 is sufficient to refute "impracticability" in that sense. Thirdly, it would be absurd to deny that some slight change in the political and strategic relations of, say, Germany and Britain, might today or tomorrow make the formation of a new Polish, Indian and other similar state fully "practicable". Fourthly, finance capital, in its drive to expand, can "freely" buy or bribe the freest democratic or republican government and the elective officials of any, even an "independent", country. The domination of finance capital and of capital in general is not to be abolished by *any* reforms in the sphere of political democracy; and self-determination belongs wholly and exclusively to this sphere. This domination of finance capital, however, does not in the least nullify the significance of political democracy as a freer, wider and clearer *form* of class oppression and class struggle. Therefore all arguments about the "impracticability", in the economic sense, of one of the demands of political democracy under capitalism are reduced to a theoretically incorrect definition of the general and basic relationships of capitalism and of political democracy as a whole.

In the second case the assertion is incomplete and inaccurate. This is because not only the right of nations to self-determination, but *all* the fundamental demands of political democracy are only partially "practicable" under imperialism, and then in a distorted form and by way of exception (for example, the secession of Norway from Sweden in 1905). The demand for the immediate liberation of the colonies that is put forward by all revolutionary Social-Democrats is also "impracticable" under capitalism without a series of revolutions. But from this it does not by any means follow that Social-Democracy should reject the immediate and most determined struggle for *all* these demands—such a rejection

would only play into the hands of the bourgeoisie and reaction—but, on the contrary, it follows that these demands must be formulated and put through in a revolutionary and not a reformist manner, going beyond the bounds of bourgeois legality, breaking them down, going beyond speeches in parliament and verbal protests, and drawing the masses into decisive action, extending and intensifying the struggle for every fundamental democratic demand up to a direct proletarian onslaught on the bourgeoisie, i.e., up to the socialist revolution that expropriates the bourgeoisie. The socialist revolution may flare up not only through some big strike, street demonstration or hunger riot or a military insurrection or colonial revolt, but also as a result of a political crisis such as the Dreyfus case<sup>21</sup> or the Zabern incident,<sup>22</sup> or in connection with a referendum on the secession of an oppressed nation, etc.

Increased national oppression under imperialism does not mean that Social-Democracy should reject what the bourgeoisie call the "utopian" struggle for the freedom of nations to secede but, on the contrary, it should make greater use of the conflicts that arise in this sphere, *too*, as grounds for mass action and for revolutionary attacks on the bourgeoisie.

## 3. The Significance of the Right to Self-Determination and its Relation to Federation

The right of nations to self-determination implies exclusively the right to independence in the political sense, the right to free political separation from the oppressor nation. Specifically, this demand for political democracy implies complete freedom to agitate for secession and for a referendum on secession by the seceding nation. This demand, therefore, is not the equivalent of a demand for separation, fragmentation and the formation of small states. It implies only a consistent expression of struggle against all national oppression. The closer a democratic state system is to complete freedom to secede the less frequent and less ardent will the desire for separation be in practice, because big states afford indisputable advantages, both from the standpoint of economic progress and from that of the interests of the masses and, furthermore, these advantages increase with the growth of capitalism. Recognition of self-determination is not synonymous with recognition of federation as a principle. One may be a determined opponent of that principle and a champion of democratic centralism but still prefer federation to national inequality as the only way to full democratic centralism. It was from this standpoint that Marx, who was a centralist, preferred even the federation of Ireland and England to the forcible subordination of Ireland to the English.<sup>23</sup>

The aim of socialism is not only to end the division of mankind into tiny states and the isolation of nations in any form, it is not only to bring the nations closer together but to integrate them. And it is precisely in order to achieve this aim that we must, on the one hand, explain to the masses the reactionary nature of Renner and Otto Bauer's idea of so-called "cultural and national autonomy"<sup>24</sup> and, on the other, demand the liberation of oppressed nations in a clearly and precisely formulated political programme that takes special account of the hypocrisy and cowardice of socialists in the oppressor nations, and not in general nebulous phrases, not in empty declamations and not by way of "relegating" the question until socialism has been achieved. In the same way as mankind can arrive at the abolition of classes only through a transition

period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, it can arrive at the inevitable integration of nations only through a transition period of the complete emancipation of all oppressed nations, i.e., their freedom to secede.

#### 4. The Proletarian-Revolutionary Presentation of the Question of the Self-Determination of Nations

The petty bourgeoisie had put forward not only the demand for the self-determination of nations but *all* the points of our democratic minimum programme long *before*, as far back as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They are still putting them *all* forward in a utopian manner because they fail to see the class struggle and its increased intensity under democracy, and because they believe in "peaceful" capitalism. That is the exact nature of the utopia of a peaceful union of equal nations under imperialism which deceives the people and which is defended by Kautsky's followers. The programme of Social-Democracy, as a counter-balance to this petty-bourgeois, opportunist utopia, must postulate the division of nations into oppressor and oppressed as basic, significant and inevitable under imperialism.

The proletariat of the oppressor nations must not confine themselves to general, stereotyped phrases against annexation and in favour of the equality of nations in general, such as any pacifist bourgeois will repeat. The proletariat cannot remain silent on the question of the *frontiers* of a state founded on national oppression, a question so "unpleasant" for the imperialist bourgeoisie. The proletariat must struggle against the enforced retention of oppressed nations within the bounds of the given state, which means that they must fight for the right to self-determination. The proletariat must demand freedom of political separation for the colonies and nations oppressed by "their own" nation. Otherwise, the internationalism of the proletariat would be nothing but empty words; neither confidence nor class solidarity would be possible between the workers of the oppressed and the oppressor nations; the hypocrisy of the reformists and Kautskyites, who defend self-determination but remain silent about the nations oppressed by "their own" nation and kept in "their own" state by force, would remain unexposed.

On the other hand, the socialists of the oppressed nations must, in particular, defend and implement the full and unconditional unity, including organisational unity, of the workers of the oppressed nation and those of the oppressor nation. Without this it is impossible to defend the independent policy of the proletariat and their class solidarity with the proletariat of other countries in face of all manner of intrigues, treachery and trickery on the part of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations persistently utilise the slogans of national liberation to deceive the workers; in their internal policy they use these slogans for reactionary agreements with the bourgeoisie of the dominant nation (for example, the Poles in Austria and Russia who come to terms with reactionaries for the oppression of the Jews and Ukrainians); in their foreign policy they strive to come to terms with one of the rival imperialist powers for the sake of implementing their predatory plans (the policy of the small Balkan states, etc.)

The fact that the struggle for national liberation against one imperialist power may, under certain conditions, be utilised by another "great" power for its own, equally imperialist, aims, is just as unlikely

to make the Social-Democrats refuse to recognise the right of nations to self-determination as the numerous cases of bourgeois utilisation of republican slogans for the purpose of political deception and financial plunder (as in the Romance countries, for example) are unlikely to make the Social-Democrats reject their republicanism.\*

#### 5. Marxism and Proudhonism on the National Question

In contrast to the petty-bourgeois democrats, Marx regarded every democratic demand without exception not as an absolute, but as an historical expression of the struggle of the masses of the people, led by the bourgeoisie, against feudalism. There is not one of these demands which could not serve and has not served, under certain circumstances, as an instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie for deceiving the workers. To single out, in this respect, one of the demands of political democracy, specifically, the self-determination of nations, and to oppose it to the rest, is fundamentally wrong in theory. In practice, the proletariat can retain its independence only by subordinating its struggle for all democratic demands, not excluding the demand for a republic, to its revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, in contrast to the Proudhonists who "denied" the national problem "in the name of social revolution", Marx, mindful in the first place of the interests of the proletarian class struggle in the advanced countries, put the fundamental principle of internationalism and socialism in the foreground—namely, that no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations.<sup>25</sup> It was from the standpoint of the interests of the German workers' revolutionary movement that Marx in 1848 demanded that victorious democracy in Germany should proclaim and grant freedom to the nations oppressed by the Germans. It was from the standpoint of the revolutionary struggle of the English workers that Marx, in 1869, demanded the separation of Ireland from England, and added: "...even if federation should follow upon separation".<sup>26</sup> Only by putting forward this demand was Marx really educating the English workers in the spirit of internationalism. Only in this way could he counterpose the opportunists and bourgeois reformism—which even to this day, half a century later, has not carried out the Irish "reform"—with a revolutionary solution of the given historical task. Only in this way could Marx maintain—in contradiction to the apologists of capital who shout that the freedom of small nations to secede is utopian and impracticable and that not only economic but also political concentration is progressive—that this concentration is progressive when it is *non-imperialist*, and that nations should not be brought together by force, but by a free union of the proletarians of all countries. Only in this way

\* It would, needless to say, be quite ridiculous to reject the right to self-determination on the grounds that it implies "defence of the fatherland". With equal right, i.e., with equal lack of seriousness, the social-chauvinists of 1914-16 refer to any of the demands of democracy (to its republicanism, for example) and to any formulation of the struggle against national oppression in order to justify "defence of the fatherland". Marxism deduces the defence of the fatherland in wars, for example, in the great French Revolution or the wars of Garibaldi, in Europe, and the renunciation of defence of the fatherland in the imperialist war of 1914-16, from an analysis of the concrete historical peculiarities of each individual war and never from any "general principle", or any one point of a programme.

could Marx, in opposition to the merely verbal, and often hypocritical, recognition of the equality and self-determination of nations, advocate the revolutionary action of the masses in the settlement of national questions *as well*. The imperialist war of 1914-16, and the Augean stables<sup>27</sup> of hypocrisy on the part of the opportunists and Kautskyites that it has exposed, have strikingly confirmed the correctness of Marx's policy, which should serve as a model for all advanced countries, for all of them are now oppressing other nations.\*

## 6. Three Types of Countries with Respect to the Self-Determination of Nations

In this respect, countries must be divided into three main types.

First, the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe and the United States. In these countries progressive bourgeois national movements came to an end long ago. Every one of these "great" nations oppresses other nations both in the colonies and at home. The tasks of the proletariat of these ruling nations are the same as those of the proletariat in England in the nineteenth century in relation to Ireland.\*\*

Secondly, Eastern Europe: Austria, the Balkans and particularly Russia. Here it was the twentieth century that particularly developed the bourgeois-democratic national movements and intensified the national struggle. The tasks of the proletariat in these countries, both in completing their bourgeois-democratic reforms, and rendering assistance to the socialist revolution in other countries, cannot be carried out without championing the right of nations to self-determination. The most difficult and most important task in this is to unite the class struggle of the workers of the oppressor nations with that of the workers of the oppressed nations.

Thirdly, the semi-colonial countries, such as China, Persia and

\*Reference is often made—e.g., recently by the German chauvinist Lensch in *Die Glocke*<sup>28</sup> Nos. 8 and 9—to the fact that Marx's objection to the national movement of certain peoples, to that of the Czechs in 1848, for example, refutes the necessity of recognising the self-determination of nations from the Marxist standpoint. But this is incorrect, for in 1848 there were historical and political grounds for drawing a distinction between "reactionary" and revolutionary-democratic nations. Marx was right to condemn the former and defend the latter.<sup>29</sup> The right to self-determination is one of the demands of democracy which must naturally be subordinated to its general interests. In 1848 and the following years these general interests consisted primarily in combating tsarism.

\*\*In some small states which have kept out of the war of 1914-16—Holland and Switzerland, for example—the bourgeoisie makes extensive use of the "self-determination of nations" slogan to justify participation in the imperialist war. This is a motive inducing the Social-Democrats in such countries to repudiate self-determination. Wrong arguments are being used to defend a correct proletarian policy, the repudiation of "defence of the fatherland" in an imperialist war. This results in a distortion of Marxism in theory, and in practice leads to a peculiar small-nation narrow-mindedness, neglect of the *hundreds of millions* of people in nations that are enslaved by the "dominant" nations. Comrade Gorter, in his excellent pamphlet *Imperialism, War and Social-Democracy* wrongly rejects the principle of self-determination of nations, but correctly applies it, when he demands the *immediate* granting of "political and national independence" to the Dutch Indies and exposes the Dutch opportunists who refuse to put forward this demand and to fight for it.

Turkey, and all the colonies, which have a combined population of 1,000 million. In these countries the bourgeois-democratic movements either have hardly begun, or have still a long way to go. Socialists must not only demand the unconditional and immediate liberation of the colonies without compensation—and this demand in its political expression signifies nothing else than the recognition of the right to self-determination; they must also render determined support to the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements for national liberation in these countries and assist their uprising—or revolutionary war, in the event of one—*against* the imperialist powers that oppress them.

## 7. Social-Chauvinism and the Self-Determination of Nations

The imperialist epoch and the war of 1914-16 has laid special emphasis on the struggle against chauvinism and nationalism in the leading countries. There are two main trends on the self-determination of nations among the social-chauvinists, that is, among the opportunists and Kautskyites, who hide the imperialist, reactionary nature of the war by applying to it the "defence of the fatherland" concept.

On the one hand, we see quite undisguised servants of the bourgeoisie who defend annexation on the plea that imperialism and political concentration are progressive, and who deny what they call the utopian, illusory, petty-bourgeois, etc., right to self-determination. This includes Cunow, Parvus and the extreme opportunists in Germany, some of the Fabians<sup>30</sup> and trade union leaders in England, and the opportunists in Russia: Semkovsky, Liebman, Yurkevich, etc.

On the other hand, we see the Kautskyites, among whom are Vandervelde, Renaudel, many pacifists in Britain and France, and others. They favour unity with the former and in practice are completely identified with them; they defend the right to self-determination hypocritically and by words alone: they consider "excessive" ("*zu viel verlangt*": Kautsky in *Die Neue Zeit*, May, 21, 1915) the demand for free political separation, they do not defend the necessity for revolutionary tactics on the part of the socialists of the oppressor nations in particular but, on the contrary, obscure their revolutionary obligations, justify their opportunism, make easy for them their deception of the people, and avoid the very question of the *frontiers* of a state forcefully retaining underprivileged nations within its bounds, etc.

Both are equally opportunist, they prostitute Marxism, having lost all ability to understand the theoretical significance and practical urgency of the tactics which Marx explained with Ireland as an example.

As for annexations, the question has become particularly urgent in connection with the war. But what is annexation? It is quite easy to see that a protest against annexations either boils down to recognition of the self-determination of nations or is based on the pacifist phrase that defends the *status quo* and is hostile to *any*, even revolutionary, violence. Such a phrase is fundamentally false and incompatible with Marxism.

## 8. The Concrete Tasks of the Proletariat in the Immediate Future

The socialist revolution may begin in the very near future. In this case the proletariat will be faced with the immediate task of winning power, expropriating the banks and effecting other dictatorial measures. The bourgeoisie—and especially the intellectuals of the Fabian and



Kautskyite type—will, at such a moment, strive to split and check the revolution by foisting limited, democratic aims on it. Whereas *any* purely democratic demands are in a certain sense liable to act as a hindrance to the revolution, provided the proletarian attack on the pillars of bourgeois power has begun, the necessity to proclaim and grant liberty to *all* oppressed peoples (i.e., their right to self-determination) will be as urgent in the socialist revolution as it was for the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in, say, Germany in 1848, or Russia in 1905.

It is possible, however, that five, ten or more years will elapse before the socialist revolution begins. This will be the time for the revolutionary education of the masses in a spirit that will make it impossible for socialist-chauvinists and opportunists to belong to the working-class party and gain a victory, as was the case in 1914-16. The socialists must explain to the masses that British socialists who do not demand freedom to separate for the colonies and Ireland, German socialists who do not demand freedom to separate for the colonies, the Alsations, Danes and Poles, and who do not extend their revolutionary propaganda and revolutionary mass activity directly to the sphere of struggle against national oppression, or who do not make use of such incidents as that at Zabern for the broadest illegal propaganda among the proletariat of the oppressor nation, for street demonstrations and revolutionary mass action—Russian socialists who do not demand freedom to separate for Finland, Poland, the Ukraine, etc., etc.—that such socialists act as chauvinists and lackeys of bloodstained and filthy imperialist monarchies and the imperialist bourgeoisie.

#### 9. The Attitude of Russian and Polish Social-Democrats and of the Second International to Self-Determination

The differences between the revolutionary Social-Democrats of Russia and the Polish Social-Democrats on the question of self-determination came out into the open as early as 1903, at the Congress which adopted the Programme of the R.S.D.L. Party, and which, despite the protest by the Polish Social-Democrat delegation, inserted Clause 9, recognising the right of nations to self-determination. Since then the Polish Social-Democrats have on no occasion repeated, in the name of their party, the proposal to remove Clause 9 from our Party's Programme, or to replace it by some other formula.

In Russia, where the oppressed nations account for no less than 57 per cent of the population, or over 100 million, where they occupy mostly the border regions, where some of them are more highly cultured than the Great Russians, where the political system is especially barbarous and medieval, where the bourgeois-democratic revolution has not been consummated—there, in Russia, recognition of the right of nations oppressed by tsarism to free secession from Russia is absolutely obligatory for Social-Democrats, for the furtherance of their democratic and socialist aims. Our Party, re-established in January 1912,<sup>31</sup> adopted a resolution in 1913 reaffirming the right to self-determination and explaining it in precisely the above concrete sense. The rampage of Great-Russian chauvinism in 1914-16 both among the bourgeoisie and among the opportunist socialists (Rubanovich, Plekhanov, *Nashe Dyelo*,<sup>32</sup> etc.) has given us even more reason to insist on this demand and to regard those who deny it as actual supporters of Great Russian chauvinism and

tsarism. Our Party declares that it most emphatically declines to accept any responsibility for such actions against the right to self-determination.

The latest formulation of the position of the Polish Social-Democrats on the national question (the declaration of the Polish Social-Democrats at the Zimmerwald Conference<sup>33</sup>) contains the following ideas:

The declaration condemns the German and other governments that regard the "Polish regions" as a pawn in the forthcoming compensation game, "*depriving the Polish people of the opportunity of deciding their own fate themselves*". "Polish Social-Democrats resolutely and solemnly protest against the *carving up and parcelling out of a whole country*". They flay the socialists who left it to the Hohenzollerns "*to liberate the oppressed peoples*". They express the conviction that only participation in the approaching struggle of the international revolutionary proletariat, the struggle for socialism, "*will break the fetters of national oppression and destroy all forms of foreign rule*, will ensure for the Polish people the possibility of free all-round development as an *equal member of a concord of nations*". The declaration recognises that "*for the Poles*" the war is "*doubly fratricidal*". (*Bulletin of the International Socialist Committee* No. 2, September 27, 1915, p. 15. Russian translation in the symposium *The International and the War*, p. 97.)

These propositions do not differ in substance from recognition of the right of nations to self-determination, although their political formulations are even vaguer and more indeterminate than those of most programmes and resolutions of the Second International. Any attempt to express these ideas as precise political formulations and to define their applicability to the capitalist system or only to the socialist system will show even more clearly the mistake the Polish Social-Democrats make in denying the self-determination of nations.

The decision of the London International Socialist Congress of 1896, which recognised the self-determination of nations, should be supplemented on the basis of the above theses by specifying: (1) the particular urgency of this demand under imperialism, (2) the political conventionalism and class content of all the demands of political democracy, the one under discussion included, (3) the necessity to distinguish the concrete tasks of the Social-Democrats of the oppressor nations from those of the Social-Democrats of the oppressed nations, (4) the inconsistent, purely verbal recognition of self-determination by the opportunists and the Kautskyites, which is, therefore, hypocritical in its political significance, (5) the actual identity of the chauvinists and those Social-Democrats, especially those of the Great Powers (Great Russians, Anglo-Americans, Germans, French, Italians, Japanese, etc.), who do not uphold the freedom to secede for colonies and nations oppressed by "their own" nations, (6) the necessity to subordinate the struggle for the demand under discussion and for all the basic demands of political democracy directly to the revolutionary mass struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeois governments and for the achievement of socialism.

The introduction into the International of the viewpoint of certain small nations, especially that of the Polish Social-Democrats, who have been led by their struggle against the Polish bourgeoisie, which deceives the people with its nationalist slogans, to the incorrect denial of self-determination, would be a theoretical mistake, a substitution of Proudhonism for Marxism implying in practice involuntary support for

the most dangerous chauvinism and opportunism of the Great-Power nations.

*Editorial Board of Sotsial-Democrat,  
Central Organ of R.S.D.L.P.*

*Postscript.* In *Die Neue Zeit* for March 3, 1916, which has just appeared, Kautsky openly holds out the hand of Christian reconciliation to Austerlitz, a representative of the foulest German chauvinism, rejecting freedom of separation for the oppressed nations of Hapsburg Austria but recognising it for *Russian* Poland, as a menial service to Hindenburg and Wilhelm II. One could not have wished for a better self-exposure of Kautskyism!

## The Discussion On Self-Determination Summed up

### 1. Socialism and the Self-Determination of Nations

We have affirmed that it would be a betrayal of socialism to refuse to implement the self-determination of nations under socialism. We are told in reply that "the right of self-determination is not applicable to a socialist society". The difference is a radical one. Where does it stem from? . . . .

Our very first thesis said that the liberation of oppressed nations implies a dual transformation in the political sphere: (1) the full equality of nations. This is not disputed and applies only to what takes place within the state; (2) freedom of political separation.\* This refers to the demarcation of state frontiers. This *only* is disputed. But it is precisely this that our opponents remain silent about. They do not want to think either about state frontiers or even about the state as such. This is a sort of "imperialist Economism" like the old Economism of 1894-1902, which argued in this way: capitalism is victorious, *therefore* political questions are a waste of time. Imperialism is victorious, *therefore* political questions are a waste of time! Such an apolitical theory is extremely harmful to Marxism.

In his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx wrote: "Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat."<sup>34</sup> Up to now this truth

\* See p. 31 of this book.—Ed.

has been indisputable for socialists and it includes the recognition of the fact that the *state* will exist until victorious socialism develops into full communism. Engels's dictum about the *withering away* of the state is well known. We deliberately stressed, in the first thesis, that democracy is a form of state that will also wither away when the state withers away. And until our opponents replace Marxism by some sort of "non-state" viewpoint their arguments will constitute one big mistake.

Instead of speaking about the state (which means, about the demarcation of its *frontiers*!), they speak of a "socialist cultural zone", i.e., they deliberately choose an expression that is indefinite in the sense that all state questions are obliterated! Thus we get a ridiculous tautology: if there is no state there can, of course, be no question of frontiers. In that case the *whole* democratic-political programme is unnecessary. Nor will there be any republic, when the state "witheres away".

The German chauvinist Lensch, in the articles we mentioned in Thesis 5 (footnote),\* quoted an interesting passage from Engels's article "The Po and the Rhine". Amongst other things, Engels says in this article that in the course of historical development, which swallowed up a number of small and non-viable nations, the "frontiers of great and viable European nations" were being increasingly determined by the "language and sympathies" of the population. Engels calls these frontiers "natural". Such was the case in the period of progressive capitalism in Europe, roughly from 1848 to 1871. Today, these democratically determined frontiers are more and more often being *broken down* by reactionary, imperialist capitalism. There is every sign that imperialism will leave its successor, socialism, a heritage of *less* democratic frontiers, a number of annexations in Europe and in other parts of the world. Is it to be supposed that victorious socialism, restoring and implementing full democracy all along the line, will refrain from *democratically* demarcating state frontiers and ignore the "sympathies" of the population? These questions need only be stated to make it quite clear that our Polish colleagues are sliding down from Marxism towards imperialist Economism.

The old Economists, who made a caricature of Marxism, told the workers that "only the economic" was of importance to Marxists. The new Economists seem to think either that the democratic state of victorious socialism will exist without frontiers (like a "complex of sensations" without matter) or that frontiers will be delineated "only" in accordance with the needs of production. In actual fact its frontiers will be delineated democratically, i.e., in accordance with the will and "sympathies" of the population. Capitalism rides roughshod over these sympathies, adding more obstacles to the rapprochement of nations. Socialism, by organising production *without* class oppression, by ensuring the well-being of *all* members of the state, gives *full play* to the "sympathies" of the population, thereby promoting and greatly accelerating the drawing together and fusion of the nations. . . .

Otto Bauer says: "The socialist community will never be able to include whole nations within its make-up by the use of force. Imagine the masses of the people, enjoying all the blessings of national culture, taking a full and active part in legislation and government, and, finally, supplied with arms—would it be possible to subordinate such a nation to the rule of an alien social organism by force? All state power rests on the force of

\* See p. 36 of this book.—Ed.

arms. The present-day people's army, thanks to an ingenious mechanism, still constitutes a tool in the hands of a definite person, family or class exactly like the knightly and mercenary armies of the past. The army of the democratic community of a socialist society is nothing but the people armed, since it consists of highly cultured persons, working without compulsion in socialised workshops and taking full part in all spheres of political life. In such conditions any possibility of alien rule disappears."

This is true. It is *impossible* to abolish national (or any other political) oppression under capitalism, since this *requires* the abolition of classes, i.e., the introduction of socialism. But while being based on economics, socialism cannot be reduced to economics alone. A foundation—socialist production—is essential for the abolition of national oppression, but this foundation must *also* carry a democratically organised state, a democratic army, etc. By transforming capitalism into socialism the proletariat creates the *possibility* of abolishing national oppression; the possibility becomes *reality* "only"—"only"!—with the establishment of full democracy in all spheres, including the delineation of state frontiers in accordance with the "sympathies" of the population, including complete freedom to secede. And this, in turn, will serve as a basis for developing the *practical* elimination of even the slightest national friction and the least national mistrust, for an accelerated drawing together and fusion of nations that will be completed when the state *withers away*. This is the Marxist theory, the theory from which our Polish colleagues have mistakenly departed. . . . .

## 2. Marxism or Proudhonism ?

. . . Marx is known to have favoured Polish independence in the interests of *European* democracy in its struggle against the power and influence—or, it might be said, against the omnipotence and predominating reactionary influence—of tsarism. That this attitude was correct was most clearly and practically demonstrated in 1849, when the Russian serf army crushed the national liberation and revolutionary-democratic rebellion in Hungary. From that time until Marx's death, and even later, until 1890, when there was a danger that tsarism, allied with France, would wage a reactionary war against a *non-imperialist* and nationally independent Germany, Engels stood first and foremost for a struggle against tsarism. It was for this reason, and exclusively for this reason, that Marx and Engels were opposed to the national movement of the Czechs and South Slavs. A simple reference to what Marx and Engels wrote in 1848 and 1849 will prove to anyone who is interested in Marxism in real earnest and not merely for the purpose of brushing Marxism aside, that Marx and Engels at that time drew a clear and definite *distinction* between "whole reactionary nations" serving as "Russian outposts" in Europe, and "revolutionary nations", namely, the Germans, Poles and Magyars. This is a fact. And it was indicated *at the time with incontrovertible truth*: in 1848 revolutionary nations fought for liberty, whose principal enemy was tsarism, whereas the Czechs, etc., were in fact reactionary nations and outposts of tsarism.

What is the lesson to be drawn from this concrete example which must be analysed *concretely* if there is any desire to be true to Marxism ? Only this : (1) that the interests of the liberation of a number of big and very big nations in Europe rate higher than the interests of the movement

for liberation of small nations ; (2) that the demand for democracy must not be considered in isolation but on a European—today we should say a world—scale.

That is all there is to it. There is no hint of any repudiation of that elementary socialist principle which the Poles forget but to which Marx was *always* faithful—that no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations.<sup>35</sup> If the concrete situation which confronted Marx when tsarism dominated international politics were to repeat itself, for instance, in the form of a few nations starting a socialist revolution (as a bourgeois-democratic revolution was started in Europe in 1848), and *other* nations serving as the chief bulwarks of bourgeois reaction—then we too would have to be in favour of a revolutionary war against the latter, in favour of "crushing" them, in favour of destroying all their outposts, no matter what small-nation movements arose in them. Consequently, instead of rejecting any examples of Marx's tactics—this would mean professing Marxism while abandoning it in practice—we must analyse them concretely and draw invaluable lessons for the future. The several demands of democracy, including self-determination, are not an absolute, but only a *small part* of the general-democratic (now : general-socialist) *world* movement. In individual concrete cases, the part may contradict the whole ; if so, it must be rejected. It is possible that the republican movement in one country may be merely an instrument of the clerical or financial-monarchist intrigues of other countries ; if so, we must *not* support this particular, concrete movement, but it would be ridiculous to delete the demand for a republic from the programme of international Social-Democracy on these grounds.

In what way has the concrete situation changed between the periods of 1848-71 and 1898-1916 (I take the most important landmarks of imperialism as a period : from the Spanish-American imperialist war to the European imperialist war) ? Tsarism has manifestly and indisputably ceased to be the chief mainstay of reaction, first, because it is supported by international finance capital, particularly French, and, secondly, because of 1905. At that time the system of big national states—the democracies of Europe—was bringing democracy and socialism to the world in spite of tsarism.\* Marx and Engels did not live to see the period of imperialism. The system now is a handful of imperialist "Great" Powers (five or six in number), each oppressing other nations : and this oppression is a source for artificially retarding the collapse of capitalism, and artificially supporting opportunism and social chauvinism in the imperialist nations which dominate the world. At that time, West-European democracy, liberating the big nations, was opposed to tsarism, which used certain small-nation movements for reactionary ends. Today,

\* Ryazanov has published in Grünberg's *Archives of the History of Socialism* (1916, I) a very interesting article by Engels on the Polish question, written in 1866. Engels emphasises that the proletariat must recognise the political independence and "self-determination" ("right to dispose of itself" [These words are in English in the original.—Ed.]) of the great, major nations of Europe, and points to the absurdity of the "principle of nationalities" (particularly in its Bonapartist application), i.e., of placing any small nation on the same level as these big ones. "And as to Russia," says Engels, "she could only be mentioned as the detainer of an immense amount of stolen property [i.e., oppressed nations] which would have to be disgorged on the day of reckoning."<sup>35</sup> Both Bonapartism and tsarism *utilise* the small-nation movements for *their own* benefit, *against* European democracy.

the socialist proletariat, split into chauvinists, "social-imperialists", on the one hand, and revolutionaries, on the other, is confronted by an *alliance* of tsarist imperialism and advanced capitalist, European, imperialism, which is based on their common oppression of a number of nations.

Such are the concrete changes that have taken place in the situation, and it is just these that the Polish Social-Democrats ignore, in spite of their promise to be concrete! Hence the concrete change in the *application* of the same socialist principles: *formerly* the main thing was to fight "against tsarism" (and against certain small-nation movements that it was using for undemocratic ends), and for the greater revolutionary peoples of the West; the main thing *today* is to stand against the united, aligned front of the imperialist powers, the imperialist bourgeoisie and the social-imperialists, and *for* the utilisation of *all* national movements against imperialism for the purposes of the socialist revolution.

The *more purely* proletarian the struggle against the general imperialist front now is, the more vital, obviously, is the internationalist principle: "No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations."

In the name of their doctrinaire concept of social revolution, the Proudhonists ignored the international role of Poland and brushed aside the national movements. Equally doctrinaire is the attitude of the Polish Social-Democrats, who *break up* the international front of struggle against the social-imperialists, and (objectively) help the latter by their vacillations on the question of annexations. For it is precisely the international front of proletarian struggle that has changed in relation to the concrete position of the small nations: at that time (1848-71) the small nations were important as the potential allies either of "Western democracy" and the revolutionary nations, or of tsarism; now (1898-1914) that is no longer so; today they are important as one of the nutritive media of the parasitism and, consequently, the social-imperialism of the "dominant nations". The important thing is not whether one-fiftieth or one-hundredth of the small nations are liberated before the socialist revolution, but the fact that in the epoch of imperialism, owing to objective causes, the proletariat has been split into two international camps, one of which has been corrupted by the crumbs that fall from the table of the dominant-nation bourgeoisie—obtained, among other things, from the double or triple exploitation of small nations—while the other cannot liberate itself without liberating the small nations, without educating the masses in an anti-chauvinist, i.e., anti-annexationist, i.e., "self-determinationist", spirit.

This, the most important aspect of the question, is ignored by our Polish comrades, who do *not* view things from the key position in the epoch of imperialism, the standpoint of the division of the international proletariat into two camps.

Here are some other concrete examples of their Proudhonism: (1) their attitude to the Irish rebellion of 1916, of which later; (2) the declaration in the theses (II, 3, end of § 3) that the slogan of socialist revolution "must not be overshadowed by anything". The idea that the slogan of socialist revolution can be "overshadowed" by *linking* it up with a consistently revolutionary position on all questions, including the national question, is certainly profoundly anti-Marxist.

The Polish Social-Democrats consider our programme "national-reformist". Compare these two practical proposals: (1) for autonomy (Polish theses, III, 4), and (2) for freedom to secede. It is in this, and in this alone, that our programmes differ! And is it not clear that it is

precisely the first programme that is reformist and not the second? A reformist change is one which leaves intact the foundations of the power of the ruling class and is merely a concession leaving its power unimpaired. A revolutionary change undermines the foundations of power. A reformist national programme does *not* abolish *all* the privileges of the ruling nation: it does *not* establish complete equality; it does *not* abolish national oppression in *all its forms*. An "autonomous" nation does not enjoy rights equal to those of the "ruling" nation; our Polish comrades could not have failed to notice this had they not (like our old Economists) obstinately avoided making an analysis of *political* concepts and categories. Until 1905 autonomous Norway, as a part of Sweden, enjoyed the widest autonomy, but she was not Sweden's equal. Only by her free secession was her equality manifested in *practice* and proved (and let us add in parentheses that it was this free secession that created the basis for a more intimate and more democratic association, founded on equality of rights). As long as Norway was merely autonomous, the Swedish aristocracy had *one* additional privilege; and secession did not "mitigate" this privilege (the essence of reformism lies in *mitigating* an evil and not in destroying it), but *eliminated* it *altogether* (the principal criterion of the revolutionary character of a programme).

Incidentally, autonomy, as a reform, differs in principle from freedom to secede, as a revolutionary measure. This is unquestionable. But as everyone knows, in practice a reform is often merely a step towards revolution. It is autonomy that enables a nation forcibly retained within the boundaries of a given state to crystallise into a nation, to gather, assess and organise its forces, and to select the most opportune moment for a *declaration*. . . in the "Norwegian" spirit: We, the autonomous diet of such-and-such a nation, or of such-and-such a territory, declare that The Emperor of all the Russias has ceased to be King of Poland, etc. The usual "objection" to this is that such questions are decided by wars and not by declarations. True: in the vast majority of cases they are decided by wars (just as questions of the form of government of big states are decided, in the vast majority of cases, only by wars and revolutions). However, it would do no harm to reflect whether *such* an "objection" to the political programme of a revolutionary party is logical. Are we opposed to wars and revolutions *for* what is just and beneficial to the proletariat, *for* democracy and socialism?

"But we cannot be in favour of a war between great nations, in favour of the slaughter of twenty million people for the sake of the problematical liberation of a small nation with a population of perhaps ten or twenty millions!" Of course not! And it does not mean that we throw complete national equality out of our Programme; it means that the democratic interests of *one* country must be subordinated to the democratic interests of *several and all* countries. Let us assume that between two great monarchies there is a little monarchy whose kinglet is "bound" by blood and other ties to the monarchs of both neighbouring countries. Let us further assume that the declaration of a republic in the little country and the expulsion of *its* monarch would in practice lead to a war between the two neighbouring big countries for the restoration of that or another monarch in the little country. There is no doubt that all international Social-Democracy, as well as the really internationalist section of Social-Democracy in the little country, *would be against substituting a republic for the monarchy* in this case. The substitution of a republic for a monarchy is not an absolute, but one of the democratic

demands, subordinate to the interests of democracy (and still more, of course, to those of the socialist proletariat) as a whole. A case like this would in all probability not give rise to the slightest disagreement among Social-Democrats in any country. But if any Social-Democrat were to propose on *these* grounds that the demand for a republic be deleted altogether from the programme of international Social-Democracy, he would certainly be regarded as quite mad. He would be told that after all one must not forget the elementary logical difference between the *general* and the *particular*.

This example brings us, from a somewhat different angle, to the question of the *internationalist* education of the working class. Can such education—on the necessity and urgent importance of which differences of opinion among the Zimmerwald Left are inconceivable—be *concretely identical* in great, oppressor nations and in small, oppressed nations, in annexing nations and in annexed nations?

Obviously not. The way to the common goal—complete equality, the closest association and the eventual *amalgamation of all* nations—obviously runs along different routes in each concrete case, as, let us say, the way to a point in the centre of this page runs left from one edge and right, from the opposite edge. If a Social-Democrat from a great, oppressing, annexing nation, while advocating the amalgamation of nations in general, were for one moment to forget that “his” Nicholas II, “his” Wilhelm, George, Poincaré, etc., *also stand for amalgamation* with small nations (by means of annexations)—Nicholas II for “amalgamation” with Galicia, Wilhelm II for “amalgamation” with Belgium, etc.—such a Social-Democrat would be a ridiculous doctrinaire in theory and an abettor of imperialism in practice.

In the internationalist education of the workers of the oppressor countries, emphasis must necessarily be laid on their advocating freedom for the oppressed countries to secede and their fighting for it. Without this there can be *no* internationalism. It is our right and duty to treat every Social-Democrat of an oppressor nation who *fails* to conduct such propaganda as a scoundrel and an imperialist. This is an absolute demand, even where the *chance* of secession being possible and “practicable” before the introduction of socialism is only one in a thousand.

It is our duty to teach the workers to be “indifferent” to national distinctions. There is no doubt about that. But it must not be the indifference of the *annexationists*. A member of an oppressor nation must be “indifferent” to whether small nations belong to *his* state or to a *neighbouring* state, or to themselves, according to where their sympathies lie: without such “indifference” he is *not* a Social-Democrat. To be an internationalist Social-Democrat one must *not* think only of one’s own nation, but place *above it* the interests of all nations, their common liberty and equality. Everyone accepts this in “theory” but displays an annexationist indifference in practice. There is the root of the evil.

On the other hand, a Social-Democrat from a small nation must emphasise in his agitation the *second* word of our general formula: “voluntary *integration*” of nations. He may, without failing in his duties as an internationalist, be in favour of *both* the political independence of his nation and its integration with the neighbouring state of X, Y, Z, etc. But in all cases he must *fight against* small-nation narrow-mindedness, seclusion and isolation, consider the whole and the general, subordinate the particular to the general interest.

People who have not gone into the question thoroughly think that it is “contradictory” for the Social-Democrats of oppressor nations to insist on the “freedom to *secede*”, while Social-Democrats of oppressed nations insist on the “freedom to *integrate*”. However, a little reflection will show that there is not, and cannot be, any *other* road to internationalism and the amalgamation of nations, any other road *from the given* situation to this goal.

And now we come to the *specific* position of Dutch and Polish Social-Democrats.

### 3. The Specific and the General in the Position of the Dutch and Polish Social-Democrat Internationalists

There is not the slightest doubt that the Dutch and Polish Marxists who oppose self-determination are among the best revolutionary and internationalist elements in international Social-Democracy. How *can* it be then that their theoretical arguments as we have seen, are a mass of errors? There is not a single correct general argument, nothing but imperialist Economism!

It is not at all due to the especially bad subjective qualities of the Dutch and Polish comrades but to the *specific* objective conditions in their countries. Both countries are: (1) small and helpless in the present-day “system” of great powers; (2) both are geographically situated between tremendously powerful imperialist plunderers engaged in the most bitter rivalry with each other (Britain and Germany; Germany and Russia); (3) in both there are terribly strong memories and traditions of the times when they *themselves* were great powers: Holland was once a colonial power greater than England, Poland was more cultured and was a stronger great power than Russia and Prussia; (4) to this day both retain their privileges consisting in the oppression of other peoples: the Dutch bourgeois owns the very wealthy Dutch East Indies; the Polish landed proprietor oppresses the Ukrainian and Byelorussian peasant; the Polish bourgeois, the Jew, etc.

The particularity comprised in the combination of these four points is not to be found in Ireland, Portugal (she was at one time annexed to Spain), Alsace, Norway, Finland, the Ukraine, the Lettish and Byelorussian territories or many others. And it is this very peculiarity that is the *real essence* of the matter! When the Dutch and Polish Social-Democrats reason against self-determination, using *general* arguments, i.e., those that concern imperialism in general, socialism in general, democracy in general, national oppression in general, we may truly say that they wallow in mistakes. But one has only to discard this obviously erroneous *shell* of general arguments and examine the *essence* of the question from the standpoint of the *specific* conditions *obtaining* in Holland and Poland for their particular position to become *comprehensible* and quite legitimate. It may be said, without any fear of sounding paradoxical, that when the Dutch and Polish Marxists battle against self-determination they do not say quite what they mean, or, to put it another way, mean quite what they say.\*

\* Let us recall that *all* the Polish Social-Democrats *recognised* self-determination in general in their Zimmerwald declaration, although their formulation was slightly different.<sup>37</sup>

We have already quoted one example in our theses.\* Gorter is against the self-determination of *his own* country but *in favour* of self-determination for the Dutch East Indies, oppressed as they are by "his" nation! Is it any wonder that we see in him a more sincere internationalist and a fellow-thinker who is closer to us than those who recognise self-determination as verbally and hypocritically as Kautsky in Germany, and Trotsky and Martov in Russia? The general and fundamental principles of Marxism undoubtedly imply the duty to struggle for the freedom to secede for nations that are oppressed by "one's own" nation, but they certainly do not require the independence specifically of Holland to be made a matter of paramount importance—Holland, which suffers most from her narrow, callous, selfish and stultifying seclusion: let the whole world burn, we stand aside from it all, "we" are satisfied with our old spoils and the rich "left-overs", the Indies, "we" are not concerned with anything else!

Here is another example. Karl Radek, a Polish Social-Democrat, who has done particularly great service by his determined struggle for internationalism in German Social-Democracy since the outbreak of war, made a furious attack on self-determination in an article entitled "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (*Lichtstrahlen*<sup>38</sup>—a Left Radical monthly prohibited by the Prussian censor, edited by J. Borchardt—1915, December 5, Third Year of Publication, No. 3). He quotes, incidentally, *only* Dutch and Polish authorities in his support and propounds, amongst others, the argument that self-determination fosters the idea that "it is allegedly the duty of Social-Democrats to support any struggle for independence".

From the standpoint of *general* theory this argument is outrageous, because it is clearly illogical: first, no democratic demand can fail to give rise to abuses, unless the specific is subordinated to the general; we are not obliged to support either "any" struggle for independence or "any" republican or anti-clerical movement. Secondly, *no* formula for the struggle against national oppression can fail to suffer from the *same* "shortcoming". Radek himself in *Berner Tagwacht* used the formula (1915, Issue 253): "Against old and new annexations." Any Polish nationalist will legitimately "deduce" from this formula: "Poland is an annexment, I am against annexations, *i.e.*, I am for the independence of Poland." Or I recall Rosa Luxemburg saying in an article written in 1908,<sup>39</sup> that the formula: "against national oppression" was quite adequate. But any Polish nationalist would say—and quite justly—that annexation is *one* of the forms of national oppression, consequently, etc.

However, take Poland's *specific* conditions in place of these general arguments: her independence *today* is "impracticable" without wars or revolutions. To be in favour of an all-European war merely for the sake of restoring Poland is to be a nationalist of the worst sort, and to place the interests of a small number of Poles above those of the hundreds of millions of people who suffer from war. Such, indeed, are the "Fracy" (the Right wing of the P.S.P.) who are socialists only in word, and compared with whom the Polish Social-Democrats are a thousand times right. To raise the question of Poland's independence *today*, with the *existing* alignment of the *neighbouring* imperialist powers, is really to run after a will-o'-the-wisp, plunge into narrow-minded nationalism and forget the necessary premise of an all-European or at least a Russian and

\* See p. 36 of this book.—Ed.

a German revolution. To have put forward in 1908-14 freedom of coalition in Russia as an independent slogan would also have meant running after a will-o'-the-wisp, and would, objectively, have helped the Stolypin labour party (now the Potresov-Gvozdyov party, which, incidentally, is the same thing). But it would be madness to remove freedom of coalition in general from the programme of Social-Democracy!

A third and, perhaps, the most important example. We read in the Polish theses (III, end of § 2) that the idea of an independent Polish buffer state is opposed on the grounds that it is an "inane utopia of small impotent groups. Put into effect, it would mean the creation of a tiny fragment of a Polish state that would be a military colony of one or another group of Great Powers, a plaything of their military or economic interests, an area exploited by foreign capital, and a battlefield in future wars." This is all very *true* when used as an argument *against* the slogan of Polish independence *today*, because even a revolution in Poland alone would change nothing and would only divert the attention of the masses in Poland from *the main thing*—the connection between their struggle and that of the Russian and German proletariat. It is not a paradox but a fact that today the Polish proletariat as such can help the cause of socialism and freedom, *including the freedom of Poland*, only by *joint* struggle with the proletariat of the neighbouring countries, against the *narrow Polish* nationalists. The great historical service rendered by the Polish Social-Democrats in the struggle against the nationalists cannot possibly be denied.

But these same arguments, which are true from the standpoint of Poland's *specific* conditions in the *present* epoch, are manifestly untrue in the *general* form in which they are presented. So long as there are wars, Poland will always remain a battlefield in wars between Germany and Russia, but this is no argument against greater political liberty (and, therefore, against political independence) in the periods between wars. The same applies to the arguments about exploitation by foreign capital and Poland's role as a plaything of foreign interests. The Polish Social-Democrats cannot, at the moment, raise the slogan of Poland's independence, for the Poles, as proletarian internationalists, can do *nothing* about it without stopping, like the "Fracy", to humble servitude to *one* of the imperialist monarchies. But it is *not* indifferent to the Russian and German workers whether Poland is independent, or they take part in annexing her (and that would mean educating the Russian and German workers and peasants in the basest turpitude and their consent to play the part of executioner of other peoples).

The situation is, indeed, bewildering, but there is a way out in which *all* participants would remain internationalists: the Russian and German Social-Democrats by demanding for Poland unconditional "*freedom* to secede"; the Polish Social-Democrats by working for the unity of the proletarian struggle in both small and big countries without putting forward the slogan of Polish independence for the given epoch or the given period.

#### 4. Engels's Letter to Kautsky

... "In my opinion the colonies proper, *i.e.*, the countries occupied by a European population—Canada, the Cape, Australia—will all become independent; on the other hand, the countries inhabited by a native population, which are simply subjugated—India, Algeria, the Dutch,



Portuguese and Spanish possessions—must be taken over for the time being by the proletariat and led as rapidly as possible towards independence. How this process will develop is difficult to say. India will perhaps, indeed very probably, make a revolution, and as a proletariat in process of self-emancipation cannot conduct any colonial wars, it would have to be allowed to run its course; it would not pass off without all sorts of destruction, of course, but that sort of thing is inseparable from all revolutions. The same might also take place elsewhere, e.g., in Algeria and Egypt, and would certainly be the best thing for us. We shall have enough to do at home. Once Europe is reorganised, and North America, that will furnish such colossal power and such an example that the semi-civilised countries will of themselves follow in their wake; economic needs, if anything, will see to that. But as to what social and political phases these countries will then have to pass through before they likewise arrive at socialist organisation, I think we today can advance only rather idle hypotheses. One thing alone is certain: *the victorious proletariat can force no blessings of any kind upon any foreign nation without undermining its own victory by so doing.* Which of course by no means excludes defensive wars of various kinds. . . .”(Letter from Engels, quoted by Kautsky).

Engels does not at all suppose that the “economic” alone will directly remove all difficulties. An economic revolution will be a stimulus to all peoples to *strive* for socialism; but at the same time revolutions—against the socialist state—and wars are possible. Politics will inevitably adapt themselves to the economy, but not immediately or smoothly, not simply, not directly. Engels mentions as “certain” only one, absolutely internationalist, principle, and this he applies to all “foreign nations”, i.e., not to colonial nations only: to force blessings upon them would mean to undermine the victory of the proletariat.

Just because the proletariat has carried out a social revolution it will not become holy and immune from errors and weaknesses. But it will be inevitably led to realise this truth by possible errors (and selfish interest—attempts to saddle others).

We of the Zimmerwald Left all hold the same conviction as Kautsky, for example, held before his desertion of Marxism for the defence of chauvinism in 1914, namely, that the socialist revolution is quite possible in the very near future—“any day”, as Kautsky himself once put it. National antipathies will not disappear so quickly: the hatred—and perfectly legitimate hatred—of an oppressed nation for its oppressor will last for a while; it will evaporate only *after* the victory of socialism and *after* the final establishment of completely democratic relations between nations. If we are to be faithful to socialism we must even now educate the masses in the spirit of internationalism, which is impossible in oppressor nations without advocating freedom of secession for oppressed nations.

## 5. The Irish Rebellion of 1916

Our theses were written before the outbreak of the rebellion, which must be the touchstone of our theoretical views.

The views of the opponents of self-determination lead to the conclusion that the vitality of small nations oppressed by imperialism has already been sapped, that they cannot play any role against imperialism, that support of their purely national aspirations will lead to nothing, etc.

The imperialist war of 1914-16 has provided *facts* which refute such conclusions.

The war proved to be an epoch of crisis for the West-European nations, and for imperialism as a whole. Every crisis discards the conventionalities, tears away the outer wrappings, sweeps away the obsolete and reveals the underlying springs and forces. What has it revealed from the standpoint of the movement of oppressed nations? In the colonies there have been a number of attempts at rebellion, which the oppressor nations naturally did all they could to hide by means of a military censorship. Nevertheless, it is known that in Singapore the British brutally suppressed a mutiny among their Indian troops; that there were attempts at rebellion in French Annam (see *Nashe Slovo*<sup>40</sup>) and in the German Cameroons (see the Junius pamphlet\*); that in Europe, on the one hand, there was a rebellion in Ireland, which the “freedom-loving” English, who did not dare to extend conscription to Ireland, suppressed by executions, and, on the other, the Austrian Government passed the death sentence on the deputies of the Czech Diet “for treason”, and shot whole Czech regiments for the same “crime”.

This list is, of course, far from complete. Nevertheless, it proves that, owing to the crisis of imperialism, the flames of national revolt have flared up *both* in the colonies and in Europe, and that national sympathies and antipathies have manifested themselves in spite of the Draconian threats and measures of repression. All this before the crisis of imperialism hit its peak; the power of the imperialist bourgeoisie was yet to be undermined (this may be brought about by a war of “attrition” but has not yet happened) and the proletarian movements in the imperialist countries were still very feeble. What will happen when the war has caused complete exhaustion, or when, in one state at least, the power of the bourgeoisie has been shaken under the blows of proletarian struggle, as that of tsarism in 1905?

On May 9, 1916, there appeared in *Berner Tagwacht*, the organ of the Zimmerwald group, including some of the Leftists, an article on the Irish rebellion entitled “Their Song Is Over” and signed with the initials K. R. It described the Irish rebellion as being nothing more nor less than a “putsch”, for, as the author argued, “the Irish question was an agrarian one”, the peasants had been pacified by reforms, and the nationalist movement remained only a “purely urban, petty-bourgeois movement, which, notwithstanding the sensation it caused, had not much social backing”.

It is not surprising that this monstrously doctrinaire and pedantic assessment coincided with that of a Russian national-liberal Cadet, Mr. A. Kulisher (*Rech* No. 102, April 15, 1916), who also labelled the rebellion “the Dublin putsch”.

It is to be hoped that, in accordance with the adage, “it’s an ill wind that blows nobody any good”, many comrades, who were not aware of the morass they were sinking into by repudiating “self-determination” and by treating the national movements of small nations with disdain, will have their eyes opened by the “accidental” coincidence of opinion held by a Social-Democrat and a representative of the imperialist bourgeoisie!!

The term “putsch”, in its scientific sense, may be employed only when the attempt at insurrection has revealed nothing but a circle of

\*See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 22, pp. 305-19.—Ed.

conspirators or stupid maniacs, and has aroused no sympathy among the masses. The centuries-old Irish national movement, having passed through various stages and combinations of class interest, manifested itself, in particular, in a mass Irish National Congress in America (*Vorwärts*,<sup>41</sup> March 20, 1916) which called for Irish independence; it also manifested itself in street fighting conducted by a section of the urban petty bourgeoisie and a section of the workers after a long period of mass agitation, demonstrations, suppression of newspapers, etc. Whoever calls such a rebellion a "putsch" is either a hardened reactionary, or a doctrinaire hopelessly incapable of envisaging a social revolution as a living phenomenon.

To imagine that social revolution is *conceivable* without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie *with all its prejudices*, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church, and the monarchy, against national oppression, etc.—to imagine all this is to *repudiate social revolution*. So one army lines up in one place and says, "We are for socialism", and another, somewhere else and says, "We are for imperialism", and that will be a social revolution! Only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic view could vilify the Irish rebellion by calling it a "putsch".

Whoever expects a "pure" social revolution will *never* live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It consisted of a series of battles in which *all* the discontented classes, groups and elements of the population participated. Among these there were masses imbued with the crudest prejudices, with the vaguest and most fantastic aims of struggle; there were small groups which accepted Japanese money, there were speculators and adventurers, etc. But *objectively*, the mass movement was breaking the back of tsarism and paving the way for democracy; for this reason the class-conscious workers led it.

The socialist revolution in Europe *cannot be* anything other than an outburst of mass struggle on the part of all and sundry oppressed and discontented elements. Inevitably, sections of the petty bourgeoisie and of the backward workers will participate in it—without such participation, *mass struggle is impossible*, without it *no* revolution is possible—and just as inevitably will they bring into the movement their prejudices, their reactionary fantasies, their weaknesses and errors. But *objectively* they will attack *capital*, and the class-conscious vanguard of the revolution, the advanced proletariat, expressing this objective truth of a variegated and discordant, motley and outwardly fragmented mass struggle, will be able to unite and direct it, capture power, seize the banks, expropriate the trusts which all hate (though for different reasons!), and introduce other dictatorial measures which in their totality will amount to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the victory of socialism, which, however, will by no means immediately "purge" itself of petty-bourgeois slag.

Social-Democracy, we read in the Polish theses (I, 4), "must utilise the struggle of the young colonial bourgeoisie against European imperialism *in order to sharpen the revolutionary crisis in Europe*". (Authors' italics.)

Is it not clear that it is least of all permissible to contrast Europe to

the colonies in *this* respect? The struggle of the oppressed nations in *Europe*, a struggle capable of going all the way to insurrection and street fighting, capable of breaking down the iron discipline of the army and martial law, will "sharpen the revolutionary crisis in Europe" to an infinitely greater degree than a much more developed rebellion in a remote colony. A blow delivered against the power of the English imperialist bourgeoisie by a rebellion in Ireland is a hundred times more significant politically than a blow of equal force delivered in Asia or in Africa.

The French chauvinist press recently reported the publication in Belgium of the eightieth issue of an illegal journal, *Free Belgium*. Of course, the chauvinist press of France very often lies, but this piece of news seems to be true. Whereas chauvinist and Kautskyite German Social-Democracy has failed to establish a free press for itself during the two years of war, and has meekly borne the yoke of military censorship (only the Left Radical elements, to their credit be it said, have published pamphlets and manifestos, in spite of the censorship)—an oppressed civilised nation has reacted to a military oppression unparalleled in ferocity by establishing an organ of revolutionary protest! The dialectics of history are such that small nations, powerless as an *independent* factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which help the *real* anti-imperialist force, the socialist proletariat, to make its appearance on the scene.

The general staffs in the current war are doing their utmost to utilise any national and revolutionary movement in the enemy camp: the Germans utilise the Irish rebellion, the French—the Czech movement, etc. They are acting quite correctly from their own point of view. A serious war would not be treated seriously if advantage were not taken of the enemy's slightest weakness and if every opportunity that presented itself were not seized upon, the more so since it is impossible to know beforehand at what moment, where, and with what force some powder magazine will "explode". We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletariat's great war of liberation for socialism, we did not know how to utilise *every* popular movement against *every single* disaster imperialism brings in order to intensify and extend the crisis. If we were, on the one hand, to repeat in a thousand keys the declaration that we are "opposed" to all national oppression and, on the other, to describe the heroic revolt of the most mobile and enlightened section of certain classes in an oppressed nation against its oppressors as a "putsch", we should be sinking to the same level of stupidity as the Kautskyites.

It is the misfortune of the Irish that they rose prematurely, before the European revolt of the proletariat had *had time* to mature. Capitalism is not so harmoniously built that the various sources of rebellion can immediately merge of their own accord, without reverses and defeats. On the other hand, the very fact that revolts do break out at different times, in different places, and are of different kinds, guarantees wide scope and depth to the general movement; but it is only in premature, individual, sporadic and therefore unsuccessful revolutionary movements that the masses gain experience, acquire knowledge, gather strength, and get to know their real leaders, the socialist proletarians, and in this way prepare for the general onslaught, just as certain strikes, demonstrations, local and national, mutinies in the army, outbreaks among the peasantry, etc., prepared the way for the general onslaught in 1905.

## 6. Conclusion

Contrary to the erroneous assertions of the Polish Social-Democrats, the demand for the self-determination of nations has played no less a role in our Party agitation than, for example, the arming of the people, the separation of the church from the state, the election of civil servants by the people and other points the philistines have called "utopian". On the contrary, the strengthening of the national movements after 1905 naturally prompted more vigorous agitation by our Party, including a number of articles in 1912-13, and the resolution of our Party in 1913 giving a precise "anti-Kautskian" definition (i.e., one that does not tolerate purely verbal "recognition") of the *content* of the point.\* ...

Outspoken social-imperialists, such as Lensch, still rail both against self-determination and the renunciation of annexations. As for the Kautskyites, they hypocritically recognise self-determination—Trotsky and Martov are going the same way here in Russia. *Both of them*, like Kautsky, say they favour self-determination. What happens in practice? Take Trotsky's articles "That Nation and the Economy" in *Nashe Slovo*, and you will find his usual eclecticism: on the one hand, the economy unites nations and, on the other, national oppression divides them. The conclusion? The conclusion is that the prevailing hypocrisy remains unexposed, agitation is dull and does not touch upon what is most important, basic, significant and closely connected with practice—one's attitude to the nation that is oppressed by "one's own" nation. Martov and other secretaries abroad simply preferred to forget—a profitable lapse of memory!—the struggle of their colleague and fellow-member Semkovsky against self-determination. In the legal press of the Gvozdyovites (*Nash Golos*<sup>42</sup>) Martov spoke in favour of self-determination, pointing out the indisputable truth that during the imperialist war it does not *yet* imply participation, etc., but evading the main thing—he also evades it in the illegal, free press!—which is that *even in peace time* Russia set a world record for the oppression of nations with an imperialism that is much more crude, medieval, economically backward and militarily bureaucratic. The Russian Social-Democrat who "recognises" the self-determination of nations more or less as it is recognised by Messrs. Plekhanov, Potresov and Co., that is, without bothering to fight for the freedom of secession for nations oppressed by tsarism, is *in fact* an imperialist and a lackey of tsarism.

No matter what the subjective "good" intentions of Trotsky and Martov may be, their evasiveness objectively supports Russian social-imperialism. The epoch of imperialism has turned all the "great" powers into the oppressors of a number of nations, and the development of imperialism will inevitably lead to a more definite division of trends in this question in international Social-Democracy as well.

\*See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 19, pp. 427-29.—Ed.

## Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions<sup>43</sup>

FOR THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST  
INTERNATIONAL

In submitting for discussion by the Second Congress of Communist International the following draft theses on the national and the colonial questions I would request all comrades, especially those who possess concrete information on any of these very complex problems, to let me have their opinions, amendments, addenda and concrete remarks *in the most concise form (no more than two or three pages)*, particularly on the following points:

- Austrian experience;
- Polish-Jewish and Ukrainian experience;
- Alsace-Lorraine and Belgium;
- Ireland;
- Danish-German, Italo-French and Italo-Slav relations;
- Balkan experience;
- Eastern peoples;
- The struggle against Pan-Islamism;
- Relations in the Caucasus;
- The Bashkir and Tatar Republics;
- Kirghizia;
- Turkestan, its experience;
- Negroes in America;
- Colonies;
- China-Korea-Japan.

N. Lenin

June 5, 1920

(1) An abstract or formal posing of the problem of equality in general and national equality in particular is in the very nature of bourgeois democracy. Under the guise of the equality of the individual in general, bourgeois democracy proclaims the formal or legal equality of the property-owner and the proletarian, the exploiter and the exploited, thereby grossly deceiving the oppressed classes. On the plea that all men are absolutely equal, the bourgeoisie is transforming the idea of equality, which is itself a reflection of relations in commodity production, into a weapon in its struggle against the abolition of classes. The real meaning of the demand for equality consists in its being a demand for the abolition of classes.

(2) In conformity with its fundamental task of combating bourgeois democracy and exposing its falseness and hypocrisy, the Communist Party, as the avowed champion of the proletarian struggle to overthrow the bourgeois yoke, must base its policy, in the national question too, not on abstract and formal principles but, first, on a precise appraisal of the specific historical situation and, primarily, of economic conditions; second, on a clear distinction between the interests of the oppressed classes, of working and exploited people, and the general concept of national interests as a whole, which implies the interests of the ruling class; third, on an equally clear distinction between the oppressed, dependent and subject nations and the oppressing, exploiting and sovereign nations, in order to counter the bourgeois-democratic lies that play down this colonial and financial enslavement of the vast majority of the world's population by an insignificant minority of the richest and advanced capitalist countries, a feature characteristic of the era of finance capital and imperialism.

(3) The imperialist war of 1914-18 has very clearly revealed to all nations and to the oppressed classes of the whole world the falseness of bourgeois-democratic phrases,\* by practically demonstrating that the Treaty of Versailles of the celebrated "Western democracies" is an even more brutal and foul act of violence against weak nations than was the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk of the German Junkers and the Kaiser. The League of Nations and the entire post-war policy of the Entente reveal this truth with even greater clarity and distinctness. They are everywhere intensifying the revolutionary struggle both of the proletariat in the advanced countries and of the toiling masses in the colonial and dependent countries. They are hastening the collapse of the petty-bourgeois nationalist illusions that nations can live together in peace and equality under capitalism.

(4) From these fundamental premises it follows that the Communist International's entire policy on the national and the colonial questions should rest primarily on a closer union of the proletarians and the working masses of all nations and countries for a joint revolutionary struggle to overthrow the landowners and the bourgeoisie. This union alone will guarantee victory over capitalism, without which the abolition of national oppression and inequality is impossible.

\* Both sides used phrases about national liberation and the right of national self-determination to make good their case, but treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest on one side, and the treaties of Versailles and St. Germain ruthlessly determine 'national' frontiers in accordance with their economic interests. Even 'national' frontiers are objects of barter for the bourgeoisie. The So-called League of Nations is nothing but the insurance contract by which the victors in the war mutually guarantee each other's spoils. For the bourgeoisie, the desire to re-establish national unity, to 're-unite with the ceded parts of the country', is nothing but an attempt of the defeated to assemble forces for new wars. The reunification of nations artificially torn apart is also in accordance with the interests of the proletariat; but the proletariat can attain genuine national freedom and unity only by means of revolutionary struggle and after the downfall of the bourgeoisie. The League of Nations and the entire post-war policy of the imperialist States disclose this truth even more sharply and clearly, everywhere intensifying the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat of the advanced countries and of the labouring classes in the colonies and dependent countries, accelerating the destruction of petty-bourgeois national illusions about the possibility of peaceful co-existence and of the equality of nations under capitalism.

(5) The world political situation has now placed the dictatorship of the proletariat on the order of the day. World political developments are of necessity concentrated on a single focus—the struggle of the world bourgeoisie against the Soviet Russian Republic, around which are inevitably grouped, on the one hand, the Soviet movements of the advanced workers in all countries, and, on the other, all the national liberation movements in the colonies and among the oppressed nationalities, who are learning from bitter experience that their only salvation lies in the Soviet system's victory over world imperialism.

(6) Consequently, one cannot at present confine oneself to a bare recognition or proclamation of the need for closer union between the working people of the various nations; a policy must be pursued that will achieve the closest alliance, with Soviet Russia, of all the national and colonial liberation movements. The form of this alliance should be determined by the degree of development of the communist movement in the proletariat of each country, or of the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement of the workers and peasants in backward countries or among backward nationalities.

(7) Federation is a transitional form to the complete unity of the working people of different nations. The feasibility of federation has already been demonstrated in practice both by the relations between the R.S.F.S.R. and other Soviet Republics (the Hungarian, Finnish<sup>44</sup> and Latvian<sup>45</sup> in the past, and the Azerbaijan and Ukrainian at present), and by the relations within the R.S.F.S.R. in respect of nationalities which formerly enjoyed neither statehood nor autonomy (e.g., the Bashkir and Tatar autonomous republics in the R.S.F.S.R., founded in 1919 and 1920 respectively).

(8) In this respect, it is the task of the Communist International to further develop and also to study and test by experience these new federations, which are arising on the basis of the Soviet system and the Soviet movement. In recognising that federation is a transitional form to complete unity, it is necessary to strive for ever closer federal unity, bearing in mind, first, that the Soviet republics, surrounded as they are by the imperialist powers of the whole world—which from the military standpoint are immeasurably stronger—cannot possibly continue to exist without the closest alliance; second, that a close economic alliance between the Soviet republics is necessary, otherwise the productive forces which have been ruined by imperialism cannot be restored and the well-being of the working people cannot be ensured; third, that there is a tendency towards the creation of a single world economy, regulated by the proletariat of all nations as an integral whole and according to a common plan. This tendency has already revealed itself quite clearly under capitalism and is bound to be further developed and consummated under socialism.

(9) The Communist International's national policy in the sphere of relations within the state cannot be restricted to the bare, formal, purely declaratory and actually noncommittal recognition of the equality of nations to which the bourgeois democrats confine themselves—both those who frankly admit being such, and those who assume the name of socialists (such as the socialists of the Second International).

In all their propaganda and agitation—both within parliament and

outside it—the Communist parties must consistently expose that constant violation of the equality of nations and of the guaranteed rights of national minorities which is to be seen in all capitalist countries, despite their “democratic” constitutions. It is also necessary, first, constantly to explain that only the Soviet system is capable of ensuring genuine equality of nations, by uniting first the proletarians and then the whole mass of the working population in the struggle against the bourgeoisie; and, second, that all Communist parties should render direct aid to the revolutionary movements among the dependent and underprivileged nations (for example, Ireland, the American Negroes, etc.) and in the colonies.

Without the latter condition, which is particularly important, the struggle against the oppression of dependent nations and colonies, as well as recognition of their right to secede, are but a false signboard, as is evidenced by the parties of the Second International.

(10) Recognition of internationalism in word, and its replacement in deed by petty-bourgeois nationalism and pacifism, in all propaganda, agitation and practical work, is very common, not only among the parties of the Second International, but also among those which have withdrawn from it, and often even among parties which now call themselves communist. The urgency of the struggle against this evil, against the most deep-rooted petty-bourgeois national prejudices, looms ever larger with the mounting exigency of the task of converting the dictatorship of the proletariat from a national dictatorship (i.e., existing in a single country and incapable of determining world politics) into an international one (i.e., a dictatorship of the proletariat involving at least several advanced countries, and capable of exercising a decisive influence upon world politics as a whole). Petty-bourgeois nationalism proclaims as internationalism the mere recognition of the equality of nations, and nothing more. Quite apart from the fact that this recognition is purely verbal, petty-bourgeois nationalism preserves national self-interest intact, whereas proletarian internationalism demands, first, that the interests of the proletarian struggle in any one country should be subordinated to the interests of that struggle on a world-wide scale, and, second, that a nation which is achieving victory over the bourgeoisie should be able and willing to make the greatest national sacrifices for the overthrow of international capital.

Thus, in countries that are already fully capitalist and have workers' parties that really act as the vanguard of the proletariat, the struggle against opportunist and petty-bourgeois pacifist distortions of the concept and policy of internationalism is a primary and cardinal task.

(11) With regard to the more backward states and nations, in which feudal or patriarchal and patriarchal-peasant relations predominate, it is particularly important to bear in mind:

first, that all Communist parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in these countries, and that the duty of rendering the most active assistance rests primarily with the workers of the country the backward nation is colonially or financially dependent on;

second, the need for a struggle against the clergy and other influential reactionary and medieval elements in backward countries;

third, the need to combat Pan-Islamism and similar trends, which

strive to combine the liberation movement against European and American imperialism with an attempt to strengthen the positions of the khans, landowners, mullahs, etc. ;\*

fourth, the need, in backward countries, to give special support to the peasant movement against the landowners, against landed proprietorship, and against all manifestations or survivals of feudalism, and to strive to lend the peasant movement the most revolutionary character by establishing the closest possible alliance between the West-European communist proletariat and the revolutionary peasant movement in the East, in the colonies, and in the backward countries generally. It is particularly necessary to exert every effort to apply the basic principles of the Soviet system in countries where pre-capitalist relations predominate—by setting up “working people's Soviets”, etc. ;

fifth, the need for a determined struggle against attempts to give a communist colouring to bourgeois-democratic liberation trends in the backward countries; the Communist International should support bourgeois-democratic national movements in colonial and backward countries only on condition that, in these countries, the elements of future proletarian parties, which will be communist not only in name, are brought together and trained to understand their special tasks, i.e., those of the struggle against the bourgeois-democratic movements within their own nations. The Communist International must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries, but should not merge with it, and should under all circumstances uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even if it is in its most embryonic form ;

sixth, the need constantly to explain and expose among the broadest working masses of all countries, and particularly of the backward countries, the deception systematically practised by the imperialist powers, which, under the guise of politically independent states, set up states that are wholly dependent upon them economically, financially and militarily.\*\* Under present-day international conditions there is no salvation for dependent and weak nations except in a union of Soviet republics.

(12) The age-old oppression of colonial and weak nationalities by the imperialist powers has not only filled the working masses of the oppressed countries with animosity towards the oppressor nations, but has also aroused distrust in these nations in general, even in their proletariat. The despicable betrayal of socialism by the majority of the official leaders of this proletariat in 1914-19, when “defence of country” was used as a social-chauvinist cloak to conceal the defence of the “right” of their “own” bourgeoisie to oppress colonies and fleece financially dependent

\*In the proofs Lenin inserted a brace opposite points 2 and 3 and wrote “2 and 3 to be united”.—Ed.

“It is necessary to struggle against the pan-Islamic and Pan-Asiatic movements and similar tendencies, which are trying to combine the liberation struggle against European and American Imperialism with the strengthening of the power of Turkish and Japanese imperialism and of the nobility, the large landlords, the priests, etc.”

\*\*A glaring example of the deception practised on the working classes of an oppressed nation by the combined efforts of Entente imperialism and the bourgeoisie of that same nation is offered by the Zionists' Palestine venture (and by Zionism as a whole, which under the pretence of creating a Jewish State in Palestine in fact surrenders the Arab working people of Palestine, where the Jewish workers form only a small minority, to exploitation by England).

countries, was certain to enhance this perfectly legitimate distrust. On the other hand, the more backward the country, the stronger is the hold of small-scale agricultural production, patriarchalism and isolation, which inevitably lend particular strength and tenacity to the deepest of petty-bourgeois prejudices, i.e., to national egoism and national narrow-mindedness. These prejudices are bound to die out very slowly, for they can disappear only after imperialism and capitalism have disappeared in the advanced countries, and after the entire foundation of the backward countries' economic life has radically changed. It is therefore the duty of the class-conscious communist proletariat of all countries to regard with particular caution and attention the survivals of national sentiments in the countries and among nationalities which have been oppressed the longest; it is equally necessary to make certain concessions with a view to more rapidly overcoming this distrust and these prejudices. Complete victory over capitalism cannot be won unless the proletariat and, following it, the mass of working people in all countries and nations throughout the world voluntarily strive for alliance and unity.

## Report Of the Commission on the National And the colonial Questions July 26<sup>46</sup>

Comrades, I shall confine myself to a brief introduction, after which Comrade Maring, who has been secretary to our commission, will give you a detailed account of the changes we have made in the theses. He will be followed by Comrade Roy, who has formulated the supplementary theses. Our commission have unanimously adopted both the preliminary theses, as amended, and the supplementary theses. We have thus reached complete unanimity on all major issues. I shall now make a few brief remarks.

First, what is the cardinal idea underlying our theses? It is the distinction between oppressed and oppressor nations. Unlike the Second International and bourgeois democracy, we emphasise this distinction. In this age of imperialism, it is particularly important for the proletariat and the Communist International to establish the concrete economic facts and to proceed from concrete realities, not from abstract postulates, in all colonial and national problems.

The characteristic feature of imperialism consists in the whole world, as we now see, being divided into a large number of oppressed nations and an insignificant number of oppressor nations, the latter possessing colossal wealth and powerful armed forces. The vast majority of the world's population, over a thousand million, perhaps even 1,250 million people, if we take the total population of the world as 1,750 million, in other words, about 70 per cent of the world's population, belong to the oppressed nations, which are either in a state of direct colonial dependence or are semi-colonies, as, for example, Persia, Turkey and China, or else, conquered by some big imperialist power, have become greatly dependent on that power by virtue of peace treaties. This idea of distinction, of dividing the nations into oppressor and oppressed, runs through the theses, not only the first theses published earlier over my signature, but also those submitted by Comrade Roy. The latter were framed chiefly from the standpoint of the situation in India and other big Asian countries oppressed by Britain. Herein lies their great importance to us.

The second basic idea in our theses is that, in the present world situation following the imperialist war, reciprocal relations between peoples and the world political system as a whole are determined by the struggle waged by a small group of imperialist nations against the Soviet movement and the Soviet states headed by Soviet Russia. Unless we bear that in mind, we shall not be able to pose a single national or colonial problem correctly, even if it concerns a most outlying part of the world. The Communist parties, in civilised and backward countries alike, can pose and solve political problems correctly only if they make this postulate their starting-point.

Third, I should like especially to emphasise the question of the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. This is a question that has given rise to certain differences. We have discussed whether it would be right or wrong, in principle and in theory, to state that the Communist International and the Communist parties must support the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. As a result of our discussion, we have arrived at the unanimous decision to speak of the national-revolutionary movement rather than of the "bourgeois-democratic" movement. It is beyond doubt that any national movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement, since the overwhelming mass of the population in the backward countries consist of peasants who represent bourgeois-capitalist relationships. It would be utopian to believe that proletarian parties in these backward countries, if indeed they can emerge in them, can pursue communist tactics and a communist policy, without establishing definite relations with the peasant movement and without giving it effective support. However, the objections have been raised that, if we speak of the bourgeois-democratic movement, we shall be obliterating all distinctions between the reformist and the revolutionary movements. Yet that distinction has been very clearly revealed of late in the backward and colonial countries, since the imperialist bourgeoisie is doing everything in its power to implant a reformist movement among the oppressed nations too. There has been a certain *rapprochement* between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonies, so that very often—perhaps even in most cases—the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries, while it does support the national movement, is in full accord with the imperialist



bourgeoisie, i.e., joins forces with it against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes. This was irrefutably proved in the commission, and we decided that the only correct attitude was to take this distinction into account and, in nearly all cases, substitute the term "national-revolutionary" for the term "bourgeois-democratic". The significance of this change is that we, as Communists, should and will support bourgeois-liberation movements in the colonies only when they are genuinely revolutionary, and when their exponents do not hinder our work of educating and organising in a revolutionary spirit the peasantry and the masses of the exploited. If these conditions do not exist, the Communists in these countries must combat the reformist bourgeoisie, to whom the heroes of the Second International also belong. Reformist parties already exist in the colonial countries, and in some cases their spokesmen call themselves Social-Democrats and socialists. The distinction I have referred to has been made in all the theses with the result, I think, that our view is now formulated much more precisely.

Next, I would like to make a remark on the subject of peasants' Soviets. The Russian Communists' practical activities in the former tsarist colonies, in such backward countries as Turkestan, etc., have confronted us with the question of how to apply the communist tactics and policy in pre-capitalist conditions. The preponderance of pre-capitalist relationships is still the main determining feature in these countries, so that there can be no question of a purely proletarian movement in them. There is practically no industrial proletariat in these countries. Nevertheless, we have assumed, the role of leader even there. Experience has shown us that tremendous difficulties have to be surmounted in these countries. However, the practical results of our work have also shown that despite these difficulties we are in a position to inspire in the masses an urge for independent political thinking and independent political action, even where a proletariat is practically non-existent. This work has been more difficult for us than it will be for comrades in the West-European countries, because in Russia the proletariat is engrossed in the work of state administration. It will readily be understood that peasants living in conditions of semi-feudal dependence can easily assimilate and give effect to the idea of Soviet organisation. It is also clear that the oppressed masses, those who are exploited, not only by merchant capital but also by the feudalists, and by a state based on feudalism, can apply this weapon, this type of organisation, in their conditions too. The idea of Soviet organisation is a simple one, and is applicable, not only to proletarian, but also to peasant feudal and semi-feudal relations. Our experience in this respect is not as yet very considerable. However, the debate in the commission, in which several representatives from colonial countries participated, demonstrated convincingly that the Communist International's theses should point out that peasants' Soviets, Soviets of the exploited, are a weapon which can be employed, not only in capitalist countries but also in countries with pre-capitalist relations, and that it is the absolute duty of Communist parties and of elements prepared to form Communist parties, everywhere to conduct propaganda in favour of peasants' Soviets or of working people's Soviets, this to include backward and colonial countries. Wherever conditions permit, they should at once make attempts to set up Soviets of the working people.

This opens up a very interesting and very important field for our practical work. So far our joint experience in this respect has not been

extensive, but more and more data will gradually accumulate. It is unquestionable that the proletariat of the advanced countries can and should give help to the working masses of the backward countries, and that the backward countries can emerge from their present stage of development when the victorious proletariat of the Soviet Republics extends a helping hand to these masses and is in a position to give them support.

There was quite a lively debate on this question in the commission, not only in connection with the theses I signed, but still more in connection with Comrade Roy's theses, which he will defend here, and certain amendments to which were unanimously adopted.

The question was posed as follows: are we to consider as correct the assertion that the capitalist stage of economic development is inevitable for backward nations now on the road to emancipation and among whom a certain advance towards progress is to be seen since the war? We replied in the negative. If the victorious revolutionary proletariat conducts systematic propaganda among them, and the Soviet governments come to their aid with all the means at their disposal—in that event it will be mistaken to assume that the backward peoples must inevitably go through the capitalist stage of development. Not only should we create independent contingents of fighters and party organisations in the colonies and the backward countries, not only at once launch propaganda for the organisation of peasants' Soviets and strive to adapt them to the pre-capitalist conditions, but the Communist International should advance the proposition, with the appropriate theoretical grounding, that with the aid of the proletariat of the advanced countries, backward countries can go over to the Soviet system and, through certain stages of development, to communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage.

The necessary means for this cannot be indicated in advance. These will be prompted by practical experience. It has, however, been definitely established that the idea of the Soviets is understood by the mass of the working people in even the most remote nations, that the Soviets should be adapted to the conditions of a pre-capitalist social system, and that the Communist parties should immediately begin work in this direction in all parts of the world.

I would also like to emphasise the importance of revolutionary work by the Communist parties, not only in their own, but also in the colonial countries, and particularly among the troops employed by the exploiting nations to keep the colonial peoples in subjection.

Comrade Quelch of the British Socialist Party spoke of this in our commission. He said that the rank-and-file British worker would consider it treasonable to help the enslaved nations in their uprisings against British rule. True, the Jingoist and chauvinist-minded labour aristocrats of Britain and America present a very great danger to socialism, and are a bulwark of the Second International. Here we are confronted with the greatest treachery on the part of leaders and workers belonging to this bourgeois International. The colonial question has been discussed in the Second International as well. The Basle Manifesto<sup>46</sup> is quite clear on this point, too. The parties of the Second International have pledged themselves to revolutionary action, but they have given no sign of genuine revolutionary work or of assistance to the exploited and dependent nations in their revolt against the oppressor nations. This, I think, applies also to most of the parties that have withdrawn from the Second International and wish to join the Third

International. We must proclaim this publicly for all to hear, and it is irrefutable. We shall see if any attempt is made to deny it.

All these considerations have formed the basis of our resolutions, which undoubtedly are too lengthy but will nevertheless, I am sure, prove of use and will promote the development and organisation of genuine revolutionary work in connection with the national and the colonial questions. And that is our principal task.

## Marxism and the National Question<sup>47</sup>

The period of counter-revolution in Russia brought not only "thunder and lightning" in its train, but also disillusionment in the movement and lack of faith in common forces. As long as people believed in "a bright future," they fought side by side irrespective of nationality: common questions first and foremost! But when doubt crept into people's hearts, they began to depart, each to his own national tent. Let every man count only upon himself! The "national question" first and foremost!

At the same time a profound upheaval was taking place in the economic life of the country. The year 1905 had not been in vain: one more blow had been struck at the survivals of serfdom in the countryside. The series of good harvests which succeeded the famine years, and the industrial boom which followed, furthered the progress of capitalism. Class differentiation in the countryside, the growth of the towns, the development of trade and means of communication all took a big stride forward. This applied particularly to the border regions. And it could not but hasten the process of economic consolidation of the nationalities of Russia. They were bound to be stirred into movement.....

The "constitutional regime" established at that time also acted in the same direction of awakening the nationalities. The spread of newspapers and of literature generally, a certain freedom of the press and cultural institutions, an increase in the number of national theatres, and so forth, all unquestionably helped to strengthen "national sentiments". The Duma, with its election campaign and political groups, gave fresh opportunities for greater activity of the nations and provided a new and wide arena for their mobilisation.

And the mounting wave of militant nationalism above and the series of repressive measures taken by the "power that be" in vengeance on the border regions for their "love of freedom," evoked an answering wave of nationalism below, which at times took the form of crude chauvinism. The spread of Zionism<sup>48</sup> among the Jews, the increase of chauvinism in Poland, Pan-Islamism among the Tatars, the spread of nationalism among the Armenians, Georgians and Ukrainians, the general swing of the philistine towards anti-Semitism—all these are generally known facts.

The wave of nationalism swept onwards with increasing force, threatening to engulf the mass of the workers. And the more the movement for emancipation declined, the more plentifully nationalism pushed forth its blossoms.

At this difficult time Social-Democracy had a high mission—to resist nationalism and to protect the masses from the general "epidemic." For Social-Democracy, and Social-Democracy alone, could do this, by countering nationalism with the tried weapon of internationalism, with the unity and indivisibility of the class struggle. And the more powerfully

the wave of nationalism advanced, the louder had to be the call of Social-Democracy for fraternity and unity among the proletarians of all the nationalities of Russia. And in this connection particular firmness was demanded of the Social-Democrats of the border regions, who came into direct contact with the nationalist movement.

But not all Social-Democrats proved equal to the task—and this applies particularly to the Social-Democrats of the border regions. The Bund, which had previously laid stress on the common tasks, now began to give prominence to its own specific, purely nationalist aims: it went to the length of declaring "observance of the Sabbath" and "recognition of Yiddish" a fighting issue in its election campaign.\* The Bund was followed by the Caucasus; one section of the Caucasian Social-Democrats, which, like the rest of the Caucasian Social-Democrats, had formerly rejected "cultural-national autonomy", are now making it an immediate demand.\*\* This is without mentioning the conference of the Liquidators, which in a diplomatic way gave its sanction to nationalist vacillations.\*\*\*

But from this it follows that the views of Russian Social-Democracy on the national question are not yet clear to all Social-Democrats.

It is evident that a serious and comprehensive discussion of the national question is required. Consistent Social-Democrats must work solidly and indefatigably against the fog of nationalism, no matter from what quarter it proceeds.

## THE NATION

What is a nation?

A nation is primarily a community, a definite community of people.

This community is not racial, nor is it tribal. The modern Italian nation was formed from Romans, Teutons, Etruscans, Greeks, Arabs, and so forth. The French nation was formed from Gauls, Romans, Britons, Teutons, and so on. The same must be said of the British, the Germans and others, who were formed into nations from people of diverse races and tribes.

Thus, a nation is not a racial or tribal, but a historically constituted community of people.

On the other hand, it is unquestionable that the great empires of Cyrus and Alexander could not be called nations, although they came to be constituted historically and were formed out of different tribes and races. They were not nations, but casual and loosely-connected conglomerations of groups, which fell apart or joined together according to the victories or defeats of this or that conqueror.

Thus, a nation is not a casual or ephemeral conglomeration, but a stable community of people.

But not every stable community constitutes a nation. Austria and Russia are also stable communities, but nobody calls them nations. What

\* See "Report of the Ninth Conference of the Bund."

\*\* See "Announcement of the August Conference."

\*\*\* *Ibid.*

distinguishes a national community from a state community? The fact, among others, that a national community is inconceivable without a common language, while a state need not have a common language. The Czech nation in Austria and the Polish in Russia would be impossible if each did not have a common language, whereas the integrity of Russia and Austria is not affected by the fact that there are a number of different languages within their borders. We are referring, of course, to the spoken languages of the people and not to the official governmental languages.

Thus, a *common language* is one of the characteristic features of a nation.

This, of course, does not mean that different nations always and everywhere speak different languages, or that all who speak one language necessarily constitute one nation. A *common language* for every nation, but not necessarily different languages for different nations! There is no nation which at one and the same time speaks several languages, but this does not mean that there cannot be two nations speaking the same language! Englishmen and Americans speak one language, but they do not constitute one nation. The same is true of the Norwegians and the Danes, the English and the Irish.

But why, for instance, do the English and the Americans not constitute one nation in spite of their common language?

Firstly, because they do not live together, but inhabit different territories. A nation is formed only as a result of lengthy and systematic intercourse, as a result of people living together generation after generation. But people cannot live together for lengthy periods unless they have a common territory. Englishmen and Americans originally inhabited the same territory, England, and constituted one nation. Later, one section of the English emigrated from England to a new territory, America, and there, in the new territory, in the course of time, came to form the new American nation. Difference of territory led to the formation of different nations.

Thus, a *common territory* is one of the characteristic features of a nation.

But this is not all. Common territory does not by itself create a nation. This requires, in addition, an internal economic bond to weld the various parts of the nation into a single whole. There is no such bond between England and America, and so they constitute two different nations. But the Americans themselves would not deserve to be called a nation were not the different parts of America bound together into an economic whole, as a result of division of labour between them, the development of means of communication, and so forth.

Take the Georgians, for instance. The Georgians before the Reform inhabited a common territory and spoke one language. Nevertheless, they did not, strictly speaking, constitute one nation, for, being split up into a number of disconnected principalities, they could not share a common economic life; for centuries they waged war against each other and pillaged each other, each inciting the Persians and Turks against the other. The ephemeral and casual union of the principalities which some successful king sometimes managed to bring about embraced at best a superficial administrative sphere, and rapidly disintegrated owing to the caprices of the princes and the indifference of the peasants. Nor could it be otherwise in economically disunited Georgia... Georgia came on the scene as a nation only in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the fall of serfdom and the growth of the economic life of the country,

the development of means of communication and the rise of capitalism introduced division of labour between the various districts of Georgia, completely shattered the economic isolation of the principalities and bound them together into a single whole.

The same must be said of the other nations which have passed through the stage of feudalism and have developed capitalism.

Thus, *a common economic life, economic cohesion*, is one of the characteristic features of a nation.

But even this is not all. Apart from the foregoing, one must take into consideration the specific spiritual complexion of the people constituting a nation. Nations differ not only in their conditions of life, but also in spiritual complexion, which manifests itself in peculiarities of national culture. If England, America and Ireland, which speak one language, nevertheless constitute three distinct nations, it is in no small measure due to the peculiar psychological make-up which they developed from generation to generation as a result of dissimilar conditions of existence.

Of course, by itself, psychological make-up or, as it is otherwise called, "national character," is something intangible for the observer, but in so far as it manifests itself in a distinctive culture common to the nation it is something tangible and cannot be ignored.

Needless to say, "national character" is not a thing that is fixed once and for all, but is modified by changes in the conditions of life; but since it exists at every given moment, it leaves its impress on the physiognomy of the nation.

Thus, *a common psychological make-up*, which manifests itself in a common culture, is one of the characteristic features of a nation.

We have now exhausted the characteristic features of a nation.

*A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.*

It goes without saying that a nation, like every historical phenomenon, is subject to the law of change, has its history, its beginning and end.

It must be emphasised that none of the above characteristics taken separately is sufficient to define a nation. More than that, it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be lacking and the nation ceases to be a nation.

It is possible to conceive of people possessing a common "national character" who, nevertheless, cannot be said to constitute a single nation if they are economically disunited, inhabit different territories, speak different languages, and so forth. Such, for instance, are the Russian, Galician, American, Georgian and Caucasian Highland *Jews*, who, in our opinion, do not constitute a single nation.

It is possible to conceive of people with a common territory and economic life who nevertheless would not constitute a single nation because they have no common language and no common "national character". Such, for instance, are the Germans and Letts in the Baltic region.

Finally, the Norwegians and the Danes speak one language, but they do not constitute a single nation owing to the absence of the other characteristics.

*It is only when all these characteristics are present together that we have a nation.*

It might appear that "national character" is not one of the characteristics but the *sole* essential characteristic of a nation, and that all the other characteristics are, properly speaking, only *conditions* for the development of a nation, rather than its characteristics. Such, for instance, is the view held by R. Springer, and more particularly by O. Bauer, who are Social-Democratic theoreticians on the national question well known in Austria.

Let us examine their theory of the nation.

According to Springer, "a nation is a union of similarly thinking and similarly speaking persons". It is "a cultural community of modern people *no longer tied to the 'soil'*"\*. (Our italics).

Thus, a "union" of similarly thinking and similarly speaking people, no matter how disconnected they may be, no matter where they live, is a nation.

Bauer goes even further.

"What is a nation?" he asks. "Is it a common language which makes people a nation? But the English and the Irish.... speak the same language without, however, being one people; the Jews have no common language and yet are a nation."\*\*

What, then, is a nation?

"A nation is a relative community of character."\*\*\*

But what is character, in this case national character?

National character is "the sum total of characteristics which distinguish the people of one nationality from the people of another nationality—the complex of physical and spiritual characteristics which distinguish one nation from another".\*\*\*\*

Bauer knows, of course, that national character does not drop from the skies, and he therefore adds:

"The character of people is determined by nothing so much as by their destiny.... A nation is nothing but a community with a common destiny" which, in turn, is determined "by the conditions under which people produce their means of subsistence and distribute the products of their labour".\*\*\*\*\*

We thus arrive at the most "complete", as Bauer calls it, definition of a nation:

*"A nation is an aggregate of people bound into a community of character by a common destiny".\*\*\*\*\**

We thus have common national character based on a common

\* See R. Springer, *The National Problem*, Obshchestvennaya Polza Publishing House, 1909, p. 43.

\*\* See O. Bauer, *The National Question and Social Democracy*, Serp Publishing House, 1909, pp. 1-2.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 6.

\*\*\*\* Ibid., p. 2.

\*\*\*\*\* Ibid., pp. 24-25.

\*\*\*\*\* Ibid., p. 139.

destiny, but not necessarily connected with a common territory, language or economic life.

But what in that case remains of the nation? What common nationality can there be among people who are economically disconnected, inhabit different territories and from generation to generation speak different languages?

Bauer speaks of the Jews as a nation, although they "have no common language",\* but what "common destiny" and national cohesion is there, for instance, between the Georgian, Daghestanian, Russian and American Jews, who are completely separated from one another, inhabit different territories and speak different languages?

The above-mentioned Jews undoubtedly lead their economic and political life in common with the Georgians, Daghestanians, Russians and Americans respectively, and they live in the same cultural atmosphere as these: this is bound to leave a definite impress on their national character; if there is anything common to them left, it is their religion, their common origin and certain relics of the national character. All this is beyond question. But how can it be seriously maintained that petrified religious rites and fading psychological relics affect the "destiny" of these Jews more powerfully than the living social, economic and cultural environment that surrounds them? And it is only on this assumption that it is possible to speak of the Jews as a single nation at all.

What then, distinguishes Bauer's nation from the mystical and self-sufficient "national spirit" of the spiritualists?

Bauer sets up an impassable barrier between the "distinctive feature" of nations (national character) and the "conditions" of their life, divorcing the one from the other. But what is national character if not a reflection of the conditions of life, a coagulation of impressions derived from environment? How can one limit the matter to national character alone, isolating and divorcing it from the soil that gave rise to it?

Further, what indeed distinguished the English nation from the American nation at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, when America was still known as New England? Not national character, of course; for the Americans had originated from England and had brought with them to America not only the English language, but also the English national character, which, of course, they could not lose so soon; although, under the influence of the new conditions, they would naturally be developing their own specific character. Yet, despite their more or less common character, they at that time already constituted a nation distinct from England! Obviously, New England as a nation differed then from England as a nation not by its specific national character, or not so much by its national character, as by its environment and conditions of life, which were distinct from those of England.

It is therefore clear that there is in fact no *single* distinguishing characteristic of a nation. There is only a sum total of characteristics, of which, when nations are compared, sometimes one characteristic (national character), sometimes another (language), or sometimes a third (territory, economic conditions), stands out in sharper relief. A nation constitutes the combination of all these characteristics taken together.

Bauer's point of view, which identifies a nation with its national character, divorces the nation from its soil and converts it into an

\* Ibid., p. 2.

invisible, self-contained force. The result is not a living and active nation, but something mystical, intangible and supernatural. For, I repeat, what sort of nation, for instance, is a Jewish nation which consists of Georgian, Daghestanian, Russian, American and other Jews, the members of which do not understand each other (since they speak different languages), inhabit different parts of the globe, will never see each other, and will never act together, whether in time of peace or in time of war?!

No, it is not for such paper "nations" that Social-Democracy draws up its national programme. It can reckon only with real nations, which act and move, and therefore insist on being reckoned with.

Bauer is obviously confusing *nation*, which is a historical category, with *tribe*, which is an ethnographical category.

However, Bauer himself apparently feels the weakness of his position. While in the beginning of his book he definitely declares the Jews to be a nation,\* he corrects himself at the end of the book and states that "in general capitalist society makes it impossible for them (the Jews) to continue as a nation,"\*\* by causing them to assimilate with other nations. The reason, it appears, is that "the Jews have no closed territory of settlement,"\*\*\* whereas the Czechs, for instance, have such a territory and, according to Bauer, will survive as a nation. In short, the reason lies in the absence of a territory.

By arguing thus, Bauer wanted to prove that the Jewish workers cannot demand national autonomy,\*\*\*\* but he thereby inadvertently refuted his own theory, which denies that a common territory is one of the characteristics of a nation.

But Bauer goes further. In the beginning of his book he definitely declares that "the Jews have no *common* language, and yet are a nation."\*\*\*\*\* But hardly has he reached p. 130 than he effects a change of front and just as definitely declares that "*unquestionably, no nation is possible without a common language*"\*\*\*\*\* (our italics).

Bauer wanted to prove that "language is the most important instrument of human intercourse",\*\*\*\*\* but at the same time he inadvertently proved something he did not mean to prove, namely, the unsoundness of his own theory of nations, which denies the significance of a common language.

Thus this theory, stitched together by idealistic threads, refutes itself.

## THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

A nation is not merely a historical category but a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism. The

\* See p. 2 of his book.

\*\* Ibid., p. 389.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 388.

\*\*\*\* Ibid., p. 396.

\*\*\*\*\* Ibid., p. 2.

\*\*\*\*\* Ibid., p. 130.

\*\*\*\*\* Ibid.

process of elimination of feudalism and development of capitalism is at the same time a process of the constitution of people into nations. Such, for instance, was the case in Western Europe. The British, French, Germans, Italians and others were formed into nations at the time of the victorious advance of capitalism and its triumph over feudal disunity.

But the formation of nations in those instances at the same time signified their conversion into independent national states. The British, French and other nations are at the same time British, etc., states. Ireland, which did not participate in this process, does not alter the general picture.

Matters proceeded somewhat differently in Eastern Europe. Whereas in the West nations developed into states, in the East multi-national states were formed, states consisting of several nationalities. Such are Austria-Hungary and Russia. In Austria, the Germans proved to be politically the most developed, and they took it upon themselves to unite the Austrian nationalities into a state. In Hungary, the most adapted for state organisation were the Magyars—the core of the Hungarian nationalities—and it was they who united Hungary. In Russia, the uniting of the nationalities was undertaken by the Great Russians, who were headed by a historically formed, powerful and well-organised aristocratic military bureaucracy.

That was how matters proceeded in the East.

This special method of formation of states could take place only where feudalism had not yet been eliminated, where capitalism was feebly developed, where the nationalities which had been forced into the background had not yet been able to consolidate themselves economically into integral nations.

But capitalism also began to develop in the Eastern states. Trade and means of communication were developing. Large towns were springing up. The nations were becoming economically consolidated. Capitalism, erupting into the tranquil life of the nationalities which had been pushed into the background, was arousing them and stirring them into action. The development of the press and the theatre, the activity of the Reichsrat (Austria) and of the Duma (Russia) were helping to strengthen "national sentiments". The intelligentsia that had arisen was being imbued with "the national idea" and was acting in the same direction.....

But the nations which had been pushed into the background and had now awakened to independent life, could no longer form themselves into independent national states; they encountered on their path the very powerful resistance of the ruling strata of the dominant nations, which had long ago assumed the control of the state. They were too late!...

In this way the Czechs, Poles, etc., formed themselves into nations in Austria; the Croats, etc., in Hungary; the Letts, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, etc., in Russia. What had been an exception in Western Europe (Ireland) became the rule in the East.

In the West, Ireland responded to its exceptional position by a national movement. In the East, the awakened nations were bound to respond in the same fashion.

Thus arose the circumstances which impelled the young nations of Eastern Europe on to the path of struggle.

The struggle began and flared up, to be sure, not between nations as a whole, but between the ruling classes of the dominant nations and of

those that had been pushed into the background. The struggle is usually conducted by the urban petty bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation against the big bourgeoisie of the dominant nation (Czechs and Germans), or by the rural bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation against the landlords of the dominant nation (Ukrainians in Poland), or by the whole "national" bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations against the ruling nobility of the dominant nation (Poland, Lithuania and the Ukraine in Russia).

The bourgeoisie plays the leading role.

The chief problem for the young bourgeoisie is the problem of the market. Its aim is to sell its goods and to emerge victorious from competition with the bourgeoisie of a different nationality. Hence its desire to secure its "own", its "home" market. The market is the first school in which the bourgeoisie learns its nationalism.

But matters are usually not confined to the market. The semi-feudal, semi-bourgeois bureaucracy of the dominant nation intervenes in the struggle with its own methods of "arresting and preventing." The bourgeoisie—whether big or small—of the dominant nation is able to deal more "swiftly" and "decisively" with its competitor. "Forces" are united and a series of restrictive measures is put into operation against the "alien" bourgeoisie, measures passing into acts of repression. The struggle spreads from the economic sphere to the political sphere. Restriction of freedom of movement, repression of language, restriction of franchise, closing of schools, religious restrictions, and so on, are piled upon the head of the "competitor". Of course, such measures are designed not only in the interest of the bourgeois classes of the dominant nation, but also in furtherance of the specifically caste aims, so to speak, of the ruling bureaucracy. But from the point of view of the results achieved this is quite immaterial; the bourgeois classes and the bureaucracy in this matter go hand in hand—whether it be in Austria-Hungary or in Russia.

The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation, repressed on every hand, is naturally stirred into movement. It appeals to its "native folk" and begins to shout about the "fatherland", claiming that its own cause is the cause of the nation as a whole. It recruits itself an army from among its "countrymen" in the interests of... the "fatherland". Nor do the "folk" always remain unresponsive to its appeals; they rally around its banner: the repression from above affects them too and provokes their discontent.

Thus the national movement begins.

The strength of the national movement is determined by the degree to which the wide strata of the nation, the proletariat and peasantry, participate in it.

Whether the proletariat rallies to the banner of bourgeois nationalism depends on the degree of development of class antagonisms, on the class consciousness and degree of organisation of the proletariat. The class-conscious proletariat has its own tried banner, and has no need to rally to the banner of the bourgeoisie.

As far as the peasants are concerned, their participation in the national movement depends primarily on the character of the repressions. If the repressions affect the "land", as was the case in Ireland, then the mass of the peasants immediately rally to the banner of the national movement.

On the other hand, if, for example, there is no serious *anti-Russian* nationalism in Georgia, it is primarily because there are neither Russian



landlords nor a Russian big bourgeoisie there to supply the fuel for such nationalism among the masses. In Georgia there is *anti-Armenian* nationalism; but this is because there is still an Armenian big bourgeoisie there which, by getting the better of the small and still unconsolidated Georgian bourgeoisie, drives the latter to anti-Armenian nationalism.

Depending on these factors, the national movement either assumes a mass character and steadily grows (as in Ireland and Galicia), or is converted into a series of petty collisions, degenerating into squabbles and "fights" over signboards (as in some of the small towns of Bohemia).

The content of the national movement, of course, cannot everywhere be the same: it is wholly determined by the diverse demands made by the movement. In Ireland the movement bears an agrarian character; in Bohemia it bears a "language" character; in one place the demand is for civil equality and religious freedom, in another for the nation's "own" officials, or its own Diet. The diversity of demands not infrequently reveals the diverse features which characterise a nation in general (language, territory, etc.). It is worthy of note that we never meet with a demand based on Bauer's all-embracing "national character". And this is natural: "national character" *in itself* is something intangible, and, as was correctly remarked by J. Strasser, "a politician can't do anything with it".\*

Such, in general, are the forms and character of the national movement.

From what has been said it will be clear that the national struggle under the conditions of *rising* capitalism is a struggle of the bourgeois classes among themselves. Sometimes the bourgeoisie succeeds in drawing the proletariat into the national movement, and then the national struggle *externally* assumes a "nation-wide" character. But this is so only externally. *In its essence* it is always a bourgeois struggle, one that is to the advantage and profit mainly of the bourgeoisie.

But it does not by any means follow that the proletariat should not put up a fight against the policy of national oppression.

Restriction of freedom of movement, disfranchisement, repression of language, closing of schools, and other forms of persecution affect the workers no less, if not more, than the bourgeoisie. Such a state of affairs can only serve to retard the free development of the intellectual forces of the proletariat of subject nations. One cannot speak seriously of a full development of the intellectual faculties of the Tatar or Jewish worker if he is not allowed to use his native language at meetings and lectures, and if his schools are closed down.

But the policy of nationalist persecution is dangerous to the cause of the proletariat also on another account. It diverts the attention of large strata from social questions, questions of the class struggle, to national questions, questions "common" to the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. And this creates a favourable soil for lying propaganda about "harmony of interests", for glossing over the class interests of the proletariat and for the intellectual enslavement of the workers. This creates a serious obstacle to the cause of uniting the workers of all nationalities. If a considerable proportion of the Polish workers are still in intellectual bondage to the bourgeois nationalists, if they still stand aloof from the international labour movement, it is chiefly because the age-old anti-Polish policy

\* See his *Der Arbeiter und die Nation*, 1912, p. 33.

of the "powers that be" creates the soil for this bondage and hinders the emancipation of the workers from it.

But the policy of persecution does not stop there. It not infrequently passes from a "system" of *oppression* to a "system" of *inciting* nations against each other, to a "system" of massacres and pogroms. Of course, the latter system is not everywhere and always possible, but where it is possible—in the absence of elementary civil rights—it frequently assumes horrifying proportions and threatens to drown the cause of unity of the workers in blood and tears. The Caucasus and south Russia furnish numerous examples. "Divide and rule"—such is the purpose of the policy of incitement. And where such a policy succeeds, it is a tremendous evil for the proletariat and a serious obstacle to the cause of uniting the workers of all the nationalities in the state.

But the workers are interested in the complete amalgamation of all their fellow-workers into a single international army, in their speedy and final emancipation from intellectual bondage to the bourgeoisie, and in the full and free development of the intellectual forces of their brothers, whatever nation they may belong to.

The workers therefore combat and will continue to combat the policy of national oppression in all its forms, from the most subtle to the most crude, as well as the policy of inciting nations against each other in all its forms.

Social-Democracy in all countries therefore proclaims the right of nations to self-determination.

The right of self-determination means that only the nation itself has the right to determine its destiny, that no one has the right *forcibly* to interfere in the life of the nation, to *destroy* its schools and other institutions, to *violate* its habits and customs, to *repress* its language, or *curtail* its rights.

This, of course, does not mean that Social-Democracy will support every custom and institution of a nation. While combating the coercion of any nation, it will uphold only the right of the *nation* itself to determine its own destiny, at the same time agitating against harmful customs and institutions of that nation in order to enable the toiling strata of the nation to emancipate themselves from them.

The right of self-determination means that a nation may arrange its life in the way it wishes. It has the right to arrange its life on the basis of autonomy. It has the right to enter into federal relations with other nations. It has the right to complete secession. Nations are sovereign, and all nations have equal rights.

This, of course, does not mean that Social-Democracy will support every demand of a nation. A nation has the right even to return to the old order of things; but this does not mean that Social-Democracy will subscribe to such a decision if taken by some institution of a particular nation. The obligations of Social-Democracy, which defends the interests of the proletariat, and the rights of a nation, which consists of various classes, are two different things.

In fighting for the right of nations to self-determination, the aim of Social-Democracy is to put an end to the policy of national oppression, to render it impossible, and thereby to remove the grounds of strife between nations, to take the edge off that strife and reduce it to a minimum.

This is what essentially distinguishes the policy of the class-conscious proletariat from the policy of the bourgeoisie, which attempts

to aggravate and fan the national struggle and to prolong and sharpen the national movement.

And that is why the class-conscious proletariat cannot rally under the "national" flag of the bourgeoisie.

That is why the so-called "evolutionary national" policy advocated by Bauer cannot become the policy of the proletariat. Bauer's attempt to identify his "evolutionary national" policy with the policy of the "modern working class"\* is an attempt to adapt the class struggle of the workers to the struggle of the nations.

The fate of a national movement, which is essentially a bourgeois movement, is naturally bound up with the fate of the bourgeoisie. The final disappearance of a national movement is possible only with the downfall of the bourgeoisie. Only under the reign of socialism can peace be fully established. But even within the framework of capitalism it is possible to reduce the national struggle to a minimum, to undermine it at the root, to render it as harmless as possible to the proletariat. This is borne out, for example, by Switzerland and America. It requires that the country should be democratised and the nations be given the opportunity of free development.

## PRESENTATION OF THE QUESTION

A nation has the right freely to determine its own destiny. It has the right to arrange its life as it sees fit, without, of course, trampling on the rights of other nations. That is beyond dispute.

But *how* exactly should it arrange its own life, *what forms* should its future constitution take, if the interests of the majority of the nation and, above all, of the proletariat are to be borne in mind?

A nation has the right to arrange its life on autonomous lines. It even has the right to secede. But this does not mean that it should do so under all circumstances, that autonomy, or separation, will everywhere and always be advantageous for a nation, i.e., for its majority, i.e., for the toiling strata. The Transcaucasian Tatars as a nation may assemble, let us say, in their Diet and, succumbing to the influence of their beys and mullahs, decide to restore the old order of things and to secede from the state. According to the meaning of the clause on self-determination they are fully entitled to do so. But will this be in the interest of the toiling strata of the Tatar nation? Can Social-Democracy look on indifferently when the beys and mullahs assume the leadership of the masses in the solution of the national question? Should not Social-Democracy interfere in the matter and influence the will of the nation in a definite way? Should it not come forward with a definite plan for the solution of the question, a plan which would be most advantageous for the Tatar masses?

But what solution would be most compatible with the interests of the toiling masses? Autonomy, federation or separation?

All these are problems the solution of which will depend on the concrete historical conditions in which the given nation finds itself.

\* See Bauer's book, p. 166.

More than that; conditions, like everything else, change, and a decision which is correct at one particular time may prove to be entirely unsuitable at another.

In the middle of the nineteenth century Marx was in favour of the secession of Russian Poland; and he was right, for it was then a question of emancipating a higher culture from a lower culture that was destroying it. And the question at that time was not only a theoretical one, an academic question, but a practical one, a question of actual reality....

At the end of the nineteenth century the Polish Marxists were already declaring against the secession of Poland; and they too were right, for during the fifty years that had elapsed profound changes had taken place, bringing Russia and Poland closer economically and culturally. Moreover, during that period the question of secession had been converted from a practical matter into a matter of academic dispute, which excited nobody except perhaps intellectuals abroad.

This, of course, by no means precludes the possibility that certain internal and external conditions may arise in which the question of the secession of Poland may again come on the order of the day.

The solution of the national question is possible only in connection with the historical conditions taken in their development.

The economic, political and cultural conditions of a given nation constitute the only key to the question *how* a particular nation ought to arrange its life and *what forms* its future constitution ought to take. It is possible that a specific solution of the question will be required for each nation. If the dialectical approach to a question is required anywhere it is required here, in the national question.

In view of this we must declare our decided opposition to a certain very widespread, but very summary manner of "solving" the national question, which owes its inception to the Bund. We have in mind the easy method of referring to Austrian and South-Slav\* Social-Democracy, which has supposedly already solved the national question and whose solution the Russian Social-Democrats should simply borrow. It is assumed that whatever, say, is right for Austria is also right for Russia. The most important and decisive factor is lost sight of here, namely, the concrete historical conditions in Russia as a whole and in the life of each of the nations inhabiting Russia in particular.

Listen, for example, to what the well-known Bundist, V. Kossovsky, says:

"When at the Fourth Congress of the Bund the principles of the question (i.e., the national question-J. St.) were discussed, the proposal made by one of the members of the congress to settle the question in the spirit of the resolution of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party met with general approval".\*\*

And the result was that "the congress unanimously adopted"... national autonomy.

And that was all! No analysis of the actual conditions in Russia, no investigation of the condition of the Jews in Russia. They first borrowed the solution of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party, then they "approved" it, and finally they "unanimously adopted" it! This is the way the Bundists present and "solve" the national question in Russia....

\* South-Slav Social-Democracy operates in the Southern part of Austria.

\*\* See V. Kossovsky, *Problems of Nationality*, 1907, pp. 16-17.

As a matter of fact, Austria and Russia represent entirely different conditions. This explains why the Social-Democrats in Austria, when they adopted their national programme at Brünn (1899)<sup>49</sup> in the spirit of the resolution of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party (with certain insignificant amendments, it is true), approached the question in an entirely non-Russian way, so to speak, and, of course, solved it in a non-Russian way.

First, as to the presentation of the question. How is the question presented by the Austrian theoreticians of cultural-national autonomy, the interpreters of the Brünn national programme and the resolution of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party, Springer and Bauer?

"Whether a multi-national state is possible", says Springer, "and whether, in particular, the Austrian nationalities are obliged to form a single political entity, is a question we shall not answer here but shall assume to be settled. For anyone who will not concede this possibility and necessity, our investigation will, of course, be purposeless. Our theme is as follows: inasmuch as these nations are *obliged* to live together, what *legal forms* will enable them to *live together in the best possible way*?" (Springer's italics).\*

Thus, the starting point is the state integrity of Austria. Bauer says the same thing.

"We therefore start from the assumption that the Austrian nations will remain in the same state union in which they exist at present and inquire how the nations within this union will arrange their relations among themselves and to the state".\*\*

Here again the first thing is the integrity of Austria.

Can Russian Social-Democracy present the question *in this way*? No, it cannot. And it cannot because from the very outset it holds the view of the right of nations to self-determination, by virtue of which a nation has the right of secession.

Even the Bundist Goldblatt admitted at the Second Congress of Russian Social-Democracy that the latter could not abandon the standpoint of self-determination. Here is what Goldblatt said on that occasion:

"Nothing can be said against the right of self-determination. If any nation is striving for independence, we must not oppose it. If Poland does not wish to enter into 'lawful wedlock' with Russia, it is not for us to interfere with her".

All this is true. But it follows that the starting points of the Austrian and Russian Social-Democrats, far from being identical, are diametrically opposite. After this, can there be any question of borrowing the national programme of the Austrians?

Furthermore, the Austrians hope to achieve the "freedom of nationalities" by means of petty reforms, by slow steps. While they propose cultural-national autonomy as a practical measure, they do not count on any radical change, on a democratic movement for liberation, which they do not even contemplate. The Russian Marxists, on the other hand, associate the "freedom of nationalities" with a probable radical change, with a democratic movement for liberation, having no grounds for counting on reforms. And this essentially alters matters in regard to the probable fate of the nations of Russia.

\* See Springer, *The National Problem*, p. 14.

\*\* See Bauer, *The National Question and Social-Democracy*, p. 399.

"Of course", says Bauer, "there is little probability that national autonomy will be the result of a great decision, of a bold action. Austria will develop towards national autonomy step by step, by a slow process of development, in the course of a severe struggle, as a consequence of which legislation and administration will be in a state of chronic paralysis. The new constitution will not be created by a great legislative act, but by a multitude of separate enactments for individual provinces and individual 'communities'".\*

Springer says the same thing.

"I am very well aware", he writes, "that institutions of this kind (i.e., organs of national autonomy—*J. St.*) are not created in a single year or a single decade. The reorganisation of the Prussian administration alone took considerable time... It took the Prussians two decades finally to establish their basic administrative institutions. Let nobody think that I harbour any illusions as to the time required and the difficulties to be overcome in Austria."\*\*

All this is very definite. But can the Russian Marxists avoid associating the national question with "bold action"? Can they count on partial reforms, on "a multitude of separate enactments" as a means for achieving the "freedom of nationalities"? But if they cannot and must not do so, is it not clear that the methods of struggle of the Austrians and the Russians and their prospects must be entirely different? How in such a state of affairs can they confine themselves to the one-sided, milk-and-water cultural-national autonomy of the Austrians? One or the other: either those who are in favour of borrowing do not count on "bold actions" in Russia or they do count on such actions but "know not what they do."

Finally, the immediate tasks facing Russia and Austria are entirely different and consequently dictate different methods of solving the national question. In Austria parliamentarism prevails, and under present conditions no development in Austria is possible without parliament. But parliamentary life and legislation in Austria are frequently brought to a complete standstill by severe conflicts between the national parties. That explains the chronic political crisis from which Austria has for a long time been suffering. Hence, in Austria the national question is the very hub of political life; it is the vital question. It is therefore not surprising that the Austrian Social-Democratic politicians should first of all try in one way or another to find a solution for the national conflicts—of course on the basis of the existing parliamentary system, by parliamentary methods....

Not so with Russia. In the first place in Russia "there is no parliament, thank God".<sup>50</sup> In the second place—and this is the main point—the hub of the political life of Russia is not the national but the agrarian question. Consequently, the fate of the Russian problem, and, accordingly, the "liberation" of the nations too, is bound up in Russia with the solution of the agrarian question, i.e., with the destruction of the relics of feudalism i.e., with the democratisation of the country. That explains why in Russia the national question is not an independent and decisive one, but a part of the general and more important question of the emancipation of the country.

"The barrenness of the Austrian parliament", writes Springer, "is precisely to the fact that every reform gives rise to antagonisms within the national parties which

\* See Bauer, *The National Question*, p. 422.

\*\* See Springer, *The National Problem*, pp. 281-82.

may affect their unity. The leaders of the parties, therefore, avoid everything that smacks of reform. Progress in Austria is generally conceivable only if the nations are granted indefeasible legal rights which will relieve them of the necessity of constantly maintaining national militant groups in parliament and will enable them to turn their attention to the solution of economic and social problems".\*

Bauer says the same thing.

"National peace is indispensable first of all for the state. The state cannot permit legislation to be brought to a standstill by the very stupid question of language or by every quarrel between excited people on a linguistic frontier, or over every new school.\*\*

All this is clear. But it is no less clear that the national question in Russia is on an entirely different plane. It is not the national, but the agrarian question that decides the fate of progress in Russia. The national question is a subordinate one.

And so we have different presentations of the question, different prospects and methods of struggle, different immediate tasks. Is it not clear that, such being the state of affairs, only pedants who "solve" the national question without reference to space and time can think of adopting examples from Austria and of borrowing a programme?

To repeat: the concrete historical conditions as the starting point, and the dialectical presentation of the question as the only correct way of presenting it—such is the key to solving the national question.

### CULTURAL-NATIONAL AUTONOMY

We spoke above of the formal aspect of the Austrian national programme and of the methodological grounds which make it impossible for the Russian Marxists simply to adopt the example of Austrian Social-Democracy and make the latter's programme their own.

Let us now examine the essence of the programme itself.

What then is the national programme of the Austrian Social-Democrats?

It is expressed in two words: cultural-national autonomy.

This means, firstly, that autonomy would be granted, let us say, not to Bohemia or Poland, which are inhabited mainly by Czechs and Poles, but to Czechs and Poles generally, irrespective of territory, no matter what part of Austria they inhabit.

That is why this autonomy is called *national* and not territorial.

It means, secondly, that the Czechs, Poles, Germans, and so on, scattered over the various parts of Austria, taken personally, as individuals, are to be organised into integral nations, and are as such to form part of the Austrian state. In this way Austria would represent not a union of autonomous regions, but a union of autonomous nationalities, constituted irrespective of territory.

\* See Springer, *The National Problem*, p. 36.

\*\* See Bauer, *The National Question*, p. 401.

It means, thirdly, that the national institutions which are to be created for this purpose for the Poles, Czechs, and so forth, are to have jurisdiction only over "cultural," not "political" questions. Specifically political questions would be reserved for the Austrian parliament (the Reichsrat).

That is why this autonomy is also called *cultural*, cultural-national autonomy.

And here is the text of the programme adopted by the Austrian Social-Democratic Party at the Brünn Congress in 1899.\*

Having referred to the fact that "national dissension in Austria is hindering political progress," that "the final solution of the national question . . . is primarily a cultural necessity," and that "the solution is possible only in a genuinely democratic society, constructed on the basis of universal, direct and equal suffrage," the programme goes on to say:

"The preservation and development of the national peculiarities\*\* of the peoples of Austria is possible only on the basis of equal rights and by avoiding all oppression. Hence, all bureaucratic state centralism and the feudal privileges of individual provinces must first of all be rejected.

"Under these conditions, and only under these conditions, will it be possible to establish national order in Austria in place of national dissension, namely, on the following principles:

"1. Austria must be transformed into a democratic state federation of nationalities.

"2. The historical crown provinces must be replaced by nationally delimited self-governing corporations, in each of which legislation and administration shall be entrusted to national parliaments elected on the basis of universal, direct and equal suffrage.

"3. All the self-governing regions of one and the same nation must jointly form a single national union, which shall manage its national affairs on an absolutely autonomous basis.

"4. The rights of national minorities must be guaranteed by a special law passed by the Imperial Parliament."

The programme ends with an appeal for the solidarity of all the nations of Austria,\*\*\*

It is not difficult to see that this programme retains certain traces of "territorialism", but that in general it gives a formulation of national autonomy. It is not without good reason that Springer, the first agitator on behalf of cultural-national autonomy, greets it with enthusiasm;\*\*\*\* Bauer also supports this programme, calling it a "theoretical victory"\*\*\*\*\* for national autonomy; only, in the interests of greater clarity, he proposes that Point 4 be replaced by a more definite formulation, which would declare the necessity of "constituting the national

\* The representatives of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party also voted for it. See *Discussion of the National Question at the Brünn Congress*, 1906, p. 72.

\*\* In M. Panin's Russian translation (see his translation of Bauer's book), "national individualities" is given in place of "national peculiarities". Panin translated this passage incorrectly. The word "individuality" is not in the German text, which speaks of *nationalen Eigenart*, i.e., *peculiarities*, which is far from being the same things.

\*\*\* *Verhandlungen des Gesamtparteitages in Brünn*, 1899.

\*\*\*\* See Springer, *The National Problem*, p. 286.

\*\*\*\*\* See *The National Question*, p. 549.

minority within each self-governing region into a public corporation" for the management of educational and other cultural affairs.†

Such is the national programme of Austrian Social-Democracy.

Let us examine its scientific foundations.

Let us see how the Austrian Social-Democratic Party justifies the cultural-national autonomy it advocates.

Let us turn to the theoreticians of cultural-national autonomy, Springer and Bauer.

The starting point of national autonomy is the conception of a nation as a union of individuals without regard to a definite territory.

"Nationality" according to Springer, "is not essentially connected with territory"; nations are "autonomous unions of persons".\*

Bauer also speaks of a nation as a "community of persons" which does not enjoy "exclusive sovereignty in any particular region".\*\*

But the persons constituting a nation do not always live in one compact mass; they are frequently divided into groups, and in that form are interspersed among alien national organisms. It is capitalism which drives them into various regions and cities in search of a livelihood. But when they enter foreign national territories and there form minorities, these groups are made to suffer by the local national majorities in the way of restrictions on their language, schools, etc. Hence national conflicts. Hence the "unsuitability" of territorial autonomy. The only solution to such a situation, according to Springer and Bauer, is to organise the minorities of the given nationality dispersed over various parts of the state into a single, general, inter-class national union. Such a union alone, in their opinion, can protect the cultural interests of national minorities, and it alone is capable of putting an end to national discord.

"Hence the necessity", says Springer, "to organise the nationalities, to invest them with rights and responsibilities".\*\*\* Of course, "a law is easily drafted, but will it be effective?"... "If one wants to make a law for nations, one must first create the nations."\*\*\*\* "Unless the nationalities are constituted it is impossible to create national rights and eliminate national dissension".\*\*\*\*\*

Bauer expressed himself in the same spirit when he proposed, as "a demand of the working class," that "the minorities should be constituted into public corporations based on the personal principle."\*\*\*\*\*

But how is a nation to be organised? How is one to determine to what nation any given individual belongs?

"Nationality", says Springer, "will be determined by certificates; every individual domiciled in a given region must declare his affiliation to one of the nationalities of that region".\*\*\*\*\*

"The personal principle," says Bauer, "presumes that the population will be divided into nationalities... On the basis of the free declaration of the adult citizens national registers must be drawn up."\*\*\*\*\*

† *Ibid.*, p. 555.

\* See Springer, *National Problem*, p. 19.

\*\* See *The National Question*, p. 286.

\*\*\* *The National Problem*, p. 74.

\*\*\*\* *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

\*\*\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 89.

\*\*\*\*\* See *The National Question*, p. 552.

\*\*\*\*\* See *The National Problem*, p. 226.

\*\*\*\*\* See *The National Question*, p. 368.

Further.

"All the Germans in nationally homogenous districts", says Bauer, "and all the Germans entered in the national registers in the dual districts will constitute the German nation and elect a *National Council*."\*

The same applies to the Czechs, Poles, and so on.

"The *National Council*", according to Springer, "is the cultural parliament of the nation, empowered to establish the principles and to grant funds, thereby assuming guardianship over national education, national literature, art and science, the formation of academies, museums, galleries, theatres," etc.\*\*

Such will be the organisation of a nation and its central institution.

According to Bauer, the Austrian Social-Democratic Party is striving, by the creation of these inter-class institutions "to make national culture... the possession of the whole people and thereby *unite all the members of the nation into a national-cultural community*"\*\*\* (our italics).

One might think that all this concerns Austria alone. But Bauer does not agree. He emphatically declares that national autonomy is essential also for other states which, like Austria, consist of several nationalities.

"In the multi-national state," according to Bauer, "the working class of all the nations opposes the national power policy of the propertied classes with the demand for national autonomy."\*\*\*\*

Then, imperceptibly substituting national autonomy for the self-determination of nations, he continues:

"Thus, national autonomy, the self-determination of nations, will necessarily become the constitutional programme of the proletariat of all the nations in a multi-national state."\*\*\*\*\*

But he goes still further. He profoundly believes that the inter-class "national unions" "constituted" by him and Springer will serve as a sort of prototype of the future socialist society. For he knows that "the socialist system of society... will divide humanity into nationally delimited communities,"\*\*\*\*\* that under socialism there will take place "a grouping of humanity into autonomous national communities,"\*\*\*\*\* that thus, "socialist society will undoubtedly present a checkered picture of national unions of persons and territorial corporations,"\*\*\*\*\* and that accordingly "the socialist principle of nationality is a higher synthesis of the national principle and national autonomy."\*\*\*\*\*

Enough, it would seem...

\* *Ibid.*, p. 375.

\*\* See *The National Problem*, p. 234.

\*\*\* See *The National Question*, p. 553.

\*\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 337.

\*\*\*\*\* See *The National Question*, p. 333.

\*\*\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 555.

\*\*\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 556.

\*\*\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 543.

\*\*\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 542.

These are the arguments for cultural-national autonomy as given in the works of Bauer and Springer.

The first thing that strikes the eye is the entirely inexplicable and absolutely unjustifiable substitution of national autonomy for self-determination of nations. One or the other: either Bauer failed to understand the meaning of self-determination, or he did understand it but for some reason or other deliberately narrowed its meaning. For there is no doubt (a) that cultural-national autonomy presupposes the integrity of the multi-national state, whereas self-determination goes outside the framework of this integrity, and (b) that self-determination endows a nation with complete rights, whereas national autonomy endows it only with "cultural" rights. That in the first place.

In the second place, a combination of international and external conditions is fully possible at some future time by virtue of which one or another of the nationalities may decide to secede from a multi-national state, say from Austria. Did not the Ruthenian Social-Democrats at the Brünn Party Congress announce their readiness to unite the "two parts" of their people into one whole? \* What, in such a case, becomes of national autonomy, which is "inevitable for the proletariat of all the nations"? What sort of "solution" of the problem is it that mechanically squeezes nations into the Procrustean bed of an integral state?

Further: National autonomy is contrary to the whole course of development of nations. It calls for the organisation of nations; but can they be artificially welded together if life, if economic development tears whole groups from them and disperses these groups over various regions? There is no doubt that in the early stages of capitalism nations become welded together. But there is also no doubt that in the higher stages of capitalism a process of dispersion of nations sets in, a process whereby a whole number of groups separate off from the nations, going off in search of a livelihood and subsequently settling permanently in other regions of the state; in the course of this these settlers lose their old connections and acquire new ones in their new domicile, and from generation to generation acquire new habits and new tastes, and possibly a new language. The question arises: is it possible to unite into a single national union groups that have grown so distinct? Where are the magic links to unite what cannot be united? Is it conceivable that, for instance, the Germans of the Baltic Provinces and the Germans of Transcaucasia can be "united into a single nation"? But if it is not conceivable and not possible, wherein does national autonomy differ from the utopia of the old nationalists, who endeavoured to turn back the wheel of history?

But the unity of a nation diminishes not only as a result of migration. It diminishes also from internal causes, owing to the growing acuteness of the class struggle. In the early stages of capitalism one can still speak of a "common culture" of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. But as large-scale industry develops and the class struggle becomes more and more acute, this "common culture" begins to melt away. One cannot seriously speak of the "common culture" of a nation when employers and workers of one and the same nation cease to understand each other. What "common destiny" can there be when the bourgeoisie thirsts for war, and the proletariat declares "war on war"?

\* See *Proceedings of the Brünn Social-Democratic Party Congress*, p. 48.

Can a single inter-class national union be formed from such opposed elements? And, after this, can one speak of the "union of all the members of the nation into a national-cultural community." \* Is it not obvious that national autonomy is contrary to the whole course of the class struggle?

But let us assume for a moment that the slogan "organise the nation" is practicable. One might understand bourgeois-nationalist parliamentarians endeavouring to "organise" a nation for the purpose of securing additional votes. But since when have Social-Democrats begun to occupy themselves with "organising" nations, "constituting" nations, "creating" nations?

What sort of Social-Democrats are they who in the epoch of extreme intensification of the class struggle organise inter-class national unions? Until now the Austrian, as well as every other, Social-Democratic party, had one task before it: namely, to organise the proletariat. That task has apparently become "antiquated." Springer and Bauer are now setting a "new" task, a more absorbing task, namely, to "create," to "organise" a nation.

However, logic has its obligations: he who adopts national autonomy must also adopt this "new" task; but to adopt the latter means to abandon the class position and to take the path of nationalism.

Springer's and Bauer's cultural-national autonomy is a subtle form of nationalism.

And it is by no means fortuitous that the national programme of the Austrian Social-Democrats enjoins a concern for the "preservation and development of the national peculiarities of the peoples." Just think: to "preserve" such "national peculiarities" of the Transcaucasian Tatars as self-flagellation at the festival of *Shakhsei-Vakhsei*; or to "develop" such "national peculiarities" of the Georgians as the vendetta!....

A demand of this character is in place in an outright bourgeois nationalist programme; and if it appears in the programme of the Austrian Social-Democrats it is because national autonomy tolerates such demands, it does not contradict them.

But if national autonomy is unsuitable now, it will be still more unsuitable in the future, socialist society.

Bauer's prophecy regarding the "division of humanity into nationally delimited communities" \*\* is refuted by the whole course of development of modern human society. National barriers are being demolished and are falling, rather than becoming firmer. As early as the 'forties Marx declared that "national differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing" and that "the supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still faster".<sup>51</sup> The subsequent development of mankind, accompanied as it was by the colossal growth of capitalist production, the reshuffling of nationalities and the union of people within ever larger territories, emphatically confirms Marx's thought.

Bauer's desire to represent socialist society as a "checkered picture of national unions of persons and territorial corporations" is a timid attempt to substitute for Marx's conception of socialism a revised version of Bakunin's conception. The history of socialism proves that every such attempt contains the elements of inevitable failure.

\* Bauer, *The National Question*, p. 553.

\*\* See the beginning of this chapter.



There is no need to mention the kind of "socialist principle of nationality" glorified by Bauer, which, in our opinion, substitutes for the socialist principle of the *class struggle* the bourgeois "*principle of rationality*." If national autonomy is based on such a dubious principle, it must be admitted that it can only cause harm to the working class movement.

True, such nationalism is not so transparent, for it is skilfully masked by socialist phrases, but it is all the more harmful to the proletariat for that reason. We can always cope with open nationalism, for it can easily be discerned. It is much more difficult to combat nationalism when it is masked and unrecognisable beneath its mask. Protected by the armour of socialism, it is less vulnerable and more tenacious. Implanted among the workers, it poisons the atmosphere and spreads harmful ideas of mutual distrust and segregation among the workers of the different nationalities.

But this does not exhaust the harm caused by national autonomy. It prepares the ground not only for the segregation of nations, but also for breaking up the united labour movement. The idea of national autonomy creates the psychological conditions for the division of the united workers' party into separate parties built on national lines. The breakup of the party is followed by the breakup of the trade unions, and complete segregation is the result. In this way the united class movement is broken up into separate national rivulets.

Austria, the home of "national autonomy", provides the most deplorable examples of this. As early as 1897 (the Wimberg Party Congress<sup>52</sup>) the once united Austrian Social-Democratic Party began to break up into separate parties. The breakup became still more marked after the Brünn Party Congress (1899), which adopted national autonomy. Matters have finally come to such a pass that in place of a united international party there are now six national parties, of which the Czech Social-Democratic Party will not even have anything to do with the German Social-Democratic Party.

But with the parties are associated the trade unions. In Austria, both in the parties and in the trade unions, the main brunt of the work is borne by the same Social-Democratic workers. There was therefore reason to fear that separatism in the party would lead to separatism in the trade unions and that the trade unions would also break up. That, in fact, is what happened: the trade unions have been also divided according to nationality. Now things frequently go so far that the Czech workers will even break a strike of German workers, or will unite at municipal elections with the Czech bourgeois against the German workers.

It will be seen from the foregoing that cultural-national autonomy is no solution of the national question. Not only that, it serves to aggravate and confuse the question by creating a situation which favours the destruction of the unity of the labour movement, fosters the segregation of the workers according to nationality and intensifies friction among them.

Such is the harvest of national autonomy.

### THE BUND, ITS NATIONALISM, ITS SEPARATISM

We said above that Bauer, while granting the necessity of national autonomy for the Czechs, Poles, and so on, nevertheless opposes similar

autonomy for the Jews. In answer to the question, "Should the working class demand autonomy for the Jewish people?" Bauer says that "national autonomy cannot be demanded by the Jewish workers."\* According to Bauer, the reason is that "capitalist society makes it impossible for them (the Jews-J. St.) to continue as a nation."\*\*\*

In brief, the Jewish nation is coming to an end, and hence there is nobody to demand national autonomy for. The Jews are being assimilated.

This view of the fate of the Jews as a nation is not a new one. It was expressed by Marx as early as the 'forties,<sup>\*\*\*53</sup> in reference chiefly to the German Jews. It was repeated by Kautsky in 1903,<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> in reference to the Russian Jews. It is now being repeated by Bauer in reference to the Austrian Jews, with the difference, however, that he denies not the present but the future of the Jewish nation.

Bauer explains the impossibility of preserving the existence of the Jews as a nation by the fact that "the Jews have no closed territory of settlement."\*\*\*\*\* This explanation, in the main a correct one, does not however express the whole truth. The fact of the matter is primarily that among the Jews there is no large and stable stratum connected with the land, which would naturally rivet the nation together, serving not only as its framework but also as a "national" market. Of the five or six million Russian Jews, only three to four per cent are connected with agriculture in any way. The remaining ninety-six per cent are employed in trade, industry, in urban institutions, and in general are town dwellers; moreover, they are spread all over Russia and do not constitute a majority in a single gubernia.

Thus, interspersed as national minorities in areas inhabited by other nationalities, the Jews as a rule serve "foreign" nations as manufacturers and traders and as members of the liberal professions, naturally adapting themselves to the "foreign nations" in respect to language and so forth. All this, taken together with the increasing re-shuffling of nationalities characteristic of developed forms of capitalism, leads to the assimilation of the Jews. The abolition of the "Pale of Settlement" would only serve to hasten this process of assimilation.

The question of national autonomy for the Russian Jews consequently assumes a somewhat curious character: autonomy is being proposed for a nation whose future is denied and whose existence has still to be proved!

Nevertheless, this was the curious and shaky position taken up by the Bund when at its Sixth Congress (1905) it adopted a "national programme" on the lines of national autonomy.

Two circumstances impelled the Bund to take this step.

The first circumstance is the existence of the Bund as an organisation of Jewish, and only Jewish, Social-Democratic workers. Even before 1897 the Social-Democratic groups active among the Jewish workers set themselves the aim of creating "a special Jewish workers' organisation."\*\*\*\*\* They founded such an organisation in 1897 by

\* See *The National Question*, pp. 381, 396.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 389.

\*\*\* See K. Marx, "The Jewish Question," 1906.

\*\*\*\* See K. Kautsky, "The Kishinev Pogrom and the Jewish Question," 1903.

\*\*\*\*\* See *The National Question*, p. 388.

\*\*\*\*\* See *Forms of the National Movement*, etc., edited by Kastelyansky, p. 772.

uniting to form the Bund. That was at a time when Russian Social-Democracy as an integral body virtually did not yet exist. The Bund steadily grew and spread, and stood out more and more vividly against the background of the bleak days of Russian Social-Democracy... Then came the 1900's. A mass labour movement came into being. Polish Social-Democracy grew and drew the Jewish workers into the mass struggle. Russian Social-Democracy grew and attracted the "Bund" workers. Lacking a territorial basis, the national framework of the Bund became too restrictive. The Bund was faced with the problem of either merging with the general international tide, or of upholding its independent existence as an extra-territorial organisation. The Bund chose the latter course.

Thus grew up the "theory" that the Bund is "the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat."

But to justify this strange "theory" in any "simple" way became impossible. Some kind of foundation "on principle," some justification "on principle," was needed. Cultural-national autonomy provided such a foundation. The Bund seized upon it, borrowing it from the Austrian Social-Democrats. If the Austrians had not had such a programme the Bund would have invented it in order to justify its independent existence "on principle."

Thus, after a timid attempt in 1901 (the Fourth Congress), the Bund definitely adopted a "national programme" in 1905 (the Sixth Congress).

The second circumstance is the peculiar position of the Jews as separate national minorities within compact majorities of other nationalities in integral regions. We have already said that this position is undermining the existence of the Jews as a nation and puts them on the road to assimilation. But this is an objective process. Subjectively, in the minds of the Jews, it provokes a reaction and gives rise to the demand for a guarantee of the rights of a national minority, for a guarantee against assimilation. Preaching as it does the vitality of the Jewish "nationality," the Bund could not avoid being in favour of a "guarantee." And, having taken up this position, it could not but accept national autonomy. For if the Bund could seize upon any autonomy at all, it could only be national autonomy, i.e., *cultural-national* autonomy; there could be no question of territorial-political autonomy for the Jews, since the Jews have no definite integral territory.

It is noteworthy that the Bund from the outset stressed the character of national autonomy as a guarantee of the rights of national minorities, as a guarantee of the "free development" of nations. Nor was it fortuitous that the representative of the Bund at the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Party, Goldblatt, defined national autonomy as "institutions which *guarantee* them (i.e., nations-*J. St.*) complete freedom of cultural development."\* A similar proposal was made by supporters of the ideas of the Bund to the Social-Democratic group in the Fourth Duma...

In this way the Bund adopted the curious position of national autonomy for the Jews.

We have examined above national autonomy in general. The examination showed that national autonomy leads to nationalism. We shall see later that the Bund has arrived at the same end point. But the Bund also regards national autonomy from a special aspect, namely, from the aspect of *guarantees* of the rights of national minorities. Let us also

\* See *Minutes of the Second Congress*, p. 176.

examine the question from this special aspect. It is all the more necessary since the problem of national minorities—and not of the Jewish minorities alone—is one of serious moment for Social-Democracy.

And so, it is a question of "*institutions which guarantee*" nations "complete freedom of cultural development" (our italics-*J. St.*).

But what are these "institutions which guarantee," etc.?

They are primarily the "National Council" of Springer and Bauer, something in the nature of a Diet for cultural affairs.

But can these institutions guarantee a nation "complete freedom of cultural development"? Can a Diet for cultural affairs guarantee a nation against nationalist persecution?

The Bund believes it can.

But history proves the contrary.

At one time a Diet existed in Russian Poland. It was a political Diet and, of course, endeavoured to guarantee freedom of "cultural development" for the Poles. But, far from succeeding in doing so, it itself succumbed in the unequal struggle against the political conditions generally prevailing in Russia.

A Diet has been in existence for a long time in Finland, and it too endeavours to protect the Finnish nationality from "encroachments," but how far it succeeds in doing so everybody can see.

Of course, there are Diets and Diets, and it is not so easy to cope with the democratically organised Finnish Diet as it was with the aristocratic Polish Diet. But the *decisive* factor, nevertheless, is not the Diet, but the general regime in Russia. If such a grossly Asiatic social and political regime existed in Russia now as in the past, at the time the Polish Diet was abolished, things would go much harder with the Finnish Diet. Moreover, the policy of "encroachments" upon Finland is growing, and it cannot be said that it has met with defeat...

If such is the case with old, historically evolved institutions—political Diets—still less will young Diets, young institutions, especially such feeble institutions as "cultural" Diet, be able to guarantee the free development of nations.

Obviously, it is not a question of "institutions," but of the general regime prevailing in the country. If there is no democracy in the country there can be no guarantees of "complete freedom for cultural development" of nationalities. One may say with certainty that the more democratic a country is the fewer are the "encroachments" made on the "freedom of nationalities," and the greater are the guarantees against such "encroachments."

Russia is a semi-Asiatic country, and therefore in Russia the policy of "encroachments" not infrequently assumes the grossest form, the form of pogroms. It need hardly be said that in Russia "guarantees" have been reduced to the very minimum.

Germany is, however, European, and she enjoys a measure of political freedom. It is not surprising that the policy of "encroachments" there never takes the form of pogroms.

In France, of course, there are still more "guarantees," for France is more democratic than Germany.

There is no need to mention Switzerland, where, thanks to her highly developed, although bourgeois democracy, nationalities live in freedom, whether they are a minority or a majority.

Thus the Bund adopts a false position when it asserts that

"institutions" by themselves are able to guarantee complete cultural development for nationalities.

It may be said that the Bund itself regards the establishment of democracy in Russia as a *preliminary* condition for the "creation of institutions" and guarantees of freedom. But this is not the case. From the report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund<sup>54</sup> it will be seen that the Bund thinks it can secure "institutions" *on the basis of* the present system in Russia, by "reforming" the *Jewish community*.

"The community," one of the leaders of the Bund said at this conference, "may become the nucleus of future cultural-national autonomy. Cultural-national autonomy is a form of self-service on the part of nations, a form of satisfying national needs. The community form conceals within itself a similar content. They are links in the same chain, stages in the same evolution."\*

On this basis, the conference decided that it was necessary to strive "for *reforming* the Jewish community and transforming it by *legislative means* into a secular institution," democratically organised\*\* (our italics—*J. St.*).

It is evident that the Bund considers as the condition and guarantee not the democratisation of Russia, but some future "secular institution" of the Jews, obtained by "reforming the Jewish community," so to speak, by "legislative" means, through the Duma.

But we have already seen that "institutions" in themselves cannot serve as "guarantees" if the regime in the state generally is not a democratic one.

But what, it may be asked, will be the position under a future democratic system? Will not special "cultural institutions which guarantee," etc., be required even under democracy? What is the position in this respect in democratic Switzerland, for example? Are there special cultural institutions in Switzerland on the pattern of Springer's "National Council"? No, there are *not*. But do not the cultural interests of, for instance, the Italians, who constitute a minority there, suffer for that reason? One does not seem to hear that they do. And that is quite natural: in Switzerland all special cultural "institutions," which supposedly "guarantee," etc., are rendered superfluous by democracy.

And so, impotent in the present and superfluous in the future—such are the *institutions* of cultural-national autonomy, and such is national autonomy.

But it becomes still more harmful when it is thrust upon a "nation" whose existence and future are open to doubt. In such cases the advocates of national autonomy are obliged to protect and preserve all the peculiar features of the "nation", the bad as well as the good, just for the sake of "saving the nation" from assimilation, just for the sake of "preserving" it.

That the Bund should take this dangerous path was inevitable. And it did take it. We are referring to the resolutions of recent conferences of the Bund on the question of the "Sabbath," "Yiddish," etc.

Social-Democracy strives to secure *for all nations* the right to use their own language. But that does not satisfy the Bund; it demands

that "the rights of the *Jewish languages*" (our italics—*J. St.*) be championed with "exceptional persistence,"\* and the Bund itself in the elections to the Fourth Duma declared that it would give "preference to those of them (i.e., electors) who undertake to defend the rights of the Jewish language."\*\*

Not the *general* right of all nations to use their own language, but the *particular* right of the Jewish language, Yiddish! Let the workers of the various nationalities fight *primarily* for their own language: the Jews for Jewish, the Georgians for Georgian, and so forth. The struggle for the general right of all nations is a secondary matter. You do not have to recognise the right of all oppressed nationalities to use their own language; but if you have recognised the right of Yiddish, know that the Bund will vote for you, the Bund will "prefer" you.

But in what way then does the Bund differ from the bourgeois nationalists?

Social-Democracy strives to secure the establishment of a compulsory weekly rest day. But that does not satisfy the Bund; it demands that "by legislative means" "the Jewish proletariat should be guaranteed the right to observe their Sabbath and be relieved of the obligation to observe another day."\*\*\*

It is to be expected that the Bund will take another "step forward" and demand the right to observe all the ancient Hebrew holidays. And if, to the misfortune of the Bund, the Jewish workers have discarded religious prejudices and do not want to observe these holidays, the Bund with its agitation for "the right to the Sabbath," will remind them of the Sabbath, it will, so to speak, cultivate among them "the Sabbatarian spirit."...

Quite comprehensible, therefore, are the "passionate speeches" delivered at the Eighth Conference of the Bund demanding "Jewish hospitals," a demand that was based on the argument that "a patient feels more at home among his own people," that "the Jewish worker will not feel at ease among Polish workers, but will feel at ease among Jewish shopkeepers."\*\*\*\*

Preservation of everything Jewish, conservation of *all* the national peculiarities of the Jews, even those that are patently harmful to the proletariat, isolation of the Jews from everything non-Jewish, even the establishment of special hospitals—that is the level to which the Bund has sunk!

Comrade Plekhanov was right a thousand times over when he said that the Bund "is adapting socialism to nationalism." Of course, V. Kossovsky and Bundists like him may denounce Plekhanov as a "demagogue"\*\*\*\*\*<sup>55</sup>—paper will put up with anything that is written on it—but those who are familiar with the activities of the Bund will easily realise that these brave fellows are simply afraid to tell the truth about themselves and are hiding behind strong language about "demagogy."...

But since it holds such a position on the national question, the Bund was naturally obliged, in the matter of organisation also, to take the path of segregating the Jewish workers, the path of formation of national

\* See *Report of the English Conference of the Bund*, p. 85.

\*\* See *Report of the Ninth Conference of the Bund*, 1912, p. 42.

\*\*\* See *Report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund*, p. 83.

\*\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 68.

\*\*\*\*\* See *Nasha Zarya*, No. 9-10, 1912, p. 120.

\* *Report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund*, 1911, p. 62.

\*\* *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

cūriae within Social-Democracy. Such is the logic of national autonomy!

And, in fact, the Bund did pass from the theory of "sole representation" to the theory of "national demarcation" of workers. The Bund demands that Russian Social-Democracy should "in its organisational structure introduce demarcation according to nationalities."\* From "demarcation" it made a "step forward" to the theory of "segregation". It is not for nothing that speeches were made at the Eighth Conference of the Bund declaring that "national existence lies in segregation."\*\*

Organisational federalism harbours the elements of disintegration and separatism. The Bund is heading for separatism.

And, indeed, there is nothing else it can head for. Its very existence as an extra-territorial organisation drives it to separatism. The Bund does not possess a definite integral territory; it operates on "foreign" territories, whereas the neighbouring Polish, Lettish and Russian Social-Democracies are international territorial collective bodies. But the result is that every extension of these collective bodies means a "loss" to the Bund and a restriction of its field of action. There are two alternatives: either Russian Social-Democracy as a whole must be reconstructed on the basis of national federalism—which will enable the Bund to "secure" the Jewish proletariat for itself; or the territorial-international principle of these collective bodies remains in force—in which case the Bund must be reconstructed on the basis of internationalism, as is the case with the Polish and Lettish Social-Democracies.

This explains why the Bund from the very beginning demanded "the reorganisation of Russian Social-Democracy on a federal basis."\*\*\*

In 1906, yielding to the pressure from below in favour of unity, the Bund chose a middle path and joined Russian Social-Democracy. But how did it join? Whereas the Polish and Lettish Social-Democracies joined for the purpose of peaceable joint action, the Bund joined for the purpose of waging war for a federation. That is exactly what Medem, the leader of the Bundists, said at the time:

"We are joining not for the sake of an idyll, but in order to fight. There is no idyll, and only Manilovs could hope for one in the near future. The Bund must join the Party armed from head to foot."\*\*\*\*

It would be wrong to regard this as an expression of evil intent on Medem's part. It is not a matter of evil intent, but of the peculiar position of the Bund, which compels it to fight Russian Social-Democracy, which is built on the basis of internationalism. And in fighting it the Bund naturally violated the interests of unity. Finally, matters went so far that the Bund formally broke with Russian Social-Democracy, violating its statutes, and in the elections to Fourth Duma joining forces with the Polish nationalists against the Polish Social-Democrats.

The Bund has apparently found that a rupture is the best guarantee for independent activity.

And so the "principle" of organisational "demarcation" led to separatism and to a complete rupture.

\* See *An Announcement on the Seventh Congress of the Bund*,<sup>56</sup> p. 7.

\*\* See *Report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund*, p. 72.

\*\*\* See *Concerning National Autonomy and the Reorganisation of Russian Social-Democracy on a Federal Basis*, 1902, published by the Bund.

\*\*\*\* *Nashe Slovo*, No. 3, Vilno, 1906, p. 24.

In a controversy with the old *Iskra*<sup>57</sup> on the question of federalism, the Bund once wrote:

"*Iskra* wants to assure us that federal relations between the Bund and Russian Social-Democracy are bound to weaken the ties between them. We cannot refute this opinion by referring to practice in Russia, for the simple reason that Russian Social-Democracy does not exist as a federal body. But we can refer to the extremely instructive experience of Social-Democracy in Austria, which assumed a federal character by virtue of the decision of the Party Congress of 1897."\*

That was written in 1902.

But we are now in the year 1913. We now have both Russian "practice" and the "experience of Social-Democracy in Austria."

What do they tell us?

Let us begin with "the extremely instructive experience of Social-Democracy in Austria." Up to 1896 there was a united Social-Democratic Party in Austria. In that year the Czechs at the International Congress in London for the first time demanded separate representation, and were given it. In 1897, at the Vienna (Wimberg) Party Congress, the united party was formally liquidated and in its place a federal league of six national "Social-Democratic groups" was set up. Subsequently these "groups" were converted into independent parties, which gradually severed contact with one another. Following the parties, the parliamentary group broke up—national "clubs" were formed. Next came the trade unions, which also split according to nationalities calling upon the workers to split them up.\*\* We will not dwell on the fact that separatist agitation weakens the workers' sense of solidarity and frequently drives them to strike-breaking.

Thus "the extremely instructive experience of Social-Democracy in Austria" speaks *against* the Bund and for the old *Iskra*. Federalism in the Austrian party has led to the most outrageous separatism, to the destruction of the unity of the labour movement.

We have seen above that "practical experience in Russia" also bears this out. Like the Czech separatists, the Bundist separatists have broken with the general Russian Social-Democratic Party. As for the trade unions, the Bundist trade unions, from the outset they were organised on national lines, that is to say, they were cut off from the workers of other nationalities.

Complete segregation and complete rupture—that is what is revealed by the "Russian practical experience" of federalism.

It is not surprising that the effect of this state of affairs upon the workers is to weaken their sense of solidarity and to demoralise them; and the latter process is also penetrating the Bund. We are referring to the increasing collisions between Jewish and Polish workers in connection with unemployment. Here is the kind of speech that was made on this subject at the Ninth Conference of the Bund:

".... We regard the Polish workers, who are ousting us, as pogromists, as scabs; we do not support their strikes, we break them. Secondly, we reply to being ousted

\* *National Autonomy*, etc., 1902, p. 17 published by the Bund.

\*\* See the words quoted from a brochure by Venek<sup>58</sup> in *Dokumente des Separatismus*, p. 29.

by ousting in our turn: We reply to Jewish workers not being allowed into the factories by not allowing Polish workers near the benches... *If we do not take this matter into our own hands the workers will follow others.*"\* (out italics—J. St.).

That is the way they talk about solidarity at a Bundist conference. You cannot go further than that in the way of "demarcation" and "segregation". The Bund has achieved its aim: it is carrying its demarcation between the workers of different nationalities to the point of conflicts and strike-breaking. And there is no other course: "If we do not take this matter into our own hands *the workers will follow others....*"

Disorganisation of the labour movement, demoralisation of the Social-Democratic ranks—that is what the federalism of the Bund leads to.

Thus the idea of cultural-national autonomy, the atmosphere it creates, has proved to be even more harmful in Russia than in Austria.

### THE CAUCASIANS, THE CONFERENCE OF THE LIQUIDATORS

We spoke above of the waverings of one section of the Caucasian Social-Democrats who were unable to withstand the nationalist "epidemic." These waverings were revealed in the fact that, strange as it may seem, the above-mentioned Social-Democrats followed in the footsteps of the Bund and proclaimed cultural-national autonomy.

Regional autonomy for the Caucasus as a whole and cultural-national autonomy for the nations forming the Caucasus—that is the way these Social-Democrats, who, incidentally, are linked with the Russian Liquidators, formulate their demand.

Listen to their acknowledged leader, the not unknown N.

"Everybody knows that the Caucasus differs profoundly from the central gubernias, both as regards the racial composition of its population and as regards its territory and agricultural development. The exploitation and material development of such a region require local workers acquainted with local peculiarities and accustomed to the local climate and culture. All laws designed to further the exploitation of the local territory should be issued locally and put into effect by local forces. Consequently, the jurisdiction of the central organ of Caucasian self-government should extend to legislation on local questions... Hence, the functions of the Caucasian centre should consist in the passing of laws designed to further the economic exploitation of the local territory and the material prosperity of the region."\*\*

Thus—regional autonomy for the Caucasus.

If we abstract ourselves from the rather confused and incoherent arguments of N., it must be admitted that his conclusion is correct. Regional autonomy for the Caucasus, within the framework of a general state constitution, which N. does not deny, is indeed essential because of the peculiarities of its composition and its conditions of life. This was also acknowledged by the Russian Social-Democratic Party, which at its Second Congress proclaimed "regional self-government for those border

regions which in respect of their conditions of life and the composition of their population differ from the regions of Russia proper."

When Martov submitted this point for discussion at the Second Congress, he justified it on the grounds that "the vast extent of Russia and the experience of our centralised administration point to the necessity and expediency of regional self-government for such large units as Finland, Poland, Lithuania and the Caucasus."

But it follows that regional *self-government* is to be interpreted as regional *autonomy*.

But N. goes further. According to him, regional autonomy for the Caucasus covers "only one aspect of the question."

"So far we have spoken only of the material development of local life. But the economic development of a region is facilitated not only by economic activity but also by spiritual, cultural activity..." "A culturally strong nation is strong also in the economic sphere..." "But the cultural development of nations is possible only in the national languages..." "Consequently, all questions connected with the native language are questions of national culture. Such are the questions of education, the judicature, the church, literature, art, science, the theatre, etc. If the material development of a region unites nations, matters of national culture disunite them and place each in a separate sphere. Activities of the former kind are associated with a definite territory."

..."This is not the case with matters of national culture. These are associated not with a definite territory but with the existence of a definite nation. The fate of the Georgian language interests a Georgian, no matter where he lives. It would be a sign of profound ignorance to say that Georgian culture concerns only the Georgians who live in Georgia. Take, for instance, the Armenian church. Armenians of various localities and states take part in the administration of its affairs. Territory plays no part here. Or, for instance, the creation of a Georgian museum interests not only the Georgians of Tiflis, but also the Georgians of Baku, Kutais, St. Petersburg, etc. Hence, the administration and control of all affairs of national culture must be left to the nations concerned. We proclaim in favour of cultural-national autonomy for the Caucasian nationalities."\*

In short, since culture is not territory, and territory is not culture, cultural-national autonomy is required. That is all N. can say in the latter's favour.

We shall not stop to discuss again national-cultural autonomy in general; we have already spoken of its objectionable character. We should like to point out only that, while being unsuitable in general, cultural-national autonomy is also meaningless and nonsensical in relation to Caucasian conditions.

And for the following reason:

Cultural-national autonomy presumes more or less developed nationalities, with a developed culture and literature. Failing these conditions, autonomy loses all sense and becomes an absurdity. But in the Caucasus there are a number of nationalities each possessing a primitive culture, a separate language, but without its own literature; nationalities, moreover, which are in a state of transition, partly becoming assimilated and partly continuing to develop. How is cultural-national autonomy to be applied to them? What is to be done with such nationalities? How are they to be "organised" into separate cultural-national unions, as is undoubtedly implied by cultural-national autonomy?

\* See *Report of the Ninth Conference of the Bund*, p. 10.

\*\* See the Georgin newspaper *Chveni Tskhoureba* (*Our Life*)<sup>58</sup>, No. 12, 1912.

\*\* See the Georgin newspaper *Chveni Tskhoureba*, No. 12, 1912.

What is to be done with the Mingrelians, the Abkhasians, the Adjarians, the Svanetians, the Lesghians, and so on, who speak different languages but do not possess a literature of their own? To what nations are they to be attached? Can they be "organised" into national unions? Around what "cultural affairs" are they to be "organised"?

What is to be done with the Ossetians, of whom the Transcaucasian Ossetians are becoming assimilated (but are as yet by no means wholly assimilated) by the Georgians, while the Cis-Caucasian Ossetians are partly being assimilated by the Russians and partly continuing to develop and are creating their own literature? How are they to be "organised" into a single national union?

To what national union should one attach the Adjarians, who speak the Georgian language, but whose culture is Turkish and who profess the religion of Islam? Shall they be "organised" separately from the Georgians *with regard to religious affairs* and together with the Georgians *with regard to other cultural affairs*? And what about the Kobuletiens, the Ingushes, the Inghilois?

What kind of autonomy is that which excludes a whole number of nationalities from the list?

No, that is not a solution of the national question, but the fruit of idle fancy.

But let us grant the impossible and assume that our N.'s national-cultural autonomy has been put into effect. Where would it lead to, what would be its results? Take, for instance, the Transcaucasian Tatars, with their minimum percentage of literates, their schools controlled by the omnipotent mullahs and their culture permeated by the religious spirit.... It is not difficult to understand that to "organise" them into a cultural-national union would mean to place them under the control of the mullahs, to deliver them over to the tender mercies of the reactionary mullahs, to create a new stronghold of spiritual enslavement of the Tatar masses to their worst enemy.

But since when have Social-Democrats made it a practice to bring grist to the mill of the reactionaries?

Could the Caucasian Liquidators really find nothing better to "proclaim" than the isolation of the Transcaucasian Tatars within a cultural-national union which would place the masses under the thrall of vicious reactionaries?

No, that is no solution of the national question.

The national question in the Caucasus can be solved only by drawing the belated nations and nationalities into the common stream of a higher culture. It is the only progressive solution and the only solution acceptable to Social-Democracy. Regional autonomy in the Caucasus is acceptable because it would draw the belated nations into the common cultural development; it would help them to cast off the shell of small-nation insularity; it would impel them forward and facilitate access to the benefits of higher culture. Cultural-national autonomy, however, acts in a diametrically opposite direction, because it shuts up the nations within their old shells, binds them to the lower stages of cultural development and prevents them from rising to the higher stages of culture.

In this way national autonomy counteracts the beneficial aspects of regional autonomy and nullifies it.

That is why the mixed type of autonomy which combines national-cultural autonomy and regional autonomy as proposed by N. is also unsuitable. This unnatural combination does not improve matters but

makes them worse, because in addition to retarding the development of the belated nations it transforms regional autonomy into an arena of conflict between the nations organised in the national unions.

Thus cultural-national autonomy, which is unsuitable generally, would be a senseless, reactionary undertaking in the Caucasus.

So much for the cultural-national autonomy of N. and his Caucasian fellow-thinkers.

Whether the Caucasian Liquidators will take "a step forward" and follow in the footsteps of the Bund on the question of organisation also, the future will show. So far, in the history of Social-Democracy federalism in organisation always preceded national autonomy in programme. The Austrian Social-Democrats introduced organisational federalism as far back as 1897, and it was only two years later (1899) that they adopted national autonomy. The Bundists spoke distinctly of national autonomy for the first time in 1901, whereas organisational federalism had been practised by them since 1897.

The Caucasian Liquidators have begun from the end, from national autonomy. If they continue to follow in the footsteps of the Bund they will first have to demolish the whole existing organisational edifice, which was created at the end of the 'nineties on the basis of internationalism.

But, easy though it was to adopt national autonomy, which is still not understood by the workers, it will be difficult to demolish an edifice which it has taken years to build and which has been raised and cherished by the workers of all the nationalities of the Caucasus. This Herostratian undertaking has only to be begun and the eyes of the workers will be opened to the nationalist character of cultural-national autonomy.

While the Caucasians are settling the national question in the usual manner, by means of verbal and written discussion, the All-Russian Conference of the Liquidators has invented a most unusual method. It is a simple and easy method. Listen to this:

"Having heard the communication of the Caucasian delegation to the effect that ... it is necessary to demand national-cultural autonomy, this conference, while expressing no opinion on the merits of this demand, declares that such an interpretation of the clause of the programme which recognises the right of every nationality to self-determination does not contradict the precise meaning of the programme."

Thus, first of all they "express no opinion on the merits" of the question, and then they "declare." An original method...

And what does this original conference "declare"?

That the "demand" for national-cultural autonomy "does not contradict the precise meaning" of the programme, which recognises the right of nations to self-determination.

Let us examine this proposition.

The clause on self-determination speaks of the rights of nations. According to this clause, nations have the right not only of autonomy but also of secession. It is a question of *political* self-determination. Whom did the Liquidators want to fool when they endeavoured to misinterpret this right of nations to political self-determination, which has long been recognised by the whole of international Social-Democracy?

Or perhaps the Liquidators will try to wriggle out of the situation and defend themselves by the sophism that cultural-national autonomy "does not contradict" the rights of nations? That is to say, if all the nations in a given stage agree to arrange their affairs on the basis of



cultural-national autonomy, they, the given sum of nations, are fully entitled to do so and nobody may *forcibly impose* a different form of political life on them. This is both new and clever. Should it not be added that, speaking generally, a nation has the right to abolish its own constitution, replace it by a system of tyranny and revert to the old order on the grounds that the nation, and the nation alone, has the right to determine its own destiny? We repeat: in this sense, neither cultural-national autonomy nor any other kind of nationalist reaction "contradicts" the *rights of nations*.

Is that what the esteemed conference wanted to say?

No, not that. It specifically says that cultural-national autonomy "does not contradict," not the rights of nations, but "*the precise meaning of the programme*." The point here is the programme and not the rights of nations.

And that is quite understandable. If it were some nation that addressed itself to the conference of Liquidators, the conference might have directly declared that the nation has a right to cultural-national autonomy. But it was not a nation that addressed itself to the conference, but a "delegation" of Caucasian Social-Democrats—bad Social-Democrats, it is true, but Social-Democrats nevertheless. And they inquired not about the rights of nations, but whether cultural-national autonomy contradicted the *principles of Social-Democracy*, whether it did not "contradict" "*the precise meaning of the programme of Social-Democracy*."

Thus, the *rights of nations* and "*the precise meaning of the programme of Social-Democracy*" are not one and the same thing.

Evidently, there are demands which, while they do not contradict the rights of nations, may yet contradict "*the precise meaning of the programme*."

For example. The programme of the Social-Democrats contains a clause on freedom of religion. According to this clause any group of persons *have the right* to profess any religion they please: Catholicism, the religion of the Orthodox Church, etc. Social-Democrats will combat all forms of religious persecution, be it of members of the Orthodox Church, Catholics or Protestants. Does this mean that Catholicism, Protestantism, etc., "do not contradict the precise meaning" of the programme? No, it does not. Social-Democrats will always protest against persecution of Catholicism or Protestantism; they will always defend the right of nations to profess any religion they please; but at the same time, on the basis of a correct understanding of the interests of the proletariat, they will carry on agitation against Catholicism, Protestantism and the religion of the Orthodox Church in order to achieve the triumph of the socialist world outlook.

And they will do so just because there is no doubt that Protestantism, Catholicism, the religion of the Orthodox Church, etc., "contradict the precise meaning" of the programme, i.e., the correctly understood interests of the proletariat.

The same must be said of self-determination. Nations have a right to arrange their affairs as they please; they have a right to preserve any of their national institutions, whether beneficial or harmful—nobody can (nobody has a right to!) *forcibly* interfere in the life of a nation. But that does not mean that Social-Democracy will not combat and agitate against the harmful institutions of nations and against the inexpedient demands of nations. On the contrary, it is the duty of Social-Democracy

to conduct such agitation and to endeavour to influence the will of nations so that the nations may arrange their affairs in the way that will best correspond to the interests of the proletariat. For this reason Social-Democracy, while fighting for the right of nations to self-determination, will at the same time agitate, for instance, against the secession of the Tatars, or against cultural-national autonomy for the Caucasian nations; for both, while not contradicting the *rights* of these nations, do contradict "*the precise meaning of the programme*," i.e., the interests of the Caucasian proletariat.

Obviously, "the rights of nations" and the "precise meaning" of the programme are on two entirely different planes. Whereas the "precise meaning" of the programme expresses the interests of the proletariat, as scientifically formulated in the programme of the latter, the rights of nations may express the interests of any class—bourgeoisie, aristocracy, clergy, etc.—depending on the strength and influence of these classes. On the one hand are the *duties* of Marxists, on the other the *rights* of nations, which consist of various classes. The rights of nations and the principles of Social-Democracy may or may not "contradict" each other, just as, say, the pyramid of Cheops may or may not contradict the famous conference of the liquidators. They are simply not comparable.

But it follows that the esteemed conference most unpardonably muddled two entirely different things. The result obtained was not a solution of the national question but an absurdity, according to which the rights of nations and the principles of Social-Democracy "do not contradict" each other, and, consequently, every demand of a nation may be made compatible with the interests of the proletariat; consequently, no demand of a nation which is striving for self-determination will "contradict the precise meaning" of the programme!

They pay no heed to logic...

It was this absurdity that gave rise to the now famous resolution of the conference of the Liquidators which declares that the demand for national-cultural autonomy "does not contradict the precise meaning" of the programme.

But it was not only the laws of logic that were violated by the conference of the Liquidators.

By sanctioning cultural-national autonomy it also violated its duty to Russian Social-Democracy. It most definitely did violate "the precise meaning" of the programme, for it is well known that the Second Congress, which adopted the programme, *emphatically repudiated* cultural-national autonomy. Here is what was said at the Congress in this connection:

"Goldblatt (Bundist): ...I deem it necessary that special institutions be set up to protect the freedom of cultural development of nationalities, and I therefore propose that the following words be added to § 8: '*and the creation of institutions which will guarantee them complete freedom of cultural development.*'" (This, as we know, is the Bund's definition of cultural-national autonomy.—J. St.)

"Martynov pointed out that general institutions must be so constituted as to protect particular interests also. It is impossible to create a *special* institution to guarantee freedom for cultural development of the nationalities.

"Yegorov: On the question of nationality we can adopt only negative proposals, i.e., we are opposed to all restrictions upon nationality. But we, as Social-Democrats, are not concerned with whether any particular nationality will develop as such. That is a spontaneous process.

"Koltsov: The delegates from the Bund are always offended when their nationalism is referred to. Yet the amendment proposed by the delegate from the Bund is of a purely nationalist character. We are asked to take purely offensive measures in order to support even nationalities that are dying out."

In the end "Goldblatt's amendment was rejected by the majority, only three votes being cast for it."

Thus it is clear that the conference of the Liquidators did "contradict the precise meaning" of the programme. It violated the programme.

The Liquidators are now trying to justify themselves by referring to the Stockholm Congress, which they allege sanctioned cultural-national autonomy. Thus, V. Kossovsky writes:

"As we know, according to the agreement adopted by the Stockholm Congress, the Bund was allowed to preserve its national programme (pending a decision on the national question by a general Party Congress). This Congress recorded that national-cultural autonomy at any rate does not contradict the general Party programme."\*

But the efforts of the Liquidators are in vain. The Stockholm Congress never thought of sanctioning the programme of the Bund—it merely agreed to leave the question open for the time being. The brave Kossovsky did not have enough courage to tell the whole truth. But the facts speak for themselves. Here they are:

"An amendment was moved by Galin: 'The question of the national programme is left open in view of the fact that it is not being examined by the Congress.' (For-50 votes, against-32.).

"Voice: What does that mean—open?

"Chairman: When we say that the national question is left open, it means that the Bund may maintain its decision on this question until the next Congress" \*\* (our italics.—J. St.).

As you see, the congress even did "not examine" the question of the national programme of the Bund—it simply left it "open", leaving the Bund itself to decide the fate of its programme until the next general congress met. In other words, the Stockholm Congress avoided the question, expressing no opinion on cultural-national autonomy one way or another.

The conference of the Liquidators, however, most definitely undertakes to give an opinion on the matter, declares cultural-national autonomy to be acceptable, and endorses it in the name of the Party programme.

The difference is only too evident.

Thus, in spite of all its artifices, the conference of the Liquidators did not advance the national question a single step.

All it could do was to squirm before the Bund and the Caucasian national-Liquidators.

## THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN RUSSIA

It remains for us to suggest a positive solution of the national question.

\* *Nasha Zarya*, No. 9-10, 1912, p. 120.

\*\* See *Nashe Slovo*, No. 8, 1906, p. 53.

We take as our starting point that the question can be solved only in intimate connection with the present situation in Russia.

Russia is in a transitional period, when "normal", "constitutional" life has not yet been established and when the political crisis has not yet been settled. Days of storm and "complications" are ahead. And this gives rise to the movement, the present and the future movement, the aim of which is to achieve complete democratisation.

It is in connection with this movement that the national question must be examined.

Thus the complete democratisation of the country is the *basis* and condition for the solution of the national question.

When seeking a solution of the question we must take into account not only the situation at home but also the situation abroad. Russia is situated between Europe and Asia, between Austria and China. The growth of democracy in Asia is inevitable. The growth of imperialism in Europe is not fortuitous. In Europe, capital is beginning to feel cramped, and it is reaching out towards foreign countries in search of new markets, cheap labour and new fields of investment. But this leads to external complications and to war. No one can assert that the Balkan War<sup>60</sup> is the end and not the beginning of the complications. It is quite possible, therefore, that a combination of internal and external conditions may arise in which one or another nationality in Russia may find it necessary to raise and settle the question of its independence. And, of course, it is not for Marxists to create obstacles in such cases.

But it follows that Russian Marxists cannot dispense with the right of nations to self-determination.

Thus, *the right of self-determination is an essential element* in the solution of the national question.

Further. What must be our attitude towards nations which for one reason or another will prefer to remain within the framework of the whole?

We have seen that cultural-national autonomy is unsuitable. Firstly, it is artificial and impracticable, for it proposes artificially to draw into a single nation people whom the march of events, real events, is disuniting and dispersing to every corner of the country. Secondly, it stimulates nationalism, because it leads to the viewpoint in favour of the "demarcation" of the people according to national curiae, the "organisation" of nations, the "preservation" and cultivation of "national peculiarities"—all of which are entirely incompatible with Social-Democracy. It is not fortuitous that the Moravian separatists in the Reichsrat, having severed themselves from the German Social-Democratic deputies, have united with the Moravian bourgeois deputies to form a single, so to speak, Moravian "kolo". Nor is it fortuitous that the separatists of the Bund have got themselves involved in nationalism by acclaiming the "Sabbath" and "Yiddish". There are no Bundist deputies yet in the Duma, but in the Bund area there is a clerical-reactionary Jewish community, in the "controlling institutions" of which the Bund is arranging, for a beginning, a "get-together" of the Jewish workers and bourgeois.\* Such is the logic of cultural-national autonomy.

Thus, *national* autonomy does not solve the problem.

What, then, is the way out?

\* See *Report of the Eighth Conference of the Bund*, the concluding part of the resolution on the community.

The only correct solution is *regional* autonomy, autonomy for such crystallised units as Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, etc.

The advantage of regional autonomy consists, first of all, in the fact that it does not deal with a fiction bereft of territory, but with a definite population inhabiting a definite territory. Next, it does not divide people according to nations, it does not strengthen national barriers; on the contrary, it breaks down these barriers and unites the population in such a manner as to open the way for division of a different kind, division according to classes. Finally, it makes it possible to utilise the natural wealth of the region and to develop its productive forces in the best possible way without awaiting the decisions of a common centre—functions which are not inherent features of cultural-national autonomy.

Thus, *regional autonomy is an essential element* in the solution of the national question.

Of course, not one of the regions constitutes a compact, homogeneous nation, for each is interspersed with national minorities. Such are the Jews in Poland, the Letts in Lithuania, the Russians in the Caucasus, the Poles in the Ukraine, and so on. It may be feared, therefore, that the minorities will be oppressed by the national majorities. But there will be ground for fear only if the old order continues to prevail in the country. Give the country complete democracy and all grounds for fear will vanish.

It is proposed to bind the dispersed minorities into a single national union. But what the minorities want is not an artificial union, but real rights in the localities they inhabit. What can such a union give them without complete democratisation? On the other hand, what need is there for a national union *when there is* complete democratisation?

What is it that particularly agitates a national minority?

A minority is discontented not because there is no national union but because it does not enjoy the right to use its native language. Permit it to use its native language and the discontent will pass of itself.

A minority is discontented not because there is no artificial union but because it does not possess its own schools. Give it its own schools and all grounds for discontent will disappear.

A minority is discontented not because there is no national union, but because it does not enjoy liberty of conscience (religious liberty), liberty of movement, etc. Give it these liberties and it will cease to be discontented.

Thus, *equal rights of nations in all forms (language, schools, etc.) is an essential element* in the solution of the national question. Consequently, a state law based on complete democratisation of the country is required, prohibiting all national privileges without exception and every kind of disability or restriction on the rights of national minorities.

That, and that alone, is the real, not a paper guarantee of the rights of a minority.

One may or may not dispute the existence of a logical connection between organisational federalism and cultural-national autonomy. But one cannot dispute the fact that the latter creates an atmosphere favouring unlimited federalism, developing into complete rupture, into separatism. If the Czechs in Austria and the Bundists in Russia began with autonomy, passed to federation and ended in separatism, there can be no doubt that an important part in this was played by the nationalist atmosphere that is naturally generated by cultural-national autonomy. It is not fortuitous that national autonomy and organisational federalism go

hand in hand. It is quite understandable. Both demand demarcation according to nationalities. Both presume organisation according to nationalities. The similarity is beyond question. The only difference is that in one case the population as a whole is divided, while in the other it is the Social-Democratic workers who are divided.

We know where the demarcation of workers according to nationalities leads to. The disintegration of a united workers' party, the splitting of trade unions according to nationalities, aggravation of national friction, national strike-breaking, complete democratisation within the ranks of Social-Democracy—such are the results of organisational federalism. This is eloquently borne out by the history of Social-Democracy in Austria and the activities of the Bund in Russia.

The only cure for this is organisation on the basis of internationalism.

To unite locally the workers of all nationalities of Russia into *single, integral* collective bodies, to unite these collective bodies into a *single* party—such is the task.

It goes without saying that a party structure of this kind does not preclude, but on the contrary presumes, wide autonomy for the *regions* within the single integral party.

The experience of the Caucasus proves the expediency of this type of organisation. If the Caucasians have succeeded in overcoming the national friction between the Armenian and Tatar workers; if they have succeeded in safeguarding the population against the possibility of massacres and shooting affrays; if in Baku, that kaleidoscope of national groups, national conflicts are now no longer possible, and if it has been possible to draw the workers there into the single current of a powerful movement, then the international structure of the Caucasian Social-Democracy was not the least factor in bringing this about.

The type of organisation influences not only practical work. It stamps an indelible impress on the whole mental life of the worker. The worker lives the life of his organisation, which stimulates his intellectual growth and educates him. And thus, acting within his organisation and continually meeting there comrades from other nationalities, and side by side with them waging a common struggle under the leadership of a common collective body, he becomes deeply imbued with the idea that workers are *primarily* members of one class family, members of the united army of socialism. And this cannot but have a tremendous educational value for large sections of the working class.

Therefore, the international type of organisation serves as a school of fraternal sentiments and is a tremendous agitational factor on behalf of internationalism.

But this is not the case with an organisation on the basis of nationalities. When the workers are organised according to nationality they isolate themselves within their national shells, fenced off from each other by organisational barriers. The stress is laid not on what is *common* to the workers but on what distinguishes them from each other. In this type of organisation the worker is *primarily* a member of his nation: a Jew, a Pole, and so on. It is not surprising that *national* federalism in organisation inculcates in the workers a spirit of national seclusion.

Therefore, the national type of organisation is a school of national narrow-mindedness and stagnation.

Thus we are confronted by two *fundamentally* different types of

organisation: the type based on international solidarity and the type based on the organisational "demarcation" of the workers according to nationalities.

Attempts to reconcile these two types have so far been vain. The compromise rules of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party drawn up in Wimberg in 1897 were left hanging in the air. The Austrian party fell to pieces and dragged the trade unions with it. "Compromise" proved to be not only utopian, but harmful. Strasser is right when he says that "separatism achieved its first triumph at the Wimberg Party Congress."\* The same is true in Russia. The "compromise" with the federalism of the Bund which took place at the Stockholm Congress ended in a complete fiasco. The Bund violated the Stockholm compromise. Ever since the Stockholm Congress the Bund has been an obstacle in the way of union of the workers locally in a *single* organisation, which would include workers of all nationalities. And the Bund has obstinately persisted in its separatist tactics in spite of the fact that in 1907 and in 1908 Russian Social-Democracy repeatedly demanded that unity should at last be established from below among the workers of all nationalities.<sup>61</sup> The Bund, which began with organisational national autonomy, in fact passed to federalism, only to end in complete rupture, separatism. And by breaking with the Russian Social-Democratic Party it caused disharmony and disorganisation in the ranks of the latter. Let us recall the Jagiello affair<sup>62</sup> for instance.

The path of "compromise" must therefore be discarded as utopian and harmful.

One thing or the other: *either* the federalism of the Bund, in which case the Russian Social-Democratic Party must re-form itself on a basis of "demarcation" of the workers according to nationalities; *or* an international type of organisation, in which case the Bund must reform itself on a basis of territorial autonomy after the pattern of the Caucasian, Lettish and Polish Social-Democracies, and thus make possible the direct union of the Jewish workers with the workers of the other nationalities of Russia.

There is no middle course: principles triumph, they do not "compromise".

Thus, *the principle of international solidarity of the workers is an essential element* in the solution of the national question.

## Report on the National Question

Delivered at the Seventh (April) All-Russian Conference  
of the R. S. D. L. P., April 29, 1917<sup>63</sup>

An extensive report on the national question should rightly be given, but time is short and I must make my report brief.

Before the draft resolution is taken up certain premises must first be laid down. What is national oppression? National oppression is that system of exploitation and plunder of subject peoples, those measures of

\* See his *Der Arbeiter und die Nation*, 1912.

forcible restriction of the sovereign rights of subject peoples, which are resorted to by imperialist circles. These, taken together, represent the policy generally known as a policy of national oppression.

The first question is, on what classes does any particular government depend in carrying out its policy of national oppression? In order that an answer to this question may be given, it must first be understood why different forms of national oppression exist in different states, why in one state national oppression is more severe and crude than in other states. For instance, in Great Britain and Austria-Hungary national oppression never took the form of pogroms, but existed in the form of restrictions on the national rights of the subject peoples; whereas in Russia it not infrequently assumes the form of pogroms and massacres. In certain states, on the other hand, no specific measures against national minorities are practised at all. For instance, there is no national oppression in Switzerland, where French, Italians and Germans all live freely.

How are we to explain the difference in attitude towards nationalities in different states?

By the difference in the degree of democracy prevailing in these states. When in former years the old landed aristocracy controlled the state power in Russia, national oppression could assume, and actually did assume, the monstrous form of massacres and pogroms. In Great Britain, where there is a definite degree of democracy and political freedom, national oppression bears a less brutal character. Switzerland, for her part, approximates to a democratic society, and in that country the small nations have more or less complete freedom. In short, the more democratic a country, the less the national oppression, and vice versa. And since by democracy we mean that definite classes are in control of state power, it may be said from this point of view that the closer the old landed aristocracy stands to power, as was the case in old tsarist Russia, the more severe is the oppression and the more monstrous its forms.

However, national oppression is maintained not only by the landed aristocracy. There is, in addition, another force—the imperialist groups, who transfer to their own country the methods of enslaving peoples acquired by them in the colonies, and thus become the natural allies of the landed aristocracy. They are followed by the petty bourgeoisie, a section of the intelligentsia and a section of the upper strata of the workers, who also enjoy the fruits of the plunder. There is thus a whole chorus of social forces, headed by the landed and financial aristocracy, which support national oppression. In order to create a real democratic system, it is first of all necessary to clear the ground and remove this chorus from the political stage.

[Reads the resolution.]

The first question is, how are we to arrange the political life of the oppressed nations? In answer to this question it must be said that the oppressed nations forming part of Russia must be allowed the right to decide for themselves whether they wish to remain as part of the Russian state or to secede and form an independent state. We are at present witnessing a definite conflict between the Finnish people and the Provisional Government. The representatives of the Finnish people, the representatives of Social-Democracy, are demanding that the Provisional Government should return to the people the rights they enjoyed before they were annexed to Russia. The Provisional Government refuses

because, it will not recognise the sovereignty of the Finnish people. On whose side must we range ourselves? Obviously, on the side of the Finnish people, for it is inconceivable for us to recognise the forcible retention of any people whatsoever within the bounds of one state. When we put forward the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination we thereby raise the struggle against national oppression to the level of a struggle against imperialism, our common foe. Unless we do so, we may find ourselves in the position of people who bring grist to the mill of the imperialists. If we, the Social-Democrats, were to deny the Finnish people the right to declare its will on the subject of secession and the right to give effect to its will, we would thereby put ourselves in the position of people who continue the policy of tsarism.

The question of the *right* of nations freely to secede must not be confused with the question of whether a nation must *necessarily* secede at any given moment. This latter question must be settled by the party of the proletariat in each particular case independently, according to circumstances. When we recognise the right of oppressed peoples to secede, the *right* to determine their political destiny, we do not thereby settle the question of whether particular nations *should* secede from the Russian state at the given moment. I may recognise the right of a nation to secede, but that does not mean that I compel it to secede. A people has a right to secede, but it may or may not exercise that right, according to circumstances. Thus we are at liberty to agitate for or against secession, according to the interests of the proletariat, of the proletarian revolution. Hence, the question of secession must be determined in each particular case independently, in accordance with existing circumstances, and for this reason the question of recognising the right to secede must not be confused with the expediency of secession in any given circumstances. For instance, I personally would be opposed to the secession of Transcaucasia, bearing in mind the general level of development in Transcaucasia and in Russia, certain conditions of the struggle of the proletariat, and so forth. But if, nevertheless, the peoples of Transcaucasia were to demand secession, they would, of course, secede, and would not encounter opposition from us.

[Continues to read the resolution.]

Further, what is to be done with peoples which may desire to remain within the Russian state? The mistrust of Russia which existed among the peoples was fostered chiefly by the policy of tsarism. But now that tsarism no longer exists, and its policy of oppression no longer exists, this mistrust is bound to diminish and the attraction towards Russia increase. I believe that now, after the overthrow of tsarism, nine-tenths of the peoples will not desire secession. The Party therefore proposes to institute regional autonomy for regions which may not desire secession and which are distinguished by peculiarities of social life and language, as, for instance, Transcaucasia, Turkestan and the Ukraine. The geographical boundaries of these autonomous regions must be determined by the population itself with due regard for the conditions of economic life, social life, etc.

In contradistinction to regional autonomy there exists another plan, one which has long been recommended by the Bund, and particularly by Springer and Bauer, who advocate the principle of national cultural autonomy. I consider this plan unacceptable for the Social-Democrats. Its

essence is that Russia should be transformed into a union of nations, and nations into unions of persons drawn into a common society irrespective of where they are domiciled in the state. All Russians, all Armenians, and so on, are to be organised into separate national unions, irrespective of territory, and only then are they to enter the union of nations of the whole of Russia. This plan is extremely inconvenient and inexpedient. The fact is that the development of capitalism has dispersed whole groups of people, severed them from their nations and scattered them over the various corners of Russia. In view of the dispersion of nations resulting from economic conditions, to draw together the various individuals of a given nation is to organise and build a nation artificially. And to draw people together into nations artificially is to adopt the standpoint of nationalism. This plan, advanced by the Bund, cannot be endorsed by the Social-Democrats. It was rejected at the conference of our Party held in 1912,\* and generally enjoys no popularity in Social-Democratic circles with the exception of the Bund. This plan is also known as cultural autonomy, because from among the numerous and varied questions which interest a nation it singles out the purely cultural group of questions and places them under the charge of national unions. The basis for singling out these questions is the proposition that what unites a nation into a single whole is its culture. It is assumed that within a nation there are, on the one hand, interests which tend to disintegrate the nation, for instance, economic interests, and, on the other hand, interests which tend to weld it into a single whole, and that the cultural question is a question of the latter kind.

Lastly, there is the question of the national minorities. Their rights must be specially protected. The Party therefore demands complete equality of rights in educational, religious and other matters and the removal of all restrictions on national minorities.

There is § 9, which proclaims the equality of nations. The conditions required for its realisation can arise only when the whole of society has been fully democratised.

We have still to settle the question of how to organise the proletariat of the various nations into a single, common party. One plan is that the workers should be organised according to nationality—so many nations, so many parties. This plan was rejected by the Social-Democrats. Experience has shown that the organisation of the proletariat of a given state according to nationality only leads to the downfall of the idea of class solidarity. All the proletarian members of all the nations in a given state must be organised in a single, indivisible proletarian body.

Thus, our views on the national question can be reduced to the following propositions: (a) recognition of the right of peoples to secession; (b) regional autonomy for nations remaining within the given state; (c) special legislation guaranteeing freedom of development for national minorities; (d) a single, indivisible proletarian body, a single party, for the proletarians of all nationalities in the given state.

\* Conference of the Party held in Cracow, December 28, 1912. For conspiratorial purposes it was known as the February Conference.

## Principal decisions of the C. P. S. U. (B.) on the National Question

### RESOLUTION ON THE NATIONAL QUESTION

Adopted by the Seventh (April) All-Russian Conference  
of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, 1917

The landlords, capitalists and petty bourgeoisie support the policy of national oppression, inherited from the autocracy and monarchy, in order to protect their class privileges and to cause disunity among the workers of the various nationalities. Modern imperialism, which accentuates the tendency to subjugate feeble nations, is a new factor intensifying national oppression.

To the extent, that the elimination of national oppression is achievable at all in capitalist society, it is possible only under a consistently democratic republican structure and state administration that guarantee equality of status for all nations and languages.

The right of all the nations forming part of Russia freely to secede and form independent states shall be recognised. To negate this right, or to fail to take measures guaranteeing its practical realisation, is equivalent to supporting a policy of seizure and annexation. The recognition by the proletariat of the right of nations to secede can alone bring about complete solidarity among the workers of the various nations and help to bring the nations closer together on truly democratic lines.

The conflict which has at present arisen between Finland and the Russian Provisional Government is a striking illustration of the fact that the negation of the right of unhampered secession leads to a direct continuation of the policy of tsarism.

The question of the right of nations freely to secede must not be confused with the question of whether it would be expedient for any given nation to secede at any given moment. This latter question must be settled quite independently by the Party of the proletariat in each particular case, from the standpoint of the interests of the social development as a whole and of the class struggle of the proletariat for socialism.

The Party demands wide regional autonomy, the abolition of tutelage from above, the abolition of a compulsory state language and the determination of the boundaries of the self-governing and autonomous regions by the local population itself based on economic and social conditions, the national composition of the population, and so forth.

The Party of the proletariat decisively rejects what is known as "national cultural autonomy," under which education, etc., is removed from the jurisdiction of the state and placed within the jurisdiction of something in the nature of National Diets. National cultural autonomy artificially divides the workers living in one locality, and even working in the same industrial enterprises, in accordance with their adherence to a particular "national culture"; in other words it strengthens the ties between the workers and the bourgeois culture of individual nations, whereas the aim of Social-Democracy is to strengthen the international culture of the proletariat of the world.

The Party demands that a fundamental law shall be embodied in the constitution nullifying all privileges enjoyed by any nation whatever and all violations of the rights of national minorities.

The interests of the working class demand the amalgamation of the workers of all the nationalities of Russia into common proletarian organisations: political, trade union, co-operative, cultural, and so forth. Only such amalgamation of the workers of the various nationalities into common organisations will make it possible for the proletariat to wage a successful struggle against international capital and bourgeois nationalism.

## The October Revolution and the National Question<sup>64</sup> (1918)

The national question is not 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 character of the power in the country and by the whole course of social development generally. This is being strikingly borne out during the period of revolution in Russia, when the national question and the national movement in the border regions of Russia are rapidly and patently changing their character in accordance with the course and issue of the revolution.

### 1. The February Revolution and the National Question

In the period of bourgeois revolution in Russia (which began in February 1917) the national movement in the border regions bore the character of a bourgeois movement of emancipation. The nationalities of Russia, which had for ages been oppressed and exploited by the "old regime," now for the first time felt their strength and hurled themselves into combat with their oppressors. "Abolish national oppression" was the slogan of the movement. In a trice, "all-national" institutions sprang up all over the border regions of Russia. The movement was headed by the national, bourgeois-democratic intelligentsia. "National Councils" in Latvia, the Esthonian Region, Lithuania, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaidjan, the Caucasus, Kirghizstan and the Middle Volga Region; the "Rada" in the Ukraine<sup>65</sup> and in Byelorussia<sup>66</sup>; the "Sfatul Tsării" in Bessarabia<sup>67</sup>; the "Kurultai" in the Crimea<sup>68</sup> and in Bashkiria<sup>69</sup>; the "Autonomous Government" in Turkestan<sup>70</sup>—such were the "all-national" institutions around which the national bourgeoisie rallied its forces. It was a question of emancipation from tsarism, the "basic cause" of national oppression, and the formation of national bourgeois states. The right of nations to self-determination was interpreted to mean the right of the national bourgeoisie in the border regions to take power into its own hands and to take advantage of the February Revolution in order to form its "own" national state. A further development of the revolution did not and could not come into the calculations of the above-mentioned bourgeois institutions. And the fact was overlooked that tsarism was being replaced by a naked and barefaced imperialism, that this imperialism was a stronger



and more dangerous foe of the nationalities, and the basis of 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 and crude form of national oppression was replaced by a new, refined, but all the more dangerous, form of oppression. The government of Lvov-Milyukov-Kerensky, far from abandoning the policy of national oppression, organised a new campaign against Finland (dispersal of the Diet in the summer of 1917) and the Ukraine (the wholesale suppression of the cultural institutions of the Ukraine). Nay more, this government, imperialist by its very nature, called upon the population to continue the war in order to subjugate new lands, new colonies and new nationalities. It was driven to this not only because of the intrinsic nature of imperialism, but also because of the existence of the old imperialist states of Western Europe, which were irresistibly striving to subjugate new lands and nationalities and threatening to narrow its sphere of influence. The picture presented by the course of the imperialist war was a struggle of the imperialist states for the subjugation of small nationalities as a condition for the existence of these states. The abolition of tsarism and the appearance on the scene of the Milyukov-Kerensky government in no way improved this unsightly picture. Since the "all-national" institutions in the border regions displayed a tendency to political independence, it was natural that they should encounter 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 the latter. 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 explosion 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 or of the independence of the small national states. It became obvious that the emancipation of the toiling masses of the oppressed nationalities and the abolition of national oppression were inconceivable without a break with imperialism, without the overthrow by each of its "own" national bourgeoisie and the assumption of power by the toiling masses themselves.

This was strikingly borne out after the October Revolution.

## II. The October Revolution and the National Question

The February Revolution harboured irreconcilable internal contradictions. The revolution was accomplished by the efforts of the workers and peasants (soldiers), whereas, as a result of the revolution, the 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, whereas the bourgeoisie upon coming to power strove to use the revolutionary ardour of the masses in order to continue the war and to oppose peace. The economic disruption of the country and the food crisis demanded the expropriation of capital and of the industrial

enterprises for the benefit of the workers and the confiscation of the landed estates for the benefit of the peasants, whereas the bourgeois Milyukov-Kerensky government stood guard over the interests of the landlords and capitalists, resolutely protecting the latter against all attempts on the part of the workers and peasants. It was a bourgeois revolution, accomplished by the instrumentality 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 collapse 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 proved to be obviously inadequate for "the salvation of the country." The Milyukov-Kerensky government proved to be obviously incapable of solving the basic problems of the revolution.

A new, *socialist* revolution was necessary to lead the country out of the impasse of imperialist war and economic ruin.

This revolution came as a result of the October seizure of power.

By overthrowing the power of the landlords and the bourgeoisie and replacing it by a government of workers and peasants, the October Revolution at one blow solved the contradictions of the February Revolution. The abolition of the omnipotence of the landlords and kulaks and the transfer of the land to the toiling agricultural masses for their use; the expropriation of the factories and mills and their transfer to the control of the workers; the break with imperialism and the termination of the predatory war; the publication of the secret treaties and the exposure of the policy of foreign territorial annexations; finally, the proclamation of self-determination for the toiling masses of the oppressed nations and the recognition of the independence of Finland—such were the principal measures carried into effect by the Soviet government in the course of the revolution.

This was a truly *socialist* revolution.

The revolution, which started in the centre, could not long be confined to this 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 seizure of power, the revolutionary wave spread from the North all over Russia, sweeping over one border region after another. But here it struck a dam in the form of the "National Councils" and regional "governments" (Don, Kuban, Siberia) which had come into being before the October Revolution. The fact is that these "national governments" would not hear of a socialist revolution. Bourgeois by nature, they had not the slightest intention of destroying the old bourgeois world; 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 intention of breaking with imperialism; on the contrary, they were never averse to seizing and subjugating bits and morsels 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 centres of reaction attracting all that was counter-revolutionary in Russia. It is no secret that all the counter-revolutionaries ejected from Russia streamed to these centres, and there, around these centres formed themselves into the Whiteguard "national" regiments.

But, in addition to the "national" governments, there are national

workers and peasants in the border regions. Organised even before the October Revolution in their own revolutionary Soviets of Deputies on the model of the Soviets of Deputies in the central parts of Russia, they had never severed their 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 served to strengthen 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 their conflict 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 national-bourgeois "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 Soviet government. This is untrue. No government in the world has permitted such extensive decentralisation, no government in the world has ever granted its peoples such complete national freedom as does Soviet government in Russia. The fight of the border "governments" was, and is, a fight of bourgeois counter-revolution against socialism. The national flag is tacked to the cause only to deceive the masses, because it is a popular flag which conveniently conceals the counter-revolutionary designs of the national bourgeoisie.

But the fight of the "national" and regional "governments" proved to be an unequal one. Attacked from two quarters—from without by the Soviet government, and from within by their "own" workers and peasants—the "national governments" were obliged to retreat after the first engagements. The revolt of the Finnish workers and cotters and the flight of the bourgeois "Senate"; the revolt of the Ukrainian workers and peasants and the flight of the bourgeois "Rada"; the revolt of the workers and peasants in the Don, Kuban, and Siberia and the collapse of Kaledin, Kornilov and the Siberian "government"; the revolt 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 Azerbaidjan—all these are facts of common knowledge which demonstrated the complete isolation of the border "governments" from their "own" masses. Utterly defeated, the "national governments" were "obliged" to appeal for aid against their "own" workers and peasants to the imperialists of Western Europe, the age-long oppressors and exploiters of the small nations of the world.

Thus began the period of foreign interference and the occupation of the border regions—a period which once more revealed the counter-revolutionary nature of the "national" and regional "governments."

Now at last it has become obvious to all that the national bourgeoisie is striving not for the liberation of its "own people" from national oppression, but for the liberty of squeezing profits out of them, for the liberty of preserving its own privileges and capital.

Now at last it has become obvious that the emancipation of the oppressed nationalities is inconceivable without a rupture with imperialism, without the overthrow of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed

nationalities and without the transfer of power to the toiling 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 self-determination, with its slogan "All power to the toiling masses of the oppressed nationalities," entered into its own and obtained the opportunity of being applied in practice.

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—which also means national oppression—against the rule of the bourgeoisie, their "own" and foreign, and against imperialism in general.

### III. The International Significance of the October Revolution

Having triumphed in the centre of Russia and spread to a number of the border regions, the October Revolution could not stop short at the territorial frontiers of Russia. In the atmosphere of the imperialist World War and the general discontent of the lower classes, it could not but spread to neighbouring countries. Russia's break with imperialism and her escape from the predatory war; the publication of the secret treaties and the solemn abrogation of the policy of foreign annexations; the proclamation of national freedom and the recognition of the independence of Finland; the proclamation of Russia a "federation of Soviet national republics" and the battle-cry for a determined struggle against imperialism issued to the world by the Soviet government—all this could not but greatly affect the enslaved East and the bleeding West.

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

The October Revolution was the first revolution in the history of the world to provide the workers and soldiers of the West with a living redeeming example and to impel them into the true path of emancipation from the yoke of war and imperialism. The revolt of the workers and soldiers in Austria-Hungary and in Germany, the formation of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, the revolutionary struggle of the non-sovereign nations of Austria-Hungary against national oppression, are eloquent proof of this.

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

Foreign interference and the policy of occupation on the part of the "external" imperialists only serve to accentuate the revolutionary crisis, by drawing new nations into the struggle and extending the area of the revolutionary engagements with imperialism.

In this way the October Revolution is establishing a tie between the nations of the backward East and of the advanced West and is drawing

them into a common struggle against imperialism.

In this way the national question, from the particular question of combating national oppression, is growing 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 wandered into 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 and 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 never understood the indissoluble bond that exists 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 enslavement of the colonies by imperialism.

It is asserted that the principles of self-determination and "national defence" have been abrogated by the very course of events under the conditions of a rising socialist revolution. But as a matter of fact it is not self-determination and "national defence" 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 yearning for liberation; one has only to glance at Russia, which is fighting a revolutionary war for the defence of the socialist fatherland from the pirates of imperialism; one has only to reflect on the events now taking place in Austria-Hungary; one has only to glance at the enslaved colonies and semi-colonies which have already organised their own Soviets (India, Persia, China)—one has only to glance at all this to realise the full revolutionary significance of the principle of self-determination in its socialist interpretation.

The great international 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 into the general question of emancipating the oppressed nations, colonies and semi-colonies from imperialism;

(2) It has opened up vast possibilities and revealed the proper way of achieving emancipation, and thereby greatly helped the cause of emancipation of the oppressed nations of the West and the East, having drawn them into the common channel 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 line of revolutions against world imperialism, extending from the proletarians of the West, through the Russian revolution, to the oppressed nations 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 West.

And this largely explains the brutal fury with which the imperialist robbers of the world have now hurled themselves against Soviet Russia.

## The Policy of the Soviet Government on the National Question in Russia<sup>71</sup> (1920)

Three years of revolution and civil war in Russia have shown that unless Central Russia and her border regions mutually support each other the success of the revolution and the liberation of Russia from the clutches of imperialism will be impossible. Central Russia, that hearth of world revolution, cannot hold out long without the assistance of the border regions, which abound in raw materials, fuel and food-stuffs. The border regions of Russia in their turn would be inevitably doomed to imperialist bondage without the political, military and organisational support of more developed Central Russia. If it is true to say that the more developed proletariat of the West cannot finish off the world bourgeoisie without the support of the peasant East, which is less developed but which abounds in raw materials and fuel, it is equally true to say that more developed Central Russia cannot complete the revolution without the support of the border regions of Russia, which are less developed but which abound in essential resources.

This circumstance has undoubtedly been taken into account by the Entente ever since the establishment of the Soviet government, when it (the Entente) pursued the plan of surrounding Central Russia economically by cutting off the more important of her border regions. And the plan of economically surrounding Russia has continued to be the unchanging basis of all the campaigns of the Entente against Russia, from 1918 to 1920, not excluding its present machinations in the Ukraine, Azerbaidjan and Turkestan.

All the more important is it, therefore, to achieve a firm alliance between the centre and the border regions of Russia.

And this means that definite relations, definite ties must be established between the centre and the border regions of Russia in order to ensure an intimate and unshakable alliance between them.

What must these relations be, what forms must they assume?

In other words, what must be the policy of the Soviet government towards the national question in Russia?

The demand for the secession of the border regions from Russia as the form that should be given to the relations between the centre and the border regions must be rejected not only because it is contrary to the very purpose of establishing an alliance between the centre and the border regions, but primarily because it is fundamentally opposed to the interests of the masses both of the centre and of the border regions. Apart from the fact that the secession of the border regions would undermine the revolutionary might of Central Russia, which is stimulating the movement for the emancipation of the West and the East, the seceded border regions themselves would inevitably fall into bondage to international imperialism. One has only to glance at Georgia, Armenia, Poland, Finland, etc., which have seceded from Russia but which have retained only the semblance of independence, having in reality been converted into unconditional vassals of the Entente; one has only, finally, to recall the recent case of the Ukraine and Azerbaidjan, the former of which was plundered by German capital and the latter by the Entente, in order to realise the counter-revolutionary nature of the demand for the secession of the border regions under present international conditions.

When a life-and-death struggle is developing between proletarian Russia and the imperialist Entente, only two alternatives confront the border regions:

Either they join forces with Russia, and then the toiling masses of the border regions will be emancipated from imperialist oppression;

Or they join forces with the Entente, and then the yoke of imperialism will be inevitable.

There is no third solution. The so-called independence of a so-called independent Georgia, Armenia, Poland, Finland, etc., is only an illusion, and conceals the utter dependence of these apologies for states on one group of imperialists or another.

Of course, the border regions of Russia, the nations and tribes which inhabit these regions, just as all other nations, possess the inalienable right to secede from Russia, and if any of these nations decided by a majority to secede from Russia, as was the case with Finland in 1917, Russia, presumably, would be obliged to record the fact and sanction the secession. But the question here is not the indubitable rights of nations, but the interests of the masses both in the centre and in the border regions; it is a question of the character—determined by these interests—of the agitation which our Party must carry on if it does not wish to repudiate itself and if it wishes to influence the will of the toiling masses of the nationalities in a definite direction. And the interests of the masses render the demand for the secession of the border regions at the present stage of the revolution a profoundly counter-revolutionary one.

Similarly, what is known as national cultural autonomy must also be rejected as a form of alliance between the centre and the border regions of Russia. The experience of Austria-Hungary (the birthplace of national cultural autonomy) during the last ten years has revealed the fully ephemeral and ineffectual character of national cultural autonomy as a form of alliance between the toiling masses of the nationalities of a multi-national state. Springer and Bauer, the authors of national cultural autonomy, who now sit lamenting over the split milk pail of their cunningly contrived national programme, are living corroborations of the fact. Finally, the spokesman of national cultural autonomy in Russia, the once famous Bund, was itself recently obliged officially to acknowledge the superfluousness of national cultural autonomy by publicly declaring that:

"The demand for national cultural autonomy, which was put forward under the capitalist system, loses all meaning in the conditions of a socialist revolution." (See *The Twelfth Conference of the Bund*, 1920, p. 21.)

There remains *regional* autonomy for border regions marked by specific social customs and national composition, as the only expedient form of alliance between the centre and the border regions, an autonomy which is designed to connect the border regions of Russia with the centre by federal ties. This is the Soviet form of autonomy which was proclaimed by the Soviet government from its very inception and which is now being practised in the border regions in the form of administrative communities and autonomous Soviet republics.

Soviet autonomy is not a rigid thing fixed once and for all time; it permits of the most varied forms and degrees of development. It passes from narrow administrative autonomy (the Volga Germans, the Chuvashes and the Karelians) to a wider, political autonomy (the Bashkirs, the Volga Tatars and the Kirghiz); from wide political autonomy to a still wider form of autonomy (the Ukraine and Turkestan); and finally from the Ukrainian

type of autonomy to the supreme form of autonomy—contractual relations (Azerbaijan). This elasticity of Soviet autonomy constitutes one of its prime merits, for this elasticity makes it possible to embrace all the various types of border regions in Russia, which vary greatly in their levels of cultural and economic development. Three years of Soviet policy in the sphere of the national question in Russia have shown that in applying Soviet autonomy in its varied forms the Soviet government is on the right path, for this policy alone made it possible to lay a road to the remotest corners of the border regions of Russia, to arouse to political life the most backward and nationally diverse masses and to connect these masses with the centre by the most varied ties—a problem which not a single government in the world was solving, or even attempting to solve (being afraid to do so!). The administrative re-arrangement of Russia on the basis of Soviet autonomy has not yet been completed; the Northern Caucasians, the Kalmucks, the Cheremisses, the Vots, the Buryats, and others, are still awaiting a settlement of the question. But no matter what aspect the administrative map of the future Russia may assume, and no matter what shortcomings there may have been in this field—and shortcomings there certainly were—it must be acknowledged that by undertaking her administrative reconstruction on the basis of regional autonomy Russia has made an extremely important stride towards rallying the border regions around the proletarian centre and bringing the government in closer contact with the broad masses of the border regions.

But the proclamation of one form of Soviet autonomy or another, the enactment of corresponding decrees and ordinances, and even the creation of governments in the border regions in the shape of regional Councils of People's Commissars of the autonomous republics, are far from being all that is required to consolidate the alliance between the border regions and the centre. In order to consolidate this alliance it is first of all necessary to put an end to the estrangement and isolation of the border regions, to their patriarchal manner of life and lack of culture and to the mistrustful attitude towards the centre which still persists in the border regions as a heritage of the brutal policy of tsarism. Tsarism deliberately cultivated patriarchal and feudal oppression in the border regions in order to keep the masses in a state of slavery and ignorance. Tsarism deliberately settled the best areas in the border regions with colonisers in order to force the natives into the worst areas and to intensify national enmity. Tsarism restricted, and at times simply suppressed, the native schools, theatres and educational institutions in order to keep the masses in intellectual darkness. Tsarism frustrated the initiative of the best members of the native population. Lastly, tsarism suppressed all activity on the part of the masses of the border regions. Tsarism in this way implanted among the natives a profound mistrust, at times passing into direct hostility, for everything Russian. If the alliance between Central Russia and the border regions is to be consolidated, this mistrust must be removed and an atmosphere of mutual understanding and fraternal confidence created. But in order to remove this mistrust we must first help the masses of the border regions to emancipate themselves from the survivals of the feudal-patriarchal yoke; we must abolish—abolish in actual fact and not only in word—all the privileges of the colonisers: we must enable the masses to taste of the material benefits of the revolution. In brief, we must prove to the masses that Central, proletarian Russia is defending their interests, and their interests alone; and this must be proved not only by repressive measures against the colonisers and the bourgeois nationalists, measures that

are frequently incomprehensible to the masses, but primarily by a consistent and well-conceived economic policy.

Everybody is acquainted with the liberals' demand for universal compulsory education. Communists in the border regions cannot stand more to the Right than the liberals; they must put universal education into effect if they want to end the ignorance of the people and if they want to create closer spiritual ties between the centre of Russia and the border regions. But in order to do so we must develop local national schools, national theatres and national educational institutions and must raise the cultural level of the masses of the border regions. For it need hardly be shown that ignorance and unenlightenment are the most dangerous enemies of Soviet government. We do not know what success is attending our work in this field generally, but we are informed that in one of the most important border regions the local People's Commissariat of Education is expending in the native schools only ten per cent of its available credits. If that is true, it must be confessed that in this field we have unfortunately not progressed much on the "old regime."

The Soviet government is not a government divorced from the people; on the contrary, it is the only government of its kind, a government which comes from the Russian masses and is near and dear to them. This in fact explains the unparalleled strength and resilience displayed by the Soviet government at critical moments. The Soviet government must become no less near and dear to the masses of the border regions of Russia. But to do so the Soviet government must first be comprehensible to them. It is therefore necessary that all Soviet organs in the border regions—the courts, the administration, the economic bodies, the direct organs of government (as also the organs of the Party)—should as far as possible be recruited from among local people acquainted with the customs, life, habits, and language of the native population; that the best people from among the native masses should be got to participate in these institutions; that the local toiling masses should be drawn into every sphere of administration of the country, including military formations, in order that the masses may see that the Soviet government and its organs are the products of their own efforts, the embodiment of their aspirations. Only in this way can an unbreakable spiritual contact be established between the masses and the government, and only in this way can the Soviet government become comprehensible and dear to the toiling masses of the border regions.

Certain comrades regard the autonomous republics in Russia and Soviet autonomy generally as a temporary, if necessary, evil which must for certain reasons be tolerated, but which must be resisted so that it may one day be abolished. It need hardly be shown that such a view is fundamentally false and that at any rate it is entirely foreign to the policy of the Soviet government on the national question. Soviet autonomy is not an abstraction or artificial thing; still less is it an empty and declarative promise. Soviet autonomy is the most real and concrete way of uniting the border regions to Central Russia. Nobody will deny that the Ukraine, Azerbaidjan, Turkestan, the Kirghiz Republic, the Bashkir Republic, the Tatar Republic, and other border regions, since they are striving for the cultural and material prosperity of their masses, must have their native schools, courts, administration and government bodies recruited principally from local people. Furthermore, the real Sovietisation of these regions, their conversion into Soviet countries closely bound to Central Russia and forming with it one state whole, is *inconceivable*

without the widespread organisation of local schools, without the creation of courts, administrative bodies, organs of government, etc., recruited from among people acquainted with the life and language of the population. But to conduct the schools, courts, the administration and organs of government in the native language precisely means putting Soviet autonomy into practice; for Soviet autonomy is nothing but the sum of these various institutions enveloped in a Ukrainian, Turkestanian, Kirghiz, etc., form.

How, after this, can one seriously say that Soviet autonomy is ephemeral, that it must be resisted, and so forth?

One thing or the other:

*Either* the Ukrainian, Azerbaidjanian, Kirghiz, Uzbek, Bashkir and the other languages are a reality, and it is therefore absolutely essential to develop in these regions native schools, courts, administrative bodies and organs of government recruited from the local people—in which case Soviet autonomy in these regions must be put into effect in its entirety, without any reservations whatsoever;

*Or* the Ukrainian, Azerbaidjanian, etc., languages are a pure fiction, and therefore schools and other institutions in the native language are unnecessary—in which case Soviet autonomy must be discarded as useless lumber.

The search for a third way is due either to ignorance of the subject or to deplorable superficiality.

One serious obstacle to the realisation of Soviet autonomy is the acute shortage of intellectual forces of local origin in the border regions, the shortage of instructors in every branch of Soviet and Party work without exception. This shortage cannot but hamper both educational and revolutionary constructive work in the border regions. But for this very reason it would be unwise and harmful to alienate the all too few groups of native intellectuals, who perhaps would like to serve the masses but are unable to do so, perhaps because, not being Communists, they believe themselves to be surrounded by an atmosphere of mistrust and are afraid of possible measures of repression. The policy of drawing such groups into Soviet work, the policy of recruiting them for economic, agrarian, food-supply and similar posts, with the purpose of their gradual Sovietisation, may be successfully applied. For it will hardly be maintained that these intellectual groups are less reliable than, let us say, the counter-revolutionary military experts who, their counter-revolution notwithstanding, were appointed to work in important posts and were subsequently Sovietised.

But the employment of the national groups of intellectuals will still be far from sufficient to satisfy the demand for instructors. We must simultaneously develop in the border regions a wide network of lecture courses and schools in every branch of administration in order to create cadres of instructors from among local people. For it is clear that without such cadres the organisation of native schools, courts, administration and other institutions in the native tongue will be difficult in the extreme.

A no less serious obstacle to the realisation of Soviet autonomy is the precipitance, at times assuming the form of gross tactlessness, displayed by certain comrades in the matter of Sovietising the border regions. When such comrades, in regions which are a whole historical period behind Central Russia, in regions where the mediaeval order has not yet been wholly abolished, take upon themselves the "heroic task" of applying "pure communism," we may safely say that no good will come of such



cavalry raids, of "communism" of this kind. We should like to remind these comrades of the point in our programme which says:

"The Communist Party of Russia adopts the historical class viewpoint, and in this takes into consideration the stage of historical development of the given nation: whether it is evolving from mediaevalism to bourgeois democracy, or from bourgeois democracy to Soviet or proletarian democracy, etc."

And further:

"In any case the proletariat of the nations which have been oppressing nations must exercise special caution and pay special attention to the survivals of national sentiment among the toiling masses of oppressed or nonsovereign nations." (See *Programme of the Russian Communist Party*.)

That means that if, for instance, the direct method of appropriating superfluous dwelling space in Azerbaidjan tends to alienate from us the Azerbaidjanian masses, who regard the home, the domestic hearth, as holy and inviolable, it is obvious that the direct method of appropriating superfluous dwelling space must be replaced by an indirect method of achieving the same end. Or further: if, for instance, the Daghestanian masses, who are profoundly imbued with religious prejudices, follow the Communists "on the basis of the Shariah," it is obvious that the direct method of combating religious prejudices in this country must be replaced by indirect and more cautious methods. And so on, and so forth.

In brief, cavalry raids with the object of "immediately communising" the backward masses must be discarded for a cautious and well-conceived policy of gradually drawing these masses into the general stream of Soviet development.

Such in general are the practical conditions necessary for realising Soviet autonomy, the introduction of which will bring about closer spiritual relations and a firm revolutionary alliance between the centre and the border regions of Russia.

Soviet Russia is performing an experiment without parallel anywhere in the world in organising the co-existence of a number of nations and tribes within a single proletarian state on a basis of mutual confidence and voluntary and fraternal good-will. Three years of the revolution have shown that this experiment has every chance of success. But this experiment can be certain of complete success only if our practical policy with regard to the national problem in the various localities does not run counter to the demands of Soviet autonomy already proclaimed, in its varied forms and degrees of application, and if every practical measure we take in the localities contributes to bringing the masses of the people in the border regions to partake of a higher, proletarian spiritual and material culture in forms corresponding to the social habits and national features of these masses.

And this will be a guarantee of the consolidation of the revolutionary alliance between Central Russia and the border regions of Russia against which all the machinations of the Entente will be shattered.

## Theses on the immediate tasks of the Party in connection with the National Problem

*Presented to the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, Endorsed by the Central Committee (1921)*

### I. The Capitalist System and National Oppression

1. Modern nations are a product of a definite epoch—the epoch of rising capitalism. The process of the abolition of feudalism and the development of capitalism was also a process of formation of people into nations. The British, French, Germans, and Italians formed into nations during the victorious march of capitalism and its triumph over feudal disunity.

2. Where the formation of nations on the whole coincided in time with the formation of centralised states, the nations naturally became invested in a state integument and developed into independent bourgeois national states. Such was the case with Great Britain (without Ireland), France and Italy. In Eastern Europe, on the contrary, the formation of centralised states, accelerated by the exigencies of self-defence (against the invasions of the Turks, Mongols and others), took place prior to the breakup of feudalism and therefore prior to the formation of nations. Here, as a result, the nations did not, and could not, develop into national states, but formed into several mixed, multi-national bourgeois states, consisting usually of one powerful, dominant nation and several weak, subject nations. Such are Austria, Hungary and Russia.

3. National states, such as France and Italy, depending at first mainly on their own national forces, were generally speaking unacquainted with national oppression. In contradistinction, the multi-national states, based as they are on the domination of one nation—or rather of its ruling class—over the other nations, were the original home and the chief scene of national oppression and national movements. The contradictions between the interests of the ruling nations and the interests of the subject nations are such that unless they are solved the stable existence of multinational states becomes impossible. The tragedy of the multi-national bourgeois state is that it is unable to overcome these contradictions and that every attempt it makes to "level" the nations and "protect" the national minorities while preserving private property and class inequality usually ends in a new failure and a further intensification of national conflicts.

4. The subsequent growth of capitalism in Europe, the need for new markets, the search for raw materials and fuel, and, finally, the development of imperialism, the export of capital and the necessity of protecting the great sea and rail routes, have led, on the one hand, to the seizure of new territories by the old national states and the conversion of the latter into multi-national (colonial) states with the national oppression and national conflicts natural to multi-national states (Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy) and, on the other hand, have intensified the strivings of the dominant nations in the old multi-national states not merely to preserve the old state boundaries but to extend them and to subjugate new (weak) nationalities at the expense of neighbouring states. In this



way the national problem was enlarged and finally, in the very course of events, became merged with the general problem of the colonies; while national oppression was transformed from an internal question into an inter-state question, into a question of conflict (and war) between the "Great" imperialist powers for the subjugation of weak and non-sovereign nationalities.

5. The imperialist war, which exposed to their very roots the irreconcilable national contradictions and the internal insolvency of the bourgeois multi-national states, led to an extreme aggravation of national conflicts within the victorious colonial states (Great Britain, France Italy), to the complete disintegration of the defeated former multi-national states (Austria, Hungary, Russia in 1917) and, finally—as the most "radical" solution of the national problem of which the bourgeoisie is capable—to the formation of new bourgeois national states (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Finland, Georgia, Armenia, etc.). But the formation of new independent national states did not result, and could not result, in the peaceful co-existence of nationalities, and did not eliminate, and could not eliminate, either national inequality or national oppression; for the new national states, based as they are on private property and class inequality, cannot exist (a) without oppressing their own national minorities (Poland, which oppresses the Byelorussians, Jews, Lithuanians and Ukrainians; Georgia, which oppresses the Ossets, Abkhazians and Armenians; Yugoslavia, which oppresses the Croats and Bosnians, and others); (b) without extending their territories at the expense of their neighbours, which leads to conflict and war (Poland against Lithuania, the Ukraine and Russia; Yugoslavia against Bulgaria; Georgia against Armenia and Turkey, and so on); and (c) without becoming subject financially, economically and militarily to the "Great" imperialist powers.

6. Thus the post-war period presents a gloomy picture of national enmity, inequality, oppression, conflict, war and imperialist brutality on the part of the nations of civilised countries both towards each other and towards the non-sovereign peoples: on the one hand we have a few "Great" Powers, which oppress and exploit the mass of dependent and "independent" (but in fact wholly dependent) national states, and the struggle of these powers among themselves for the monopoly of exploiting the national states; and on the other hand we have the struggle of the national states, dependent and "independent" against the intolerable oppression of the "Great" Powers; the struggle of the national states among themselves for the extension of their national territory; the struggle of the national states, each in particular, against its own oppressed national minorities; and, finally, the growth of the movement for emancipation on the part of the colonies against the "Great" Powers and the intensification of national conflicts both within these powers and within the national states, which as a rule contain a number of national minorities. Such is the "world picture" inherited from the imperialist war.

Bourgeois society has proved to be utterly bankrupt in the matter of solving the national problem.

## II. The Soviet System and National Freedom

1. Whereas private property and capital inevitably disunite people, inflame national enmity and intensify national oppression, collective property and labour just as inevitably bring people closer, undermine

national enmity and abolish national oppression. The existence of capitalism without national oppression is just as inconceivable as the existence of socialism without the emancipation of oppressed nations, without national freedom. Chauvinism and national conflict are inevitable, unavoidable, as long as the peasantry (and the petty bourgeoisie generally) is permeated with nationalist prejudices and follows the bourgeoisie; while, on the contrary, national peace and national freedom may be regarded as assured when the peasantry follows the proletariat, that is to say, when dictatorship of the proletariat has been assured. Hence the triumph of the Soviets and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat is a basic condition for the abolition of national oppression, the institution of national equality and the guarantee of the rights of national minorities.

2. The experience of the Soviet revolution entirely bears out this assertion. The establishment of a Soviet system in Russia and the proclamation of the right of nations to political secession have brought about a complete change in the relations between the toiling masses of the nationalities of Russia; they have undermined the old national enmity, deprived national oppression of its foundation, won for the Russian workers the confidence of their brothers of other nationalities, not only in Russia, but also in Europe and Asia, and have raised this confidence to a pitch of enthusiasm and readiness to fight for the common cause. The creation of Soviet republics in Azerbaidjan and Armenia has been productive of similar results and has put an end to national collisions and the "age-old" enmity between the Turkish and Armenian toiling masses and between the Armenian and Azerbaidjanian toiling masses. The same must be said of the temporary success of the Soviets in Hungary, Bavaria, Finland and Latvia. On the other hand, it may safely be said that the Russian workers could not have defeated Kolchak and Denikin and the Azerbaidjan and Armenian Republics could not have been put on their feet without the elimination of national enmity and national oppression at home, and without the confidence and enthusiasm displayed towards them by the toiling masses of the nationalities of the West and the East. The consolidation of the Soviet republics and the abolition of national oppression are two aspects of one and the same process of emancipation of the toilers from imperialist bondage.

3. But the existence of the Soviet republics, even the smallest in size, represents a fatal menace to imperialism. This menace lies not merely in the fact that the Soviet republics, having broken away from imperialism, have been converted from colonies and semi-colonies into really independent states and have thereby deprived the imperialists of a certain part of their territories and revenues, but also, and primarily, in the fact that the very existence of the Soviet republics, and every step taken by these republics in the direction of suppressing the bourgeoisie and consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat, is of the greatest value as agitation against capitalism and imperialism, agitation for the emancipation of dependent countries from imperialist bondage, and an insuperable factor in the disintegration and disorganisation of capitalism in all its forms. Hence the inevitability of the struggle of the "Great" imperialist powers against the Soviet republics and the endeavour of the "Great" Powers to annihilate these republics. The history of the struggle of the "Great" Powers against Soviet Russia, in which they are raising against her one bourgeois border government after another and one group of counter-revolutionary generals after another, carefully blockading her

and generally endeavouring to isolate her economically, furnishes eloquent testimony to the fact that under present international conditions, under the conditions of a capitalist encirclement, not a single Soviet republic taken alone can regard itself as secure against economic exhaustion and military destruction at the hands of world imperialism.

4. Hence, in isolation, the existence of the various Soviet republics is uncertain and unstable, because of the menace to their existence offered by the capitalist states. The joint interests of the Soviet republics in the matter of defence, in the first place, the restoration of the productive forces shattered during the war, in the second place, and the fact that the Soviet republics which are rich in food must come to the aid of the Soviet republics which are poor in food, in the third place, imperatively dictate the political union of the various Soviet republics as the only means of escaping imperialist bondage and national oppression. Having liberated themselves from their "own" and "foreign" bourgeoisie, the national Soviet republics can defend their existence and defeat the combined forces of imperialism only by amalgamating themselves into a close political union, or not at all.

5. A federation of Soviet republics based on common military and economic affairs is that general form of political union which makes it possible (a) to guarantee the integrity and economic development both of the individual republics and of the federation as a whole; (b) to embrace the various social, cultural and economic conditions of the various nations and peoples, which are at different levels of development, and accordingly to apply one form of federation or another, and (c) to bring about the peaceful co-existence and fraternal collaboration of the nations and peoples which have in one form or another thrown in their lot with that of the federation. The experience of Russia in applying various forms of federation, passing from federation based on Soviet autonomy (the Kirghiz Republic, the Bashkir Republic, the Tatar Republic, the Gortsi, Daghestan) to federation based on contractual relations between independent Soviet republics (the Ukraine, Azerbaidjan), with intermediate phases (Turkestan, Byelorussia), has fully proved the value and flexibility of federation as a general form of political union of the Soviet republics.

6. But federation may be durable, and the results of federation real, only if it is based on mutual confidence and the voluntary consent of the countries constituting the federation. If the R. S. F. S. R. is the only country in the world in which the experiment in the peaceful co-existence and fraternal collaboration of a large number of nations and peoples has succeeded, it is because it contains neither ruling nor subject peoples, neither a mother country nor colonies, neither imperialism nor national oppression. In the R. S. F. S. R. federation rests on mutual confidence and a voluntary desire for union on the part of the toiling masses of the various nations. This voluntary character of the federation must absolutely be preserved in the future, for only a federation of this kind can serve as a transition stage to that supreme unity of the toilers of all countries in a single world economic system the necessity for which is growing more and more palpable.

### III. Immediate Tasks of the Russian Communist Party

1. The R. S. F. S. R. and its allied Soviet Republics are representative of a population of about 140,000,000 people. Of these the non-Great-Russian peoples amount to about 65,000,000 (Ukrainians, Byelorussians,

Kirghiz, Uzbeks, Turkmens, Tadjiks, Azerbaidjanians, Volga Tatars, Crimean Tatars, Bokharans, Khivans, Bashkirs, Armenians, Chechens, Kabardians, Ossets, Circassians, Ingushes, Karachis, Balkarians\* Kalmucks, Karelians, Avarians, Darghis, Kazikumukhians, Kurins, Kumyks,\*\* Maris, Chuvashes, Vots, Volga Germans, Buryats, Yakutians, etc.). The policy of tsarism, the policy of the landlords and the bourgeoisie, towards these peoples was to destroy every germ of statehood among them, to cripple their culture, restrict the use of their native tongue, hold them in a state of ignorance, and, finally, as far as possible, to Russify them. The effects of this policy are reflected in the low level of development and political backwardness of these peoples.

Now that the landlords and bourgeoisie have been overthrown and a Soviet government has been proclaimed by the masses of the people in these countries also, the task of the Party is to help the toiling masses of the non-Great-Russian peoples to catch up with Central Russia, which is ahead of them, and to help them (a) to develop and consolidate their own Soviet state system in forms consistent with the national character of these peoples; (b) to organise their own courts, administrative bodies, economic organs and government organs functioning in the native language and recruited from among local people acquainted with the customs and psychology of the local population, and (c) to develop a press, schools, theatres, clubs and cultural and educational institutions generally, functioning in the native language.

2. If from the 65,000,000 of the non-Great-Russian population we exclude the Ukraine, Byelorussia, a small part of Azerbaidjan, and Armenia, which in a more or less degree have passed through the period of industrial capitalism, there remain about 30,000,000, consisting principally of Turkic peoples (Turkestan, the greater part of Azerbaidjan, Daghestan, the Gortsi, Tatars, Bashkirs, Kirghiz, and others), who have not passed through a capitalist development, who do not, or practically do not, possess an industrial proletariat of their own, who in the majority of cases preserve the pastoral and patriarchal tribal form of life (Kirghizia, Bashkiria, the Northern Caucasus), or who have not yet progressed beyond a primitive semi-patriarchal, semi-feudal form of life (Azerbaidjan, the Crimea, etc.), but who have already been drawn into the common current of Soviet development.

The duty of the Party towards the toiling masses of these peoples (in addition to the duties set forth in Par. 1) is to assist them in eliminating the survivals of patriarchal and feudal relations and in joining in the work of building up a Soviet economic system on the basis of Soviets of toiling peasants, by creating among these peoples strong Communist organisations capable of utilising the experience gained by the Russian workers and peasants in Soviet and economic development and at the same time capable of adopting their constructive work to the peculiarities of the concrete economic conditions, class structure, culture and habits of each particular people, instead of mechanically transplanting the economic measures of Central Russia, which are adapted to a different, and higher, stage of economic development.

\* The Chechens, Kabardians, Ossets, Circassians, Ingushes, Karachis, and Balkarians form the Gortsi group of peoples.

\*\* The Avarians, Darghis, Kazikumukhians, Kurins, and Kumyks form the Daghestanian group of peoples.

3. If from these 30,000,000, consisting principally of Turkic peoples, we exclude Azerbaidjan, the greater part of Turkestan, the Volga and the Crimean Tatar Republics, Bokhara, Khiva, Daghestan, a part of the Gortsi (Kabardians, Circassians, Balkarians) and several other peoples which have already become settled and permanently attached to a definite territory, there remain about 10,000,000 Kirghiz, Bashkirs, Chechens, Ossets and Ingushes, whose lands until recently had been subject to colonisation by Russian settlers, the latter having already seized the best of their arable land, systematically forcing them into the sterile desert. The policy of tsarism, the policy of the landlords and the bourgeoisie, was to settle these parts with the greatest possible number of kulaks from among the Russian peasants and the Cossacks, and to make the latter a reliable basis for Great-Power ambitions. This policy led to the gradual extermination of the natives (Kirghiz, Bashkirs) who had been forced into the sterile wilderness.

The duty of the Party in relation to the toiling masses of these peoples (in addition to the duties enumerated in Pars. 1 and 2) is to unite their efforts with the efforts of the toiling masses of the local Russian population in that struggle for emancipation from the kulaks in general and from the predatory Great-Russian kulaks in particular, to help them in every way to throw off the yoke of the kulak colonisers and thus to provide them with land suitable and essential for human subsistence.

4. In addition to the above-mentioned nations and peoples, which possess a definite class structure and occupy definite territory, there exist within the R. S. F. S. R. various casual national groups, national minorities, interspersed among compact majorities of other nations, who in most cases neither possess a definite class structure nor occupy a definite territory (Letts, Esthonians, Poles, Jews, and others). The policy of tsarism was to exterminate these minorities by every possible means, including massacre (Jewish pogroms).

Now that national privileges have been abolished and the equality of nationalities established, and the right of national minorities to free national development is guaranteed by the very nature of the Soviet system, the duty of the Party towards the toiling masses of these national groups is to help them to make the fullest possible use of the right to free development which they have secured.

5. The development of Communist organisations in the border regions is taking place under rather peculiar circumstances, which tend to hinder the normal growth of the Party in these parts. On the one hand, the Great-Russian Communists working in these regions, who have grown up under the conditions of a "sovereign" nation, and who have never known national oppression, not infrequently minimise the importance of national peculiarities in Party work, or else ignore them altogether, and fail in their work to reckon with the peculiarities of class structure, culture, social life, and historical past of the given people, and so vulgarise and distort the policy of the Party on the national question. This circumstance leads to a deviation from communism towards the dominant-nation spirit, the colonising spirit, the spirit of Great-Russian chauvinism. On the other hand, the native Communists, who have lived through the painful period of national oppression and have not entirely ceased to be haunted by the horrors of that period, not infrequently exaggerate the importance of national peculiarities in Party work, leave the class interests of the toilers in the background, or else simply identify the interests of the toilers of the given nation with the "general national"

interests of that nation, failing to pick out the former from the latter and to base their Party work on them. This circumstance in its turn leads to a deviation from communism towards bourgeois-democratic nationalism, which at times assumes the form of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism (in the East).

The congress emphatically condemns both these deviations as harmful and dangerous to the cause of communism and deems it necessary to point to the particular danger and the particular harm of the first deviation, the deviation towards the dominant-nation spirit, the colonising spirit. The congress calls attention to the fact that unless colonising and nationalist survivals within the ranks of the party are eliminated it will be impossible in the border regions to create strong, genuinely communist organisations closely bound up with the masses and uniting within their ranks the proletarian elements of the native and Russian populations on the basis of internationalism. The congress therefore considers that one of the main tasks of the Party in the border regions is to eliminate the nationalist, and particularly the coloniser, vacillations among the Communists.

6. In connection with the successes achieved on the military fronts, and particularly since the liquidation of Wrangel, in some of the backward border regions which do not possess, or practically do not possess, an industrial proletariat, there is an increasing urge on the part of petty-bourgeois nationalist elements to join the Party for careerist purposes. These elements, realising that the Party is the virtual ruling power, usually adopt the colouring of communism and not infrequently strive to join the Party in whole groups, bringing with them a spirit of ill-concealed chauvinism and corruption; and the Party organisations in the border regions, which are generally weak, are not always able to withstand the temptation of "enlarging" the Party by the admission of new members.

The congress calls for a vigorous struggle against all pseudo-Communist elements who have wormed their way into the party of the proletariat, and warns the Party against the temptation of "enlarging" its ranks by the admission of intellectual, petty-bourgeois nationalist elements. The congress considers that reinforcements to the ranks of the Party in the border regions should be recruited chiefly from among the proletarians and the poor and toiling peasants of those regions and that at the same time activities must be directed to strengthening the Party organisations in the border regions by improving the quality of the membership.

## Report on the immediate tasks of the Party in connection with the National Problem

*Delivered at the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist  
Party, March 10, 1921*

Before proceeding directly to the concrete immediate tasks of the Party in connection with the national problem, we must first lay down certain premises without which the solution of the national problem is impossible. These premises relate to the appearance of nations, the

origin of national oppression, the forms assumed by national oppression in the course of historical development, and, finally, the forms of solution of the national problem in the various periods of development.

There are three such periods.

The first is the period of the break-up of feudalism in the West and the triumph of capitalism. The formation of people into nations occurred during this period. I am referring to such countries as Great Britain (without Ireland), France and Italy. In the West—in Great Britain, France, Italy, and partly in Germany—the period of the break-up of feudalism and the formation of people into nations on the whole coincided in time with the period which saw the appearance of the centralised states, and as a result the nations in their development became invested there in state forms. And inasmuch as there were no other national groups of any considerable size within these states, such a thing as national oppression was not known. In Eastern Europe, on the contrary, the process of formation of nationalities and the elimination of feudal disunity did not coincide in time with the process of formation of centralised states. I am referring to Hungary, Austria and Russia. In these countries capitalist development had not yet begun; it was perhaps only incipient; but the necessity of taking defensive measures against the invasions of the Turks, Mongols and other Oriental peoples demanded that centralised states capable of withstanding the onslaught of the invaders be formed without delay. And since in Eastern Europe the process of formation of centralised states proceeded more rapidly than the process of formation of people into nations, mixed states arose, each made up of several nationalities which had not yet formed themselves into nations but which were already united in a common state.

Thus, the first period is marked by the appearance of nationalities in the dawn of capitalism: in Western Europe we observe the birth of purely national states to which national oppression is unknown, whereas in the East we observe the birth of multinational states with one, more developed, nation at the head and the remaining, less developed, nations in a state of political, and later of economic, subjection to the dominant nation. These multi-national states of the East were the birthplace of that national oppression which gave rise to national conflicts, national movements, the national problem and the various methods of solving that problem.

The second period in the development of national oppression and the methods of combating it coincides with the period which saw the appearance of imperialism; when capitalism, in its search for markets, raw materials, fuel and cheap labour power, and in the competition for the export of capital and the possession of the great rail and sea routes, breaks out of the confines of the national state and extends its territory at the expense of near and distant neighbours. In this second period, the old national states in the West—Great Britain, Italy and France—cease to be national states; in other words, by virtue of the seizure of new territories they become converted into multi-national, colony-owning states, and thereby come to be an arena for that national and colonial oppression which already exists in Eastern Europe. In Eastern Europe this period is marked by the awakening and enervation of subject nations (Czechs, Poles, Ukrainians), which, as a result of the imperialist war, have led to the dissolution of the old bourgeois multi-national states

and the formation of new national states enthralled to what are known as the Great Powers.

The third period is the Soviet period; the period of the destruction of capitalism and the abolition of national oppression; in which the question of ruling and subject nations, of colonies and mother countries, is being consigned to the archives of history; in which, on the territory of the R. S. F. S. R., we see nationalities which possess equal rights and equal opportunities for development, but which still preserve a certain historical heritage of inequality owing to their economic, political and cultural backwardness. The substance of this inequality of nationalities consists in the fact that, as a result of historical development, we have received a heritage from the past by virtue of which one nationality, the Great-Russian nationality, is more developed politically and industrially than the other nationalities. Hence the existence of actual inequality, which cannot be eradicated all at once, but which must be eradicated by rendering economic, political and cultural assistance to the backward nationalities.

These are the three periods of development of the national problem known to us historically.

The first two periods have one feature in common. It is that in both these periods the nationalities suffered oppression and enslavement, as a result of which the national struggle continued to be fought and the national problem remained unsolved. But there is also a difference between them. It is that in the first period the national problem did not extend beyond the boundaries of the various multi-national states and embraced only a few, mainly European, nationalities; whereas in the second period the national problem became converted from an internal problem of each particular state into a problem mutually affecting several states—into a problem of war between imperialist states waged with the object of retaining the non-sovereign nationalities under the sway of the latter and of subjugating new nationalities and tribes outside Europe. Thus the national problem, which was formerly of significance only in the more cultured countries, lost its isolated character in this period and merged with the general problem of the colonies.

The development of the national problem into a general problem of the colonies is not a historical accident. It is due firstly to the fact that during the imperialist war the imperialist groups of belligerent powers were themselves obliged to appeal to the colonies from which they recruited the man-power that went to form armies. Unquestionably, this process, by which the imperialists were inevitably constrained to appeal to the backward peoples of the colonies, could not but awaken in these tribes and peoples the desire for emancipation and for struggle. There is another factor which caused the national problem to extend, to develop into a general problem of the colonies and to spread over the whole surface of the globe, first in isolated sparks and then in the flames of the movement for emancipation. This factor was the attempt of the imperialist groups to dismember Turkey and put an end to her existence as a state. Turkey, the country which among the Mohammedan peoples is politically the most developed, could not reconcile herself to such a prospect. She raised the standard of war and rallied the peoples of the East against imperialism. A third factor was the appearance of Soviet Russia, whose struggle against imperialism has met with several successes and has naturally served to inspire the oppressed peoples of the East, awaken them and rouse them to the struggle, and thus make it possible

to create a united front of oppressed nationalities, from Ireland to India.

These are the factors that in the second stage of development of national oppression resulted in the fact that bourgeois society, far from solving the national problem, far from bringing peace to the peoples, has fanned the spark of national struggle of the oppressed peoples, colonies and semi-colonies against world imperialism.

Obviously, the only regime capable of solving the national problem, that is, of creating conditions which make possible the peaceful co-existence and fraternal collaboration of various peoples and tribes, is the regime of the Soviet government, the regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

It need hardly be shown that under the rule of capital, private property in the means of production and the existence of classes, the equality of nations cannot be secured; that as long as the power of capital exists, as long as the struggle for possession of the means of production proceeds, there can be no equality of nationalities, just as there can be no collaboration between the toiling masses of the nations. History shows that the only way to abolish national inequality, the only way to establish a regime of fraternal collaboration among the toiling masses of the oppressed and unoppressed peoples, is to abolish capitalism and establish a Soviet system.

Further, history has shown that when individual peoples succeed in emancipating themselves both from their own national bourgeoisie and from the "foreign" bourgeoisie, that is, when they establish a Soviet system, they cannot, as long as imperialism prevails, carry on a separate existence and successfully maintain themselves without the economic and military support of neighbouring Soviet republics. The example of Hungary eloquently proves that, failing a political union of Soviet republics and their consolidation into a united military and economic force, it is impossible to withstand the united forces of world imperialism on either the military or the economic front.

A federation of Soviet republics is that desired form of political union, of which the R. S. F. S. R. is a living embodiment.

These, comrades, are the premises I desired to discuss first in order then to prove that it is essential for our Party to take certain definite steps to solve the national problem within the framework of the R. S. F. S. R.

Although under the Soviet regime in Russia and in the republics associated with Russia we no longer have ruling nationalities or subject nationalities, mother country or colonies, exploited or exploiters, nevertheless the national problem still exists in Russia. The crux of the national problem in the R. S. F. S. R. lies in the obligation to put an end to that backwardness (economic, political and cultural) of the nationalities which we have inherited from the past and to afford the backward peoples the opportunity of catching up with Central Russia politically, culturally and economically. Under the old regime, the tsarist government did not strive, and could not strive, to develop the statehood of the Ukraine, Azerbaidjan, Turkestan, and the other border regions; it resisted the development of statehood in the border regions, just as it resisted their cultural development, and endeavoured to assimilate the native populations forcibly. Furthermore, the old regime, the landlords and the capitalists, have left us as a heritage such browbeaten peoples as the Kirghiz, the Chechens and the Ossets, whose lands served as an object of colonisation by the Cossacks and kulak element of Russia. These peo-

ples were doomed to incredible suffering and to extinction. Moreover the position of the Great-Russian nation, which was the dominant nation, has left its traces even on Russian Communists, who are unable, or unwilling, to establish closer contact with the toiling native masses, to comprehend their needs and to help them emerge from their backward and uncivilised state. I am referring to those not very numerous groups of Russian Communists who, ignoring in their work the peculiarities of social life and culture in the border regions, at times tend towards Russian dominant-nation chauvinism. Nor has the position of the non-Russian nationalities, which have suffered national oppression, failed to leave its traces on the native Communists, who are at times unable to distinguish the class interests of the toiling masses of their people from the so-called "national" interests. I am referring to the deviation towards local, native nationalism which is at times to be observed in the ranks of the native Communists and which in the East expresses itself in Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism. Lastly, we must save the Kirghiz and Bashkirs and certain of the Gortsi tribes from extinction and provide them with necessary land at the expense of the kulak colonisers.

Having described the immediate tasks of the Party, I should like to pass to the general task, the task of adapting our Communist policy in the border regions to those specific conditions of economic life which are to be found chiefly in the East.

The fact of the matter is that a number of peoples, mainly Turkic peoples—about thirty million in all—have not passed, have not had time to pass, through the period of industrial capitalism, and consequently have no industrial proletariat, or practically no industrial proletariat, and as a result will have to pass from primitive forms of economy to the stage of Soviet economy without passing through the stage of industrial capitalism. In order to effect this difficult but by no means impossible operation, we must take into account all the peculiarities of economic life and even the history, social life and culture of these peoples. To transplant to the territories of these peoples the measures which were effective and valuable here, in the centre of Russia, would be absurd and dangerous. It is clear that, when putting the economic policy of the R. S. F. S. R. into practice, we must unfailingly take into account all the peculiarities of economic life, class structure and historical past which mark the border regions. I will not stop to mention the elimination of such incongruities as, for instance, the demand made by the People's Commissariat of Food, in connection with the food quotas, for the delivery of pigs in Kirghizia, where the Mohammedan population have never kept pigs. This example shows how unwilling people are to reckon with the peculiarities of customs which at once strike the eye of any traveller.

I have just been handed a note in which a reply to Comrade Chicherin's articles is requested.<sup>72</sup> Comrades, I consider that these articles of Chicherin, which I have read carefully, are nothing but literature. They contain four errors, or misconceptions. Firstly, Comrade Chicherin is inclined to deny the existence of contradictions among the imperialist states, to exaggerate the international unanimity of the imperialists and to overlook and underrate the internal contradictions between the imperialist groups and states (France, America, Great Britain, Japan, etc.), contradictions which do exist and give rise to war. He has exaggerated the unanimity of the imperialist rulers and has underrated the contradictions that exist within this "trust". Yet these contradictions



do exist, and it is on them that the activities of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs are based. Comrade Chicherin makes a second mistake. He underestimates the contradictions which exist between the dominant Great Powers and the newly formed national states (Czechoslovakia, Poland, Finland, etc.), which are in a position of financial and military subjection to the Great Powers. Comrade Chicherin has entirely overlooked the fact that, in spite of the subjection of these national states to the Great Powers, or, more truly, because of this subjection, there are contradictions between these Great Powers and these states, such as were revealed, for example, in the negotiations with Poland, Esthonia, etc. The whole purpose of the existence of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs is to take account of these contradictions, to use them as a basis and to manoeuvre within these contradictions. Comrade Chicherin underrates this factor in a most astonishing way. Comrade Chicherin's third mistake is that he speaks too much of national self-determination, which has in effect become an empty slogan easily adaptable to the use of the imperialists. Comrade Chicherin has strangely forgotten that we discarded this slogan two years ago. Our programme no longer contains this slogan. Our programme speaks not of national self-determination—an absolutely vague slogan—but of a better minted and more clearly defined slogan—the right of nations to political secession. These are two different things. Strangely enough, Comrade Chicherin in his articles does not take this fact into account, and as a result all his objections to a slogan which has become a vague slogan are sheer misfires. For neither in my theses nor in the programme of the Party is there a single word about "self-determination." What they speak of is the right of peoples to political secession. But for us at the present moment, when the movement for emancipation has flared up in the colonies, this slogan is a revolutionary slogan. Inasmuch as the Soviet states join in federation voluntarily, the right to secession remains unavailed of because the peoples that form the R. S. F. S. R. themselves so will it. And inasmuch as we are concerned with colonies which are in the clutches of Great Britain, France, America and Japan, inasmuch as we are concerned with such subject countries as Arabia, Mesopotamia, Turkey, Hindustan, i.e., countries which are colonies of the Entente, the slogan of the right of peoples to secession is a revolutionary slogan, and to abandon it would be playing into the hands of the Entente. The fourth basis for mis-conception is that Comrade Chicherin's articles contain no practical suggestions. It is easy, of course, to write articles; but when you entitle them "Against the Theses of Comrade Stalin," you must put forward something worthy of serious attention, some practical counter-proposals at least. Yet I have not found in his articles a single practical proposal worthy of attention.

I conclude, comrades. We have arrived at the following conclusions. Not only has bourgeois society proved incapable of solving the national problem, but in its attempts to "solve" it has inflated it and turned the national problem into a colonial problem and has set up against itself a new front stretching from Ireland to Hindustan. The only state capable of tackling and solving the national problem is a state based on collective ownership of the means and implements of production—a Soviet state. In the Soviet federal state there are no oppressed nationalities or ruling nationalities; national oppression has been abolished. But in view of the actual inequality (cultural, economic and political), inherited from the old bourgeois system, between the more civilised and the less civilised

nationalities, the national problem assumes a form which demands the adoption of measures designed to foster the economic, political and cultural progress of the toiling masses of the backward nationalities and to give them the opportunity of catching up with the more advanced Central—proletarian—Russia. From this follow the practical proposals that constitute the third section of the theses on the national problem I have submitted.

## The National Question Presented (1921)

The presentation of the national question given by the Communists essentially differs from the presentation favoured by the leaders of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals<sup>73</sup> and by all and every kind of "Socialist," "Social-Democratic," Menshevik, Socialist-Revolutionary and other parties.

It is particularly important to stress four principal factors as being the most characteristic and distinguishing features of the new presentation of the national question, features which draw a line between the old and the new conceptions of the national question.

The *first factor* is that the national question, as a part, has been merged with the general question of the emancipation of the colonies, as the whole. In the era of the Second International it was usual to confine the national question to a narrow circle of questions relating exclusively to the "civilised nations." The Irish, the Czechs, the Poles, the Finns, the Serbs, the Armenians, the Jews and a few other European nationalities—such was the circle of non-sovereign peoples whose fates interested the Second International. The tens and hundreds of millions of the Asiatic and African peoples suffering from national oppression in its crudest and most brutal form did not as a rule enter the field of vision of the "Socialists." They did not venture to place the white peoples and coloured peoples, the "uncultured" Negroes and the "civilised" Irish, the "backward" Indians and the "enlightened" Poles on one and the same footing. It was tacitly assumed that although it might be necessary to strive for the emancipation of the European non-sovereign nationalities, it was entirely unbecoming for "respectable Socialists" to speak seriously of the emancipation of the colonies, which were "necessary" for the "preservation" of "civilisation." These apologies for Socialists did not even suspect that the abolition of national oppression in Europe is inconceivable without the emancipation of the colonial peoples of Asia and Africa from the oppression of imperialism, and that the former is organically bound up with the latter. It was the Communists who first revealed the connection between the national question and the question of the colonies, who proved it theoretically and made it the basis of their practical revolutionary work. This broke down the wall between the white peoples and the coloured peoples, between the "civilised" and the "uncivilised" slaves of imperialism. This considerably facilitated the co-ordination of the struggle of the backward colonies with the struggle of the advanced proletariat against the common enemy, imperialism.

The *second factor* is that the vague slogan of the right of nations to self-determination has been replaced by the clear revolutionary slogan of the right of nations and colonies to political secession and the formation of independent states. When they spoke of the right of self-determina-



tion, the moving spirits of the Second International as a rule never even hinted at the right to political secession—the right of self-determination was at best interpreted to mean the right to autonomy in general. Springer and Bauer, the “experts” on the national question, even went so far as to convert the right of self-determination into the right of the oppressed nations of Europe to cultural autonomy, that is, the right to have their own cultural institutions while all the *political* (and economic) power was to remain in the hands of the dominant nation. In other words, the right of non-sovereign nations to self-determination was transformed into the privilege of the dominant nations to wield political power, and the question of political secession was excluded. Kautsky, the ideological leader of the Second International, associated himself in the main with this essentially imperialist interpretation of self-determination as given by Springer and Bauer. It is not surprising that the imperialists, realising how convenient for them this feature of the slogan of self-determination is, proclaimed this slogan their own. As we know, the imperialist war, the aim of which was to enslave peoples, was fought under the flag of self-determination. Thus the vague slogan of self-determination was transformed from an instrument of emancipation of nations and of equality of nations, into an instrument for taming nations, an instrument for keeping nations in subjection to imperialism. The course of events in recent years all over the world, the logic of revolution in Europe, and, lastly, the spread of the movement for emancipation in the colonies demanded that this slogan, which had become a reactionary slogan, should be cast aside and replaced by another slogan, a revolutionary slogan, which would serve to dissipate the atmosphere of mistrust entertained by the toiling masses of the non-sovereign nations towards the proletarians of the dominant nations and to clear the way for the equality of nations and for the unity of the toilers of all nations. Such a slogan is the slogan issued by the Communists proclaiming the right of non-sovereign nations and colonies to political secession. The advantages of this slogan are that:

1. It removes all grounds of suspicion that the toilers of one nation entertain annexatory ambitions towards the toilers of another nation, and therefore creates a basis for mutual confidence and voluntary amalgamation; and

2. It tears the mask from the imperialists, who, while mendaciously prating of self-determination, are endeavouring to keep the non-sovereign peoples and colonies in subjection and to retain them within their imperialist state, and thus intensifies the struggle of these peoples and colonies for emancipation from imperialism.

It need hardly be shown that the Russian workers could not have gained the sympathies of their comrades of other nationalities in the West and the East if, having assumed power, they had not proclaimed the right of peoples to political secession, if they had not demonstrated in practice their readiness to give effect to this inalienable right of peoples, if they had not renounced their “rights,” let us say, to Finland (1917), if they had not withdrawn the troops from Northern Persia (1917), if they had not renounced all claims to certain parts of Mongolia and China, and so on, and so forth.

It is equally unquestionable that the fact that the policy of the imperialists, skilfully concealed under the flag of self-determination, has recently been meeting with defeat after defeat in the East is due among other reasons to its having there encountered a growing movement for

emancipation, which has arisen as a result of agitation in the spirit of the demand for the right of peoples to political secession. This is not understood by the heroes of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals, who are zealously abusing the Baku “Council of Action and Propaganda” \* for certain immaterial lapses it has committed; but it will be understood by anyone who takes the trouble to acquaint himself with the activities of this “Council” during the year it has been in existence and with the movement for emancipation of the Asiatic and African colonies during the last two or three years.

The *third factor* is the disclosure of the connection, the organic connection, between the national and colonial question and the question of the power of capital, the overthrow of capitalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the period of the Second International the national question, narrowed to the extreme in scope, was usually treated as an isolated question, unrelated to the future proletarian revolution. It was tacitly assumed that the national question would be settled “naturally,” before the proletarian revolution, by means of a series of reforms within the framework of capitalism; that the proletarian revolution could be accomplished without a radical solution of the national problem, and that, vice versa, the national problem could be solved without the overthrow of the power of capital, without and prior to the victory of the proletarian revolution. This essentially imperialist view runs like a crimson thread through the works of Springer and Bauer on the national question. But the last decade has exposed the utter falsity and rottenness of this conception of the national question. The imperialist war has shown, and the revolutionary experience of recent years has again confirmed:

1. That the national and colonial questions are inseparable from the question of emancipation from the power of capital;

2. That imperialism (the highest form of capitalism) cannot exist without the political and economic enslavement of non-sovereign nations and colonies;

3. That the non-sovereign nations and colonies cannot be emancipated without the overthrow of the power of capital; and

4. That the victory of the proletariat cannot be a lasting one unless the non-sovereign nations and colonies are emancipated from the yoke of imperialism.

While Europe and America may be called the front, the scene of the main engagements between socialism and imperialism, the non-sovereign nations and the colonies, with their raw materials, fuel, food and vast store of human material, should be regarded as the rear, the reserve of imperialism. In order to win a war one must not only triumph at the front but also revolutionise the enemy's rear, his reserves. Hence the victory of the world proletarian revolution may be regarded as assured only if the proletariat is able to combine its own revolutionary struggle with the movement for emancipation of the toiling masses of the non-sovereign nations and the colonies against the power of the imperialists and for a dictatorship of the proletariat. This “trifle” was overlooked by the moving spirits of the Second and the Two-and-a-Half Internationals when they divorced the national and colonial question from the question of power in the era of growing proletarian revolution in the West.

\* It was formed in September 1920 at a congress of peoples of the East held in Baku.

The *fourth factor* is that a new element has been introduced into the national question—the element of real (and not merely juridical) equalisation of nations (helping and encouraging the backward nations to raise themselves to the cultural and economic level of the more advanced nations), as one of the conditions necessary for securing fraternal co-operation between the toiling masses of the various nationalities. In the period of the Second International nothing more was done than to proclaim “national equality”; at best the demand was made for the realisation of such equality. But national equality, in itself a very important political acquisition, runs the risk of remaining merely an empty phrase if adequate resources and opportunities for exercising this very important right do not exist. There can be no question but that the toiling masses of the backward peoples are not in a position to exercise the right of “national equality” granted them to the degree that it can be exercised by the toiling masses of advanced nationalities. The actual inequality of nations (cultural and economic), which is inherited from the past and which cannot be abolished in one or two years makes its influence felt. This circumstance is particularly perceptible in Russia, where a number of nationalities have never passed through capitalism, and some have not even entered the phase of capitalism, and have no proletariat, or practically no proletariat, of their own; where, in spite of the fact that full national equality has already been established, the toiling masses of these nationalities are not in a position to make adequate use of the rights they have won in view of their cultural and economic backwardness. This inequality will make itself felt still more “on the morrow” of the victory of the proletariat in the West, when numerous backward colonies and semi-colonies, marked by the most varied levels of development, will inevitably appear on the scene. That is why it is essential that the triumphant proletariat of the advanced countries should render aid, real and prolonged aid, to the toiling masses of the backward nationalities in their cultural and economic development; that it should help them to rise to a higher stage of development and to catch up with the more advanced nationalities. Unless such aid is forthcoming it will be impossible to bring about the peaceful co-existence and fraternal collaboration of the toilers of the various nations and peoples within a single world economic system that are so essential for the final triumph of socialism.

But from this it follows that we cannot content ourselves with “national equality” and that “national equality” must be extended by measures for securing the real equality of nationalities, and that we must proceed to work out and put into effect practical measures in relation to:

1. The study of the economic conditions, social life and culture of the backward nations and peoples;
2. The development of their culture;
3. Their political education;
4. Their gradual and painless incorporation into the higher forms of economic life; and
5. The organisation of economic co-operation between the toilers of the backward and the advanced nationalities.

Such are the four principal factors which distinguish the new formulation of the national question as given by the Communists.

## Declaration of the Constitution of a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Since the formation of the Soviet republics the states of the world have been split into two camps: the camp of capitalism and the camp of socialism.

There, in the camp of capitalism, we have national animosity and inequality, colonial slavery and chauvinism, national oppression and pogroms, imperialist brutalities and wars.

Here, in the camp of socialism, we have mutual confidence and peace, national freedom and equality, the peaceful co-existence and fraternal collaboration of peoples.

The attempts made by the capitalist world during the course of decades to solve the problem of nationalities by combining the free development of peoples with the system of exploitation of man by man have proved fruitless. On the contrary, the skein of national contradictions is becoming more and more entangled and is threatening the very existence of capitalism. The bourgeoisie has proved itself utterly incapable of bringing about the collaboration of peoples.

Only in the camp of the Soviets, only under the dictatorship of the proletariat, which has rallied the majority of the population around itself, has it proved possible to abolish national oppression root and branch, to create an atmosphere of mutual confidence, and to lay the foundation for the fraternal collaboration of peoples.

It was thanks to these circumstances alone that the Soviet republics were able to beat off the attacks of the imperialists of the world, both domestic and foreign; it was thanks to these circumstances alone that they successfully managed to put an end to the Civil War, to preserve their existence and to commence peaceful economic construction.

But the years of war have left their traces. Ruined fields, idle factories, shattered productive forces and exhausted economic resources left as a heritage by the war render inadequate the individual efforts of the individual republics to build up their economy. The restoration of the national economy has proved to be impossible while the republics continue to lead separate existences.

On the other hand, the instability of the international situation and the danger of new attacks render inevitable the creation of a united front of the Soviet republics in face of the capitalist encirclement.

Finally, the very structure of Soviet government, which is international in its class nature, impels the toiling masses of the Soviet republics to unite into one socialist family.

All these circumstances imperatively demand the amalgamation of the Soviet republics into a single federal state, capable of ensuring external security, internal economic progress and the unhampered national development of the peoples.

The will of the peoples of the Soviet republics who recently assembled at their Congresses of Soviets and unanimously resolved to form a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, is a sure pledge that this Union is a voluntary association of peoples enjoying equal status, that each republic is guaranteed the right of freely seceding from the Union that admission to the Union is open to all socialist Soviet republics, whether now existing

or hereafter to arise, that the new federal state will prove itself a worthy crown to the foundation for the peaceful co-existence and fraternal collaboration of peoples laid in October 1917, and that it will serve as a reliable bulwark against world capitalism and a new and decisive advance towards the amalgamation of the working people of all countries into a World Socialist Soviet Republic.

Declaring all this to the world, and solemnly proclaiming the firmness of the foundations of the Soviet government as expressed in the constitutions of the socialist Soviet republics by whom we have been empowered, we, the delegates of these republics, acting in accordance with our mandates, have resolved to conclude a treaty for the constitution of a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

## National Factors in Party and State Development

*Resolution Adopted by the Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, April 1923*

### I

1. Even as early as the last century the development of capitalism betrayed a tendency to internationalise the means of production and exchange, to eliminate national aloofness, to bring peoples into closer economic relations, and gradually to merge vast territories into a single connected whole. The further development of capitalism, the development of the world market, the perfection of the great rail and sea routes, the export of capital, and so on, still further accentuated this tendency and bound all kinds of peoples by ties arising out of the international division of labour and universal interdependence. Inasmuch as this process was a reflection of a colossal development of productive forces, inasmuch as it helped to destroy national isolation and the contradiction between the interests of the various peoples, it was and is a progressive process, for it is creating the material conditions for a future world socialist economic system.

2. But this tendency developed in specific forms which were completely at variance with its intrinsic historical significance. The interdependence of peoples and the economic amalgamation of territories arose in the course of development of capitalism not as a result of the collaboration of peoples enjoying equal status, but by means of the subjection of certain peoples by others, by means of the oppression and exploitation of less developed peoples by more developed peoples. Colonial plunder and annexations, national oppression and inequality, imperialist violence and arbitrary rule, colonial slavery and national inequality, and finally, the struggle between the "civilised" nations for mastery over the "uncivilised" peoples—such were the forms in which the process of economic amalgamation of peoples took place. For this reason we find that side by side with the tendency to amalgamation there grew up a tendency to destroy the violent forms assumed by this amalgamation, a struggle for the emancipation of the oppressed colonies and dependent nationalities

from the imperialist yoke. Inasmuch as the latter tendency implied a revolt of the oppressed masses against imperialist forms of amalgamation, inasmuch as it demanded the amalgamation of peoples on the basis of collaboration and voluntary union, it was and is a progressive tendency, for it is creating the psychological condition for the future world socialist economic system.

3. The conflict between these two fundamental tendencies, expressed in forms that are natural to capitalism, fills the history of the multi-national bourgeois states during the last half-century. The fact that the contradiction between these tendencies is irreconcilable within the framework of capitalist development was the basic reason for the intrinsic insolidity and the organic instability of the bourgeois colonial states. Inevitable conflicts within such states and inevitable wars between such states; disintegration of the old colony-owning states and the formation of new ones; a new drive for colonies and again the disintegration of multi-national states, leading to a new re-arrangement of the political map of the world—such are the results of this fundamental contradiction. The disintegration of the old Russia, of Austria-Hungary and of Turkey on the one hand, and the history of such colony-owning states as Great Britain and the old Germany on the other; and, lastly, the "great" imperialist war and the spread of the revolutionary movement among the colonial and non-sovereign peoples—all these and similar facts clearly point to the instability and insolidity of the multi-national bourgeois states.

Thus the irreconcilable contradiction between the process of economic amalgamation of the peoples and the imperialist methods of accomplishing this amalgamation was the cause of the inability, helplessness and impotence of the bourgeoisie in finding a correct approach to the solution of the national problem.

4. Our Party took these circumstances into consideration when it made the basis of its policy in the national question the right of nations to self-determination, the right of peoples to lead an independent political existence. From the first days of its existence, at its very first congress (in 1898), when the contradictions of capitalism in connection with the national question had not yet become fully and clearly defined, the Party recognised this inalienable right of nations. In subsequent years it invariably endorsed its national programme in specific decisions and resolutions of its congresses and conferences down to the October Revolution. The imperialist war and the mighty revolutionary movement which arose in connection with it in the colonies only provided new corroboration of the correctness of the decisions adopted by the Party on the national question. These decisions consist of (a) the vigorous repudiation of all forms of compulsion in relation to the nationalities; (b) the recognition of the equal and sovereign right of the peoples to determine their own destinies; (c) the recognition of the principle that a durable amalgamation of peoples can be accomplished only on a basis of collaboration and voluntary consent; (d) the proclamation of the truth that such an amalgamation is possible only as a result of the overthrow of the power of capital.

Our Party in its work never tired of advancing this programme of national emancipation in opposition to both the frankly coercive policy of tsarism and the half-hearted, semi-imperialist policy of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. Whereas the tsarist Russification policy created an abyss between tsarism and the nationalities of old Russia,

and whereas the semi-imperialist policy of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries led the best elements among these nationalities to desert Kerenskyism, the policy of emancipation pursued by our Party won for it the sympathy and support of the broad masses of these nationalities in the struggle it waged against tsarism and the imperialist Russian bourgeoisie. There can be little doubt that this sympathy and support was one of the decisive factors that determined the triumph of our Party in the October Revolution.

5. The October Revolution confirmed and gave practical effect to the decisions of our Party on the national question. By overthrowing the power of the landlords and capitalists, to whom national oppression was chiefly due, and by putting the proletariat in power, the October Revolution at one blow smashed the fetters of national oppression, destroyed the old relations between peoples, removed the grounds of the old national enmity, cleared the way for the collaboration of peoples, and won for the Russian proletariat the confidence of its brothers of other nationalities, not only in Russia, but in Europe and Asia as well. It need hardly be shown that had it not enjoyed this confidence the Russian proletariat could not have defeated Kolchak and Denikin. Yudenich and Wrangel. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the oppressed nationalities could not have achieved their emancipation if the dictatorship of the proletariat had not been established in the centre of Russia. National enmity and national conflicts are inevitable, unavoidable, as long as capital is in power, as long as the petty bourgeoisie, and in particular the peasantry, of the former "sovereign" nation, permeated as they are by nationalist prejudices, follow the capitalists; and, on the contrary, national peace and national freedom may be considered assured when the peasantry and the other petty-bourgeois strata follow the proletariat, that is, when the dictatorship of the proletariat is assured. Hence, the triumph of the Soviets and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat constitute the basis and foundation on which the fraternal collaboration of peoples within a single federal state can be built up.

6. But the results of the October Revolution are not confined to the elimination of national oppression and the creation of a basis for the amalgamation of peoples. In the course of its development the October Revolution also evolved the forms of this amalgamation and laid down the main lines for the amalgamation of peoples into a single federal state. In the first period of the revolution, when the toiling masses of the nationalities first came to feel that they were independent national units, while the threat of foreign intervention had not yet become a real danger, collaboration between the peoples did not yet assume a fully and strictly defined form. In the period of civil war and intervention, when the requirements of military defence in the national republics assumed prime importance, while questions of economic construction had not yet been placed on the order of the day, collaboration took the form of a military alliance. Finally, in the post-war period, when the problems of the restoration of the productive forces destroyed by the war assumed prime importance, the military alliance was supplemented by an economic alliance. The amalgamation of the national republics into the Union of Soviet Republics represents the concluding stage in the development of the forms of collaboration, which have now assumed the character of a military, economic and political amalgamation of peoples into a single multi-national Soviet state.

Thus in Soviet system the proletariat has found the key to the

national problem, has found the way to organise a durable multi-national state on the basis of national equality and voluntary consent.

7. But the fact that the key has been found to the national problem does not yet mean that it has been solved fully and finally, that the solution has been exhaustively realised concretely and practically. In order to give proper effect to the national programme advanced by the October Revolution, it is necessary to surmount obstacles which have been left to us as a heritage from the period of national oppression, obstacles that cannot be surmounted at one stroke and at short notice.

This heritage consists, in the first place, in the survivals of dominant-national chauvinism, which is a reflection of the former privileged position of the Great-Russians. These survivals still persist in the minds of our Soviet officials, both central and local; they breed in our state institutions, central and local; they are receiving reinforcements in the shape of the "new" Smenovekh Great-Russian chauvinist spirit, which the New Economic Policy tends to accentuate. In practice they find expression in an arrogant, negligent and soullessly bureaucratic attitude on the part of Russian Soviet officials towards the needs and requirements of the national republics. The multi-national Soviet state can be really durable, and the collaboration of the peoples within it really fraternal, only if these survivals are vigorously and irrevocably eradicated from the practice of our state institutions. The situation in a number of the national republics (the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Azerbaidjan and Turkestan) is complicated by the fact that a considerable section of the working class, which forms the main support of Soviet government, are by nationality Great-Russian. In these districts the alliance between the town and the countryside, between the working class and the peasantry, encounters a powerful obstacle in the form of the survivals of Great-Russian chauvinism in both Party and Soviet organs. Under these circumstances, to talk of the superiority of Russian culture and to advance the thesis that the victory of the superior Russian culture over the cultures of more backward peoples (Ukrainian, Azerbaidjanian, Uzbek, Kirghiz and so on) is inevitable is nothing but an attempt to perpetuate the domination of the Great-Russian nationality. Thus the first immediate task of our Party is to wage determined warfare on the survivals of Great-Russian chauvinism.

This heritage consists, secondly, in the actual, i.e., economic and cultural, inequality of the nationalities of the Union of Republics. The equality of legal status of the nations won by the October Revolution is a great achievement for the peoples, but it does not in itself solve the whole national problem. A number of republics and peoples, which have not passed, or have hardly entered, the stage of capitalism, which have no proletariat, or hardly any proletariat, of their own, and which on this account are backward economically and culturally, are incapable of utilising to the full the rights and opportunities offered them by national equality; they are incapable of achieving a higher level of development, and thus catching up with the more advanced nationalities, unless they receive real and prolonged assistance from outside. The causes of this actual inequality lie not only in the history of these peoples, but also in the policy pursued by tsarism and the Russian bourgeoisie, which aimed at converting the border regions into areas exclusively producing raw materials and exploited by the industrially developed central districts. To remove this inequality in a short space of time, to eliminate this heritage in a year or two, is impossible. The Tenth Congress of our Party has already pointed out that "the elimination of

actual national inequality is a lengthy process involving a stubborn and persistent struggle against all survivals of national oppression and colonial slavery." But eliminated it must be at all costs. And it can be eliminated only if real and prolonged assistance is given by the Russian proletariat to the backward peoples of the Union in their economic and cultural advancement. This assistance must first and foremost take the form of a series of practical measures for creating in the republics of formerly oppressed nationalities industrial centres, into the operation of which the local population should be drawn to the greatest possible extent. Lastly, this assistance must, in accordance with the resolution of the Tenth Congress, be rendered simultaneously with the struggle of the toiling masses against the local and foreign exploiting upper strata, which are gaining in strength in connection with the New Economic Policy, and for the consolidation of their social positions. Since these republics are chiefly agricultural districts, domestic social measures must first and foremost proceed along the lines of allotting to the toiling population land from the free state reserve. Otherwise there can be no grounds for expecting the establishment of a proper and durable collaboration of peoples within the framework of a single federal state. Hence, the second immediate task of our Party is to strive to eliminate the actual inequality of the nationalities and to raise the cultural and economic level of the backward peoples.

This heritage consists, lastly, in the survivals of nationalism among a number of peoples which have suffered the heavy yoke of national oppression and have not yet managed to rid their minds of old national grudges. These survivals find practical expression in a certain national aloofness and a lack of complete trust on the part of the formerly oppressed peoples in measures proceeding from the Russian. However, in some of the republics the population of which is made up of several nationalities, this defensive nationalism often turns into aggressive nationalism, into the outright chauvinism of the stronger nationality directed against the weaker nationalities of these republics. Georgian chauvinism (in Georgia) against the Armenians, Ossets, Adjarians and Abkhazians; Azerbaidjanian chauvinism (in Azerbaidjan) against the Armenians; Uzbek chauvinism (in Bokhara and Khorezm) against the Turkmens and Kirghiz, (American chauvinism,) and so on—all these forms of chauvinism, which moreover are fostered by the conditions of the New Economic Policy and by competition, are a grave evil which threatens to make certain of the national republics the scene of squabbling and wrangling. It need hardly be said that all these factors hinder the cause of the actual amalgamation of the peoples into a single federal state. When the survivals of nationalism are a peculiar form of defence against Great-Russian chauvinism, the surest means of overcoming nationalist survivals is to wage determined war on Great-Russian chauvinism. When, however, these survivals assume the form of local chauvinism directed against the weak national groups in certain of the republics, it is the duty of Party members to wage direct war on these survivals. Thus the third immediate task of our Party is to combat nationalist survivals, and particularly the chauvinist forms of these survivals.

8. We must regard as one of the most pronounced expressions of the heritage of the past, the fact that a considerable number of Soviet officials in the centre and in the localities regard the Union of Republics not as an alliance of equal political units, whose mission it is to guarantee the free development of the national republics, but as a step towards the

abolition of these republics and as the beginning of the formation of what is called the "single and indivisible."

We must regard as a similar consequence of the heritage of the past the endeavour of certain departments of the R. S. F. S. R. to render the independent Commissariats of the autonomous republics subordinate to themselves and to pave the way for abolishing the latter.

The congress condemns this conception as anti-proletarian and reactionary, proclaims the absolute necessity of the existence and continued development of the national republics, and calls upon the members of the Party to keep vigilant watch lest the amalgamation of the republics and the fusion of the Commissariats should be utilised by chauvinistically-minded Soviet officials as a screen for their attempts to ignore the economic and cultural needs of the national republics. The fusion of the Commissariats is a test for the Soviet apparatus: if this experiment were in practice to betray a dominant-nation tendency, the Party would be obliged to adopt the most resolute measures against such a distortion, even to the extent of raising the question of annulling the fusion of certain Commissariats until such time as the Soviet apparatus has been properly re-educated so that it will give genuinely proletarian and genuinely fraternal heed to the needs and requirements of the small and backward nationalities.

9. The Union of Republics, established on the principle of the equal status and the voluntary consent of the workers and peasants of each republic, is the first experiment on the part of the proletariat in regulating international relations between independent countries and the first step towards the creation of the future World Soviet Labour Republic. Since the Union of Republics is a new form of co-existence of peoples, a new form of collaboration of peoples within a single federal state, within which the survivals outlined above are to be eliminated in the process of the co-operative work of the peoples, the supreme organs of the Union must be so constructed as fully to reflect not only the common needs and requirements of all nationalities of the Union, but also the special needs and requirements of each individual nationality. For this reason, in addition to the existing central organs of the Union, which represent the toiling masses of the entire Union without distinction of nationality, there should be created a special organ representing all the nationalities on an equality basis. Such a structure of the central organs of the Union would make it fully possible to lend an attentive ear to the needs and requirements of the peoples, to render them timely and necessary aid, to create an atmosphere of complete mutual confidence, and thus to nullify the above-mentioned heritage in the most painless way.

10. On the basis of what has been said, the congress recommends the members of the Party to secure the accomplishment of the following practical measures:

(a) That in establishing the central organs of the Union, equality of rights and duties of the republics be ensured both in relations between themselves and in their relations with the central government of the Union;

(b) That within the system of the higher organs of the Union a special organ be instituted representing on an equality basis all national republics and national regions without exception, possible provision being made for the representation of all nationalities forming part of these republics;

(c) That the executive organs of the Union be so constructed as to

ensure the real participation of the representatives of the republics and the satisfaction of the needs and requirements of the peoples of the Union;

(d) That the republics be granted sufficiently wide financial and, in particular, budgetary powers to enable them to exercise their own initiative in matters of state administration, culture and economy;

(e) That the organs of the national republics and regions be recruited chiefly from among the local inhabitants acquainted with the language, social life, manners and customs of the peoples concerned;

(f) That special legislation be promulgated providing that in all state organs and in all institutions serving the local non-native population and the national minorities the language of these latter be employed and that all violators of national rights, in particular the rights of national minorities, be punished with revolutionary severity;

(g) That educational work be intensified in the Red Army with the object of instilling the idea of the brotherhood and solidarity of the peoples of the Union and that practical measures be taken to organise national military units, all necessary steps being taken fully to ensure the defence of the republics.

## II

1. The development of the organisations of our Party in the majority of the national republics is taking place under conditions which do not wholly favour their growth and consolidation. The economic backwardness of these republics, the numerical weakness of the national proletariat, the shortage or even total lack of old Party workers belonging to the native population, the lack of suitable Marxist literature in the native languages, the weakness of Party educational work, and, lastly, the persistence of survivals of radical-nationalist traditions, which have not yet died out, have given rise among the local Communists to a definite deviation in the direction of overrating the specific national features and of underrating the class interests of the proletariat—a deviation towards nationalism. This factor becomes especially dangerous in the case of republics inhabited by several nationalities, where it frequently assumes the form of a deviation among the Communists of the stronger nationality towards chauvinism directed against the Communists of the weak nationalities (Georgia, Azerbaidjan, Bokhara, Khorezm). The deviation towards nationalism is dangerous because, by hindering the emancipation of the national proletariat from the ideological influence of the national bourgeoisie, it impedes the knitting the proletarians of the various nationalities into a single internationalist organisation.

2. On the other hand, the presence in both the central institutions of the Party and the organisations of the Communist Parties of the national republics of large numbers of old Party workers of Russian descent, who are unfamiliar with the manners, customs and language of the toiling masses of these republics, and who for this reason are not always attentive to their requirements, has given rise in our Party to a deviation which consists in underrating specific national features and national language in Party work, to an arrogant and negligent attitude towards these specific features—a deviation towards Great-Russian chauvinism. This deviation is pernicious not only because, by impeding the formation of Communist cadres of local inhabitants acquainted with the national language, it creates the danger that the party may become

isolated from the proletarian masses of the national republics, but also, and primarily, because it feeds and nourishes the deviation towards nationalism outlined above and hinders the struggle against this deviation.

3. Condemning both these deviations as harmful and dangerous to the cause of communism, and drawing the attention of the members of the Party to the particular danger of the deviation towards Great-Russian chauvinism, the congress calls upon the Party to eliminate as quickly as possible these survivals of the past in our Party affairs.

The congress instructs the Central Committee to carry out the following practical measures:

(a) To form Marxist study circles of an advanced type among the local Party workers in the national republics;

(b) To develop literature dealing with fundamental Marxist principles written in the native languages;

(c) To reinforce the University of the Peoples of the East and its branches in the localities;

(d) To establish under the aegis of the Central Committees of the national Communist Parties groups of instructors recruited from among local workers;

(e) To develop mass Party literature in the native languages;

(f) To intensify Party educational work in the republics;

(g) To intensify work among the youth in the republics.

4. In view of the great importance which attaches to the activity of responsible workers in the autonomous and independent republics and in the border regions generally (realisation of the bond between the toilers of the particular republics and the toilers of the rest of the Union), the congress charges the Central Committee to take steps for the especially careful selection of these workers in order that it may fully ensure the carrying into effect of the decisions of the Party on the national question.

## Report on National Factors in Party and State Development

*Delivered at the Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist  
Party, April 23, 1923*

Comrades, this is the third time since the October Revolution that we are discussing the national question: the first time was at the Eighth Congress, the second at the Tenth, and the third at the Twelfth. Does this indicate that something has changed fundamentally in our views on the national question? No, our fundamental view of the national question has remained what it was both before and after the October Revolution. But since the Tenth Congress the international situation has changed, inasmuch as greater importance has been acquired by the heavy reserves of the revolution which the countries of the East now constitute. That is the first point. The second point is that since the Tenth Congress our Party has witnessed certain changes in the internal situation in connection with the New Economic Policy. All these new factors must be



taken into account and the conclusion drawn from them. In this sense one may say that the national question is being presented at the Twelfth Congress in a new way.

As to the international significance of the national question. You know, comrades, that we, the Soviet federation, by the will of historical destiny, now represent the vanguard of the world revolution. You know that we were the first to break through the general capitalist front, that it has been our destiny to take precedence of all others. You know that in our advance we went as far as Warsaw, that we then retreated, entrenching ourselves in the positions we considered strongest. From that moment we passed to the New Economic Policy, from that moment we realised that the international revolutionary movement was slowing down, and from that moment our policy changed from a policy of offence to a policy of defence. We could not advance after we had failed at Warsaw (we shall not hide the truth); we could not advance, for we would have risked being cut off from our rear, which in our case is a peasant rear; and, lastly, we would have risked advancing too far ahead of the reserves of the revolution with which destiny has provided us the reserves of the East and the West. That is why we made a turn within the country towards the New Economic Policy, and outside the country towards a slower rate of advance; for we decided that we needed a respite, that we must heal our wounds, the wounds received by the vanguard, the proletariat, that we must establish contact with the peasant rear, and continue to prosecute our work among the reserves, which had fallen behind us—the reserves of the West and the reserves of the East, the heavy reserves which form the main rear of world capitalism. It is of these reserves—the heavy reserves of the East, which at the same time constitute the rear of world imperialism—that we must speak when discussing the national question.

One thing or the other: either we succeed in stirring up and revolutionising the far imperialist rear—the colonial and semi-colonial countries of the East—and thereby hasten the fall of capitalism; or we fail in this, and thereby strengthen imperialism and weaken the force of our movement. That is how the question stands.

The fact of the matter is that the whole East regards our Union of Republics as an experimental station. Either we shall, within the Union, find a correct solution for the national problem in practical application and establish truly fraternal relations and true collaboration among the peoples—in which case the entire East will see that our federation is the banner of its liberation, its advance guard, in whose footsteps it must follow—and that will be the beginning of the collapse of world imperialism; or we, the federation as a whole, commit an error undermine the confidence of formerly oppressed peoples in the proletariat of Russia, and deprive the Union of Republics of that power of attraction which it possesses in the eyes of the East—in which case imperialism will win and we shall lose.

That is the international significance of the national question.

The national question is also of importance for us from the point of view of the internal situation; not only because the former sovereign nation numerically constitutes about 75,000,000 people and the other nations 65,000,000 (no mean figure) and not only because the formerly oppressed nationalities inhabit regions most essential from the point of view of economic development and most important from the point of view of military strategy, but first and foremost because during the last

two years we have introduced what is known as the New Economic Policy, as a result of which Russian nationalism has grown and become accentuated, the idea of *Smenovekhism* has been born, and the desire is rife to accomplish peacefully what Denikin failed to accomplish, i.e., to create the so-called "single and indivisible."

Thus, as a result of the New Economic Policy, a new force is being engendered in the internal life of our country, namely, Great-Russian chauvinism, which breeds in our institutions, which penetrates not only into Soviet institutions, but also into Party institutions, and which stalks in every corner of our federation. And the result will be that if we do not resolutely repulse this new force, if we do not strike at its roots—and the conditions of the New Economic Policy favour its growth—we shall be faced with the risk of a rupture between the proletariat of the former sovereign nation and the peasantry of the formerly oppressed nations—which will mean the undermining of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But the New Economic Policy fosters not only Russian chauvinism—it also fosters local varieties of chauvinism, especially in republics composed of several nationalities. I have in mind Georgia, Azerbaidjan, Bokhara and partly—one might add—Turkestan, in all of which there are several nationalities, the foremost elements of which may soon begin to compete among themselves for supremacy. Of course, these local varieties of chauvinism are not as strong and therefore not as dangerous as chauvinism. But they are dangerous nevertheless, for they threaten to turn some of our republics into a scene of national wrangling and thus weaken the bonds of internationalism in these republics.

Such are the international and internal reasons for the great, the paramount importance of the national question in general, and at the present moment in particular.

What is the class essence of the national question? What is the national question? The essential thing in the national question from the class point of view is to establish definite relations—I am speaking of our Soviet conditions—to establish definite and correct relations between the proletariat of the former sovereign nation and the peasantry of the formerly oppressed nationalities. The question of the bond between the proletariat and the peasantry has been more than sufficiently discussed here, but when this question was discussed in connection with the reports of Kamenev, Kalinin and Sokolnikov, and even of Rykov and Trotsky, the chief thing in mind was the relations between the Russian proletariat and the Russian peasantry. Here, in the national sphere, we are dealing with a more complex mechanism. Here we are concerned with the question of establishing proper relations between the proletariat of the former sovereign nation, which represents the most cultured section of the proletariat in our entire federation, and the peasantry, mainly the peasantry of the formerly oppressed nationalities. That is the class essence of the national question. If the proletariat succeeds in establishing with regard to the peasantry of other nationalities relations that will be capable of eradicating all remnants of mistrust towards everything Russian, a mistrust implanted and fostered for decades by the policy of tsarism; if, moreover, the Russian proletariat succeeds in bringing about complete mutual understanding and confidence, in effecting a genuine alliance not only between the Russian proletariat and the Russian peasantry, but also between the Russian proletariat and the peasantry of other nationalities, the problem will be solved. To achieve this it is neces-

sary that the government of the proletariat should be as dear to the peasantry of other nationalities as it is to the Russian peasantry. And in order that the Soviet government should become dear also to the peasantry of other nationalities, it must be comprehensible to this peasantry, it must function in their own language, the schools and government bodies must be recruited from among the local people acquainted with the language, manners, customs and traditions. Only when the institutions and government bodies in the republics of these countries speak and function in the native language, only then, and only to that extent, will the Soviet government, which until very recently was a Russian government, become a government that is not only Russian but inter-national, a government that will be near and dear to the peasants of the formerly oppressed nationalities. That is one of the fundamental factors in the national problem in general, and in the national problem under Soviet conditions in particular.

What is the characteristic feature of the solution of the national problem at the present moment in 1923? What form have the problems requiring solution in the national sphere assumed in 1923? They have assumed the form of establishing collaboration between the peoples of our federation in the economic, military and political spheres. I am referring to international relations. The national problem, the essence of which is to establish proper relations between the proletariat of the former sovereign nation and the peasantry of the other nationalities, has at the present moment assumed a special form, which is to establish collaboration and fraternal co-existence among peoples which in the past were disunited and which are now amalgamated within a single state. That is the essence of the national problem in the form it has assumed in 1923. The concrete form of this political amalgamation is the Union of Republics, which we discussed at the Congress of Soviets at the end of last year and which we then established.

The basis of this Union is voluntary consent and equality of legal status of the members of the Union. Voluntary consent and equality—because our national programme is based on the right of nations to independent political existence, formerly called the right to self-determination. Starting from this premise we must definitely say that no union of peoples, no amalgamation of peoples into a single state, can be durable unless it is based on absolutely voluntary consent, unless the peoples involved themselves desire to unite. The second basis of the Union is the equality of legal status of the peoples forming the Union. And that is but natural. I am not referring to actual equality—of that I shall speak later—for the establishment of actual equality between nationalities which have gone on ahead and nationalities which lag behind is a very complex, very difficult problem, requiring many years for its solution. I am speaking at present of equality of legal status. Equality in this sense is expressed in the fact that all the republics forming the Union, in this case the four republics—Transcaucasia, Byelorussia, the Ukraine and the R.S.F.S.R.—enjoy the advantages of the Union to an equal degree and at the same time to an equal degree forego certain of their independent rights in favour of the Union. If the R.S.F.S.R., the Ukraine, Byelorussia and the Transcaucasian Republic are not each to have its own Peoples's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, it is clear that the abolition of these Commissariats and the establishment of a joint commissariat of Foreign Affairs for the Union of Republics will entail a certain restriction of the independence formerly enjoyed by these republics, and that the extent of this restriction will be the same for all the republics forming the Union. It is clear that if these

republics formerly had their own People's Commissariats of Foreign Trade, and these Commissariats are now abolished, both in the R.S.F.S.R. and in the other republics, in order to make way for a joint Commissariat of Foreign Trade of the Union of Republics, this too will involve a certain restriction of the independence formerly enjoyed in full measure, but now curtailed in favour of the Union; and so on, and so forth. Some people ask a purely scholastic question, namely, whether after amalgamation the republics remain independent. That is a scholastic question. Their independence is restricted, for every amalgamation involves a certain restriction of the rights of the amalgamating parties. But the elements of independence of each of these republics undoubtedly remain, for each republic retains the right to leave the Union at its own discretion. There you have the elements of independence, the maximum of independence, which is potentially retained by each of the republics forming part of the Union and which each of them is always at liberty to exercise.

Thus the concrete form assumed by the national problem under the conditions prevailing in our country at the present moment is to achieve the collaboration of the peoples in economic, foreign and military affairs. We must unite the republics along these lines into a single union, known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Such are the concrete forms assumed by the national problem at the present time.

But that is easier said than done.

The fact of the matter is that in our country there are not only a number of factors favouring amalgamation of the peoples into a single state but also factors hindering amalgamation.

The favourable factors we know. They are, firstly, the economic ties between the peoples, which were set up even before the time of the Soviet government but which the Soviet government strengthened—a certain division of labour among the peoples, begun before our time, but furthered by us, by the Soviet government. That is the chief factor favouring the amalgamation of the republics into the Union. The nature of the Soviet government must be regarded as the second factor favouring amalgamation. That is only natural. The Soviet government is a government of the workers, a dictatorship of the proletariat, which by its very nature encourages the toiling elements of the republics and peoples forming the Union to live in friendly relations with each other. That is only natural. And the third factor favouring amalgamation is the imperialist encirclement, which constitutes the environment in which the Union of Republics is obliged to operate.

But there are also factors hindering and impeding such an amalgamation. The principal force hindering the amalgamation of the republics into a single union is the force which, as I have said, is growing in our country under the influence of the New Economic Policy—Great-Russian chauvinism. It is by no means fortuitous, comrades, that the Smenovekhists have recruited a large number of supporters among the Soviet officials. That is by no means fortuitous. Nor is it fortuitous that Messrs. the Smenovekhists are landing the Bolshevik Communists, saying, as it were: You may talk as much as you like about Bolshevism, you may prate as much as you like about your internationalist tendencies, but we know that what Denikin failed to do you will do, that you Bolsheviks have resurrected, or at least are going to resurrect, the great idea of a great Russia. All this is not fortuitous. Nor is it fortuitous that this idea has penetrated even into some of our Party institutions. At the February Plenum, where the question of a Second Chamber was first raised, I was

myself a witness to utterances on the part of certain members of the Central Committee which were not in harmony with communism—utterances entirely alien to internationalism. All this is a sign of the times, an epidemic. The chief danger arising from this is that, owing to the New Economic Policy, dominant-nation chauvinism is growing in our country daily and hourly—dominant chauvinism, the rankest kind of nationalism, which strives to obliterate all that is not Russian, to gather all the threads of administration into the hands of Russians and to crush everything that is not Russian. The chief danger is that such a policy involves the risk that the Russian proletariat may forfeit the confidence of the formerly oppressed peoples, which it won in the days of October Revolution, when the Russian proletarians overthrew the landlords and the Russian capitalists, when they, the Russian proletarians, smashed the fetters of national oppression, evacuated the troops from Persia and Mongolia, proclaimed the independence of Finland and Armenia, and generally placed the national question on an entirely new basis. We may lose every shred of the confidence we earned at that time unless we arm ourselves against this new, I repeat, Great-Russian chauvinism, which creeps along without face or form, insinuating itself drop by drop into the eyes and ears, drop by drop changing the mind and soul of our political workers, so that one may hardly recognise them. It is this danger, comrades, that we must lay at all costs; otherwise we run the risk of losing the confidence of the workers and peasants of the formerly oppressed peoples, we run the risk that the ties may be snapped between these peoples and the Russian proletariat, which involves the risk of a fissure forming in the system or our dictatorship. Do not forget, comrades, that we advanced against Kerensky with flying colours and overthrew the Provisional Government partly because we were backed by the confidence of those oppressed peoples which were expecting liberation at the hands of the Russian proletarians. Do not forget such reserves as the oppressed peoples, who are mute, but whose very muteness exerts pressure and decides much. This is often not felt, but these peoples live, they exist, and they must not be forgotten. Yes, comrades, it is dangerous to forget them. Do not forget that if in the rear of Kolchak, Denikin, Wrangel and Yudenich we had not had the so-called “aliens,” the formerly oppressed peoples, who disorganised the rear of these generals by their tacit sympathy for the Russian proletarians—comrades, that is a specific factor in our development, this tacit sympathy, which nobody hears or sees, but which decides everything—if it had not been for this sympathy, we would not have nailed a single one of these generals. While we were advancing on them, their rear was disintegrating. Why? Because these generals depended on the colonising elements among the Cossacks, they held out to the oppressed peoples the prospect of further oppression, and the oppressed peoples were therefore forced into our arms, while we held aloft the banner of the liberation of these oppressed peoples. That is what decided the fate of these generals; those are the factors which, although they are obscured by the victories of our armies, in the long run decided everything. This must not be forgotten. That is why we must make an abrupt change of front in the sense of combating the new chauvinist tendencies and pillorying those bureaucrats in our institutions and those Party comrades who are forgetting one of our gains in the October Revolution, namely, the confidence of the formerly oppressed peoples, a confidence we must cherish.

That is the first, and the most dangerous, factor hindering the

amalgamation of the peoples and republics into a single union. It must be understood that if a force like Great-Russian chauvinism begins to flourish and gets its way, then farewell to the confidence of the formerly oppressed peoples; we shall never secure collaboration within a single union, and we shall never have a Union of Republics.

The second factor hindering a union of the formerly oppressed peoples around the Russian proletariat, comrades, is the actual inequality which we have inherited from the period of tsarism.

We have proclaimed equality of legal status and are practising it; but equality of legal status, although in itself a factor of the utmost importance in the history of the development of the Soviet republics, is still a long way from actual equality. Formally, all the backward nationalities and all the tribes enjoy all the rights enjoyed by the other, more advanced, nationalities of our federation. But the trouble is that some nationalities have no proletarians of their own, have never passed through the stage of industrial development, or even entered that stage, are frightfully backward culturally and are entirely unable to take advantage of the rights granted them by the revolution. That, comrades, is far more important than the question of schools. Some of our comrades here think that the knot can be unravelled by stressing the question of schools and language. That is not so, comrades. Schools will not get you very far. The schools are developing, so are the languages; but actual inequality is the basis of all discord and friction. Talk of schools and language is not enough. What is wanted is real, systematic, sincere and genuine proletarian assistance on our part to the toiling masses of the culturally and economically backward nationalities. Apart from schools and language, the Russian proletariat must take every necessary measure to establish centres of industry in the border regions, in the republics which are culturally backward—and they are backward not through any fault of their own, but because they were formerly looked upon as sources of raw materials. Certain attempts have already been made in this direction. One factory from Moscow has already been transferred to Georgia and will probably soon start operation. Bokhara has taken one factory, and might have taken four. Turkestan is taking one large factory. Thus the conditions now exist enabling these republics, which are backward economically and possess no proletariat, to establish with the aid of the Russian proletariat their own centres of industry, small though they may be, in order to create in these centres groups of local proletarians to serve as a bridge between the Russian proletarians and peasants and the toilers of these republics. In this sphere serious work is required; and here talk of schools and language is not enough.

But there is still a third factor hindering the amalgamation of the republics into a single union: it is the existence of nationalism in the individual republics. The New Economic Policy affects not only the Russian, but also the non-Russian population. The New Economic Policy is fostering private trade and industry not only in the centre of Russia, but also in the individual republics. And this New Economic Policy, and private capital, which is associated with it, nourish and foster Georgian, Azerbaidjanian, Uzbek and other nationalism. Of course, if there were no Great-Russian chauvinism—which is aggressive because it is strong, because it always has been strong, and which has retained the habit of oppressing and humiliating—if there were no Great-Russian chauvinism, local chauvinism, as a reaction to Great-Russian chauvinism, might perhaps have existed, so to speak, only in the smallest way, in miniature,

because anti-Russian nationalism is in the long run a form of defence, a rather ugly form of defence against Russian nationalism, against Russian chauvinism. If this nationalism were only defensive, it might not be worth making a fuss about. We could concentrate our entire weight of action, the entire weight of our struggle, on Great-Russian chauvinism, in the hope that if this powerful enemy were overcome, anti-Russian nationalism would be overcome with it; for, I repeat, this nationalism is in the long run a reaction to Great-Russian nationalism, a retaliation to it, a definite form of defence. Yes, that would be so if anti-Russian nationalism in the localities were nothing more than a reaction to Russian nationalism. But the trouble is that in some republics this defensive nationalism is converted into aggressive nationalism.

Take Georgia. Over 30 per cent of its population are non-Georgians. They include Armenians, Abkhazians, Adjarians, Ossets and Tatars. The Georgians dominate. And among a certain section of the Georgian Communists the idea has been developing that there is no particular need to reckon with these small nationalities; they are less cultured, less developed, and there is therefore no need to reckon with them. That is chauvinism—a harmful and dangerous chauvinism; for it may turn, and has already turned, the small republic of Georgia into an arena of discord.

Take Azerbaidjan. Here the Azerbaidjanians are the principal nationality, but there are also Armenians. Among a certain section of the Azerbaidjanians there is also a tendency, sometimes quite unconcealed, to think that the Azerbaidjanians are the native population of the country and the Armenians intruders, and that on these grounds it is perhaps possible to push them somewhat into the background, to disregard their interests. That is chauvinism too. It undermines that equality of nationalities on which the Soviet power is based.

Take Bokhara. In Bokhara there are three nationalities—the Uzbeks, who constitute the principal nationality, the Turkmens, who from the point of view of Bokharan chauvinism are a “less important” nationality, and the Kirghiz, who are few in number and are also “less important.”

In Khorezm you have the same thing—Turkmens and Uzbeks. The Uzbeks are the principal nationality and the Turkmens are “less important”.

All this leads to conflict and weakens the Soviet power. This tendency towards local chauvinism must also be stricken root and branch. Of course, local chauvinism is not as important as Great-Russian chauvinism, which in the general scheme of the national question comprises three-quarters of the whole; but from the point of view of local work, of the local people, from the point of view of the peaceful development of the national republics themselves, this chauvinism is a factor of prime moment.

Sometimes this chauvinism begins to undergo a very interesting evolution. I have in mind Transcaucasia. You know that Transcaucasia consists of three republics embracing ten nationalities. From very early times Transcaucasia has been the scene of massacre and strife and, under the Mensheviks and nationalists, the scene of warfare. You know of the Georgian-Armenian War. You also know of the massacres which took place at the beginning of 1904 and the end of 1905. I could name several districts where the Armenian majority massacred the entire remaining part of the population, which consisted of Tatars. Zangezur, for instance: in this region the majority of the population are Armenians,

and they massacred all the Tatars. I could name another province—Nakhichevan. There the Tatars predominated and they massacred all the Armenians. That was just before the liberation of Armenia and Georgia from the yoke of imperialism. [Voice: That was their way of solving the national problem]. That also, of course, was a way of solving the national problem. But it is not the Soviet way. Of course, the Russians have nothing to do with this state of mutual national enmity, for it is the Tatars and Armenians who are fighting, and the Russians are not involved. That is why a special organ is required in Transcaucasia to regulate the relations between the nationalities. It may safely be said that the relations between the proletariat of formerly sovereign Russia and the toilers of all the other nationalities make up three-quarters of the national question. But one-quarter of this question must be attributed to the relations of the formerly oppressed nationalities among themselves.

And if in this atmosphere of mutual mistrust the Soviet government had failed to establish in Transcaucasia an organ of national peace capable of adjusting all friction and conflict, we would have returned to the era of tsarism, or to the era of the Dashnaks<sup>74</sup>, the Mussavatists<sup>75</sup>, the Mensheviks, the era when people burnt and massacred each other. That is why the Central Committee has thrice re-affirmed the necessity of preserving the Transcaucasian Federation as an organ of national peace.

There has been and still is a group of Georgian Communists who do not object to Georgia's amalgamation with the Union of Republics, but do object to this amalgamation being effected through the Transcaucasian Federation. You see, they would like to get closer to the Union, they do not want any intermediary between themselves—the Georgians—and the Union of Republics in the shape of the Transcaucasian Federation; the federation, they say, is unnecessary. That sounds very revolutionary. But the idea behind it is a different one. In the first place, these statements indicate that in the national question in Georgia the attitude towards the Russians is of secondary importance, for these deviator comrades (so they are called) have nothing against the direct amalgamation of Georgia with the Union; that is, they do not fear Great-Russian chauvinism, considering that in one way or another it has been undermined, or at any rate is not of decisive importance. It is evidently the federation of Transcaucasia they fear most. Why? Why, when the three peoples which inhabit Transcaucasia, which fought among themselves so long, which massacred each other, and warred on each other, have at last been united by the Soviet government by bonds of fraternal unity in the form of a federation—why, when this federation has now produced genuine fruits of mutual amity, should these bonds be broken? What is the trouble, comrades? The trouble is, comrades, that the bonds of federation deprive Georgia of that somewhat privileged position which she might assume in virtue of her geographical position. Judge for yourselves. Georgia has her own port—Batum—to which goods from the West flow; Georgia has a railway centre like Tiflis, which cannot be avoided by the Armenians, nor by Azerbaidjan, which receives all its goods through Batum. If Georgia were a separate republic, if she were not part of the Transcaucasian Federation, she could present a certain little ultimatum both to Armenia, which cannot get along without Tiflis, and to Azerbaidjan, which cannot get along without Batum. There would be certain advantages in this. It is not fortuitous, comrades, that it was in Georgia

that the monstrous decree on the cordon was elaborated<sup>76</sup>. The blame for this is now being shifted on to Serebryakov. Suppose that is so. But the decree originated in Georgia, and not in Azerbaidjan or Armenia. It is not fortuitous that there was such a decree, which was intended to regulate the relations between the national groups of the population in such a way as to retain certain advantages for Georgia and to enable her to utilise the favourable geographical position which she undoubtedly possesses and which she, in the person of the deviators, does not want to lose. Then there is another reason. Tiflis is the capital of Georgia, but the Georgians there are not more than 25 per cent of the population, the Armenians not less than 35 per cent, and the rest belong to other nationalities. There's a capital of Georgia for you! If Georgia were a separate republic, a certain transplantation of population might be effected—for instance, the Armenian population might be removed from Tiflis. Was there not such a decree, which Comrade Makharadze declared was directed against the Armenians? A certain transplantation might be effected so as to diminish the proportion of Armenians to Georgians in Tiflis from year to year, and thus convert Tiflis into a real Georgian capital. I grant that they have abandoned the decree on eviction. But they possess a vast number of possibilities, a vast number of flexible forms—such as “decongesting” the town—by which it would be possible, while maintaining the semblance of internationalism, to arrange matters in such a way that there would be fewer Armenians in Tiflis. It is these geographical advantages, which the deviators do not want to lose, and the disadvantages of the Georgians in Tiflis itself, where there are less Georgians than Armenians, that are causing our deviators to be opposed to the federation. The Mensheviks simply evicted Armenians and Tatars from Tiflis. Now, under Soviet rule, eviction is impossible; therefore one must leave the federation, for this will create legal opportunities for performing independently certain operations which would result in the advantageous position enjoyed by the Georgians being fully utilised against Azerbaidjan and Armenia. And the result would be to create a privileged position for the Georgians in Transcaucasia. Therein lies the whole danger. Can we ignore the interests of national peace in Transcaucasia and create conditions under which the Georgians would be in a privileged position in relation to the republics of Armenia and Azerbaidjan? No. We cannot allow that.

There is an old, specific system of ruling, under which a bourgeois government makes certain nationalities its favourites, grants them privileges and humbles the other nations not wishing to be bothered with them. Thus by placing one nationality in a favoured position it uses it to press on the others. Such for instance, was the method of rule in Austria. Everyone remembers the statement of the Austrian Minister Beist, who summoned the Hungarian Minister and said: “You manage your hordes and I'll look after mine”; that is, you crush and press on your nationalities in Hungary and I will press on my own. You and I are privileged nations, and we will press on the rest. The same was the case with the Poles in Austria. The Austrians put the Poles in a favoured position, granted them privileges, in order that the Poles should help the Austrians strengthen their positions in Poland; and in return they allowed the Poles to strangle Galicia. This system of picking out a few nationalities and granting them privileges in order to crush the rest is purely and specifically Austrian. From the point of view of the bureaucracy, this is an economical method of ruling, because it is necessary to bother only with

one nationality; but from the political point of view it is fatal, for to violate the principle of equality of nations and to grant privileges to any one nationality is to doom one's national policy to certain failure.

Great Britain is now ruling India in this way. In order to make it easier, from the point of view of the bureaucracy, to deal with the nationalities and tribes of India, Great Britain has divided India into British India (240,000,000 population) and native India (72,000,000 population). Why? Because Great Britain wanted to pick out one group of nations and grant it privileges in order to make it easier to rule the remaining nationalities. There are no less than eight hundred nationalities in India, and Great Britain decided that, rather than bother with eight hundred nationalities separately, it is better to pick out a few nations, grant them certain privileges and through them rule the rest; for, firstly, the discontent of the other nations would be directed against these favourites and not against Great Britain, and, secondly, it is cheaper to “bother” with two or three nations than with eight hundred.

That is also a nice little system of governing, the British system. What does it lead to? To a cheaper apparatus—that is true. But, comrades, if we disregard bureaucratic conveniences, this means death to British rule in India; this system bears within it the doom of British rule and British domination as certain as twice two is four.

It is into this dangerous road that the Georgian deviators are impelling us when they resist federation, violate all the laws of the Party and want to separate from the federation in order to retain their advantageous position. They are trying to get us to grant them certain privileges at the expense of the Armenian and Azerbaidjanian republics. But this is a road we cannot take, for it means certain doom for our entire policy and for Soviet government in the Caucasus.

It is not without good reason that this danger was sensed by our comrades in Georgia. This Georgian chauvinism, having assumed the offensive against the Armenians and Azerbaidjanians, roused the Communist Party of Georgia. It is not without good reason that the Communist Party of Georgia, which within the period of its legal existence has held two congresses, on both occasions unanimously rejected the position of the deviators. For without the Transcaucasian Federation it would be impossible to maintain peace in the Caucasus, it would be impossible to establish equality. One nation must not be permitted more privileges than another. This our comrades have sensed. That is why after two years of contention the Mdivani group represents a small handful, repeatedly ejected by the Party in Georgia herself.

Nor is it without good reason that Comrade Lenin was so pressing and insistent that the federation should be established immediately. Nor is it without good reason that our Central Committee thrice re-affirmed the need for a federation in Transcaucasia, with its own Central Executive Committee and its own executive authority, the decisions of which would be binding on the republics. Nor is it without good reason that both the commissions—that of Comrade Dzerzhinsky and that of Kamenev and Kuibyshev<sup>77</sup>—stated upon their arrival in Moscow that federation is indispensable.

Nor, finally, is it without good reason that the Mensheviks of the *Sotsialistichesky Vestnik* laud our deviators and sing their praises for resisting federation: birds of a feather flock together.

I now pass, comrades, to an examination of the means of eliminating these three main factors hindering union—Great-Russian chauvinism,



actual inequality and local nationalism, particularly when the latter tends to pass into chauvinism. Of the methods that may help us painlessly outgrow this heritage of the past which is hindering closer relations between the nations, I shall mention only three.

The first means is to adopt every possible measure to make the Soviet government understood and loved in the republics, to make the Soviet government not merely Russian but international. This requires that not only the schools, but all institutions and all bodies, both Party and Soviet, should become steadily naturalised, that they should employ the language understood by the masses and function under conditions answering to the habits of the given people. This condition alone will make it possible to convert the Soviet government from a Russian government into an international government, a government understood by and near and dear to the toiling masses of all the republics, particularly to those which are economically and culturally backward.

The second means that may help us painlessly to outgrow the heritage left by tsarism and the bourgeoisie is to construct the Commissariats of the Union of Republics in such a way as to enable at least the chief nationalities to have their representatives on the collegiums and to create conditions in which the needs and requirements of the various republics will be unconditionally met.

The third means is to have among our supreme organs one that will serve to express the needs and requirements of every republic and nationality without exception. I want to draw particular attention to this latter point.

If within the Central Executive Committee of the Union we could create two chambers, one of which would be elected at the Union Congress of Soviets, irrespective of nationality and the other by the republics and regions (all the republics being equally represented and all the national regions being equally represented) and endorsed by the Congress of Soviets of the Union of Republics, I think that our supreme institutions would express not only the class interests of all proletarian groups without exception, but also purely national needs. We should have an organ which would reflect the special interests of the nationalities, peoples and tribes inhabiting the territories of the Union of Republics. Under the conditions prevailing in our Union, which embraces not less than 140,000,000 people, of which about 65,000,000 are non-Russians, one cannot, in such a state, govern without having before us here, in Moscow, in the supreme organ of government, emissaries of these nationalities who can express not only the interests common to the proletariat as a whole, but also the interests which are particularly, specially and specifically national. Without this, comrades, it will be impossible to govern. Unless we have this barometer, comrades, unless we have people capable of formulating these special needs of the various nationalities, it will be impossible to govern.

There are two ways of governing a country. One way is to have a simplified apparatus, headed, say, by a group of people or by a single person, with hands and eyes in the localities in the shape of governors. That is a very simple form of government, under which the ruler, in governing the country, receives the kind of information governors can supply, and consoles himself with the hope that he is governing honestly and well. Friction arises, friction passes into conflicts and conflicts into revolts. The revolts are then crushed. That is not our system of government; besides, although simple, it is too costly. In our Soviet country

we must evolve a system of government which will permit us to anticipate all changes with certainty, to perceive everything that is going on among the peasants, the nationals, the non-Russian nations and the Russians; the system of supreme organs must possess a number of barometers which will anticipate every change, register and forestall a Basmach movement, a bandit movement, Kronstadt, and all possible storms and inclemencies. That is the Soviet system of government. It is called the Soviet government, the people's government, because, resting on the rank and file, it is the first to register changes, takes the necessary measures and rectifies the line in time if it has become distorted—criticising itself and rectifying its line. This system of government is the Soviet system, and it requires that among the number of our supreme bodies there should be such as will give exhaustive expression to national needs and requirements.

The objection is made that this will complicate the whole system of government, that it will pile body on body. That is true. Hitherto we had the Central Executive Committee of the R. S. F. S. R., then we created the Central Executive Committee of the Union, and now it seems we shall have to split the Central Executive Committee of the Union into two. It can't be helped. I said that the simplest form of government is to have one man and to give him governors. But now, after the October Revolution, we cannot try such experiments. The system has become more complex, but it makes government easier and lends the whole government system a profoundly Soviet character. That is why I think that the congress must agree to the establishment of a special organ, a second chamber within the Central Executive Committee of the Union, since it is absolutely indispensable.

I will not say that this is a perfect form of organising collaboration among the peoples of the Union; I will not say that it is the last word in science; by no means. We shall have many occasions to discuss the national question for national and international conditions change, and may change again. I do not swear that some of the Commissariats we are merging in the Union of Republics will not have to be separated out again if experience should show that the merging of some of the Commissariats produces unfavourable results.

But one thing is clear, namely, that under present conditions and in present circumstances there is no better method and no more suitable organ available. As yet we have no better means or method of creating an organ capable of reflecting all the oscillations and all the changes that take place within the various parts of the republic than by the institution of a second chamber. It need hardly be said that the second chamber must consist of representatives not only of the four republics that have united, but of all the peoples; for the question concerns not only the republics which have formally united (there are four of them), but all the peoples and nationalities. We therefore require a form that will reflect the needs of all the peoples and republics without exception.

To sum up, comrades. We see that the importance of the national question is determined by the new situation in international affairs, by the fact that we must here, in Russia, in our federation, solve the national problem in a correct, a model way, in order to set an example to the East, which represents the heavy reserves of our revolution, and thus increase the confidence in and urge towards our federation. From the point of view of the internal situation, the New Economic Policy, the growing Great-Russian chauvinism and local chauvinism also compel us to emphasise the particular importance of the national question.



I then said that the essence of the national problem is to establish correct relations between the proletariat of the former sovereign nation and the peasantry of the former non-sovereign nations and that from this point of view the concrete form of solution of the national problem at the present moment is to find the way, the means of bringing about the collaboration and co-existence of the peoples within a Union of Republics, within a single state.

I further spoke of the factors which favour such closer relations between the peoples; I spoke of the factors which impede such amalgamation. I dealt especially with Great-Russian chauvinism, as a force that is gaining in strength. This force constitutes the chief danger tending to undermine the confidence of the formerly oppressed peoples in the Russian proletariat. This is our most dangerous enemy, which we must overcome; for once we overcome it, we shall have overcome nine-tenths of the nationalism which has survived and which is developing in certain republics.

Further, we are faced with the danger of being impelled by certain groups of comrades into granting privileges to certain nationalities at the expense of others. I have said that this is a road we cannot take, because it implies the development of local nationalism in its ugliest, most chauvinistic forms, and because it may undermine national peace and kill the confidence of the masses of other nations in Soviet government.

I further said that the chief means enabling us to eliminate most painlessly the factors hindering amalgamation is a second chamber in the Central Executive Committee, of which I spoke more openly at the February Plenum of the Central Committee, and which is dealt with in the theses in a more veiled form in order to enable the comrades themselves, perhaps, to indicate, to probe for, some other, more flexible form, some other, more suitable organ capable of reflecting the interests of the nationalities. Such are the conclusions.

I think that only in this way shall we be able to achieve a correct solution of the national problem, shall we be able to unfurl the banner of proletarian revolution and rally around it the sympathy and confidence of the countries of the East, which are the heavy reserves of our revolution and which may play a decisive part in the coming battle of the proletariat against imperialism. [Applause.]

### Reply to the Discussion

Comrades, before proceeding to report on the work of the committee on the national question, permit me to object on two main points to those who have spoken on my report. It will take about twenty minutes, not more.

The first question is that one group, headed by Bukharin and Rakovsky, have attached too much importance to the national question, have exaggerated it, and on account of the national question have overlooked the social question, the question of the power of the working class.

And yet it is clear to us, as Communists, that the basis of all our work must be to strengthen the power of the workers; and only then do we address ourselves to the other question—a very important question, but subordinate to the first—the national question. We are told that we must not injure the nationals. That is perfectly true, I agree that we

must not injure them. But to evolve out of this a new theory to the effect that the Great-Russian proletariat must be placed in a position of inequality with regard to the formerly oppressed nations is absurd. Bukharin has converted into a regular slogan what was merely a figure of speech in Comrade Lenin's article. Yet it is clear that the political basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat consists mainly and primarily of the central, the industrial regions, and not the border regions, which are peasant countries. If we over-emphasise the peasant border regions at the expense of the proletarian districts, a fissure in the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat may result. That is dangerous, comrades. We must not overshoot the mark in politics, just as we must not under-shoot it.

It should be borne in mind that besides the right of nations to self-determination there is also the right of the working class to consolidate its power, and to this latter right the right of self-determination is subordinate. There are occasions when the right of self-determination conflicts with the other, the higher right—the right of a working class that has assumed power to consolidate its power. In such cases—this must be said bluntly—the right to self-determination cannot and must not serve as an obstacle to the exercise by the working class of its right to dictatorship. The former must give way to the latter. That, for instance, was the case in 1920, when in order to defend the power of the working class we were obliged to march on Warsaw.

It must therefore not be forgotten when handing out all sorts of promises to the nationals, when bowing and scraping before the representatives of the nationalities, as certain comrades did at the present congress, it must be borne in mind that the sphere of action of the national question and the limits of its jurisdiction, so to speak, are, in view of our external and internal situation, confined within the sphere of action and jurisdiction of the "labour question", as the fundamental question.

A great many speakers here have referred to notes and articles by Vladimir Ilyich. I would rather not have to quote my teacher, Comrade Lenin, since he is not here, and I am afraid of quoting him wrongly and inappropriately. Nevertheless, I feel obliged to refer to one passage, which is axiomatic and can give rise to no misunderstanding, in order that there should be no doubt in the minds of comrades with regard to the relative importance of the national question. Analysing Marx's letter on the national question in an article on self-determination, Comrade Lenin draws the following conclusion:

"Marx had no doubt as to the subordinate position of the national question as compared with the 'labour question'".<sup>78</sup>

Here are only two lines, but they are decisive. And this is what some of our comrades who are more zealous than wise should drill into their heads.

The second question is that of Great-Russian chauvinism and local chauvinism. Rakovsky, and especially Bukharin, have come forward here and proposed that the point dealing with the danger of local chauvinism should be deleted. Their argument is that there is no need to bother with such a pigmy as local chauvinism when we have such a Goliath as Great-Russian chauvinism. Generally, Bukharin was in a repentant mood. That is natural: he has been sinning for years against the nationalities, denying the right of self-determination. It is high time

to repent. But in repenting he went to the other extreme. It is a curious thing that Bukharin should call upon the Party to follow his example and repent, when it is common knowledge that the Party is in no way implicated: for it has from its very inception (1898) recognised the right of self-determination and therefore has nothing to repent. The point is that Bukharin has not understood the real meaning of the national question. When it is said that the most important thing in the national question is to fight Great-Russian chauvinism, this indicates what are the duties of a Russian Communist; it implies that it is the duty of every Russian Communist himself to wage war on Russian chauvinism. If the fight against Russian chauvinism were undertaken not by the Russian but by the Turkestanian or Georgian Communists, it would be interpreted as anti-Russian chauvinism. This would confuse everything and strengthen Great-Russian chauvinism. Only the Russian Communists can undertake the war on Great-Russian chauvinism and fight it to a finish.

And what is implied when a war on local anti-Russian chauvinism is proposed? It implies the duty of local Communists, the duty of non-Russian Communists, to resist their own chauvinists. Can one deny the existence of deviations towards anti-Russian chauvinism? Why, the whole congress has seen for itself that local, Georgian, Bashkir and other kinds of chauvinism exist and that they must be combated.

Russian Communists cannot combat Tatar, Georgian, or Bashkir chauvinism; for if a Russian Communist were to undertake the difficult task of fighting Tatar or Georgian chauvinism it would be regarded as the fight of a Great-Russian chauvinist against the Tatars or the Georgians. That would confuse the whole issue. Only the Tatar, Georgian and other Communists can fight Tatar, Georgian and other chauvinism, only the Georgian Communists can successfully combat Georgian nationalism or chauvinism. That is the duty of the non-Russian Communists. That is why it is necessary to refer in the theses to this dual task, that of the Russian Communists (I refer to the fight against Great-Russian chauvinism) and that of the non-Russian Communists (I refer to the fight against anti-Armenian, Anti-Tatar, anti-Russian chauvinism). Otherwise the theses will be one-sided, we shall not be able to create internationalism either in state or in Party development.

If we fight only against Great-Russian chauvinism, this fight will obscure the fight of the Tatar and other chauvinists which is developing in the localities and which is especially dangerous now, under the conditions of the New Economic Policy. We cannot refrain from waging a fight on two fronts, for only by fighting on two fronts—on the one hand against Great-Russian chauvinism, which constitutes the chief danger in our work of construction, and on the other hand against local chauvinism—can we achieve success; for without this dual fight there can be no solidarity between the Russian workers and peasants and the workers and peasants of other nationalities. If this fight is not waged, the result may be to foster local chauvinism, it may lead to a policy of encouraging local chauvinism, which we cannot allow.

Permit me here too to quote Comrade Lenin. I would not have done so, but since at our congress there are many comrades who quote Comrade Lenin all away, and distort him, allow me to read a few words from one of his well-known articles:

"The proletariat must demand the right of political secession for the colonies and for the nations that 'its own' nation oppresses. Unless it does this, proletarian inter-

nationalism will remain a meaningless phrase; mutual confidence and class solidarity between the workers of the oppressing and oppressed nations will be impossible."

These are, as it were, the duties of the proletarians of the ruling or formerly ruling nation. Then he goes on to speak of the duties of the proletarians or the Communists of the formerly oppressed nations:

"The Socialists of the oppressed nations, on the other hand, must particularly fight for and maintain complete and absolute unity, including organisational unity, between the workers of the oppressed nation and the workers of the oppressing nation. Without such unity it will be impossible to maintain an independent proletarian policy and class solidarity with the proletariat of other countries in the face of all the subterfuge, treachery and trickery of the bourgeoisie: for the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations are constantly converting the slogans of national liberation into a means for deceiving the workers."<sup>79</sup>

As you see, if one is to follow in the footsteps of Comrade Lenin—and some comrades here have sworn by him—both theses must be retained in the resolution—the thesis on combating Great-Russian chauvinism and the thesis on combating local chauvinism—as being two aspects of one phenomenon as being theses on combating chauvinism in general.

This concludes my objections to what has been said by the speakers here.

## The October Revolution and the Problem of the middle Strata (1923)

The problem of the middle strata is undoubtedly one of the fundamental problems of a workers' revolution. The middle strata are made up of the peasantry and the petty working tradesfolk of the towns. Under this category must also be classed the oppressed nationalities, nine-tenths of which consist of middle strata. As you see, these are the strata that, as regards their economic status, stand midway between the proletariat and the capitalist class. The relative importance of these strata is due to two circumstances: in the first place, these strata represent a majority, or, at any rate, a considerable minority of the population of the existing states; in the second place, 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 unless these strata have at least been neutralised, unless they have already been divorced from the capitalist class and unless in their mass they no longer constitute an army of capital. Hence the fight for the middle strata, the fight for the peasantry, which ran like a crimson thread through the whole of our revolution, from 1905 to 1917, a fight which is still far from ended and which will continue to be fought in the future.

One of the reasons for the defeat of the Revolution of 1848 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. Certain vulgar Marxists, chief among them Kautsky, basing themselves on the experience of European revolutions, have come to the conclusion that the middle strata, especially the peasantry, are almost the natural enemies of the workers' revolution; that therefore a more lengthy period of development must be contemplated, as a result of which the proletariat will become the majority of the nation and thereby the proper conditions created for the victory of the workers' revolution. On the basis of this conclusion, they, the vulgar Marxists, warned the proletariat against "premature" revolution. On the basis of this conclusion, they, from "motives of principle," left the middle strata under the complete sway of capital. On the basis of this conclusion, they prophesied the doom of the Russian October Revolution, on the grounds that the proletariat in Russia constitutes a minority of the population, that Russia is a peasant country and that therefore a victorious workers' revolution in Russia is impossible.

It is noteworthy that Marx himself had an entirely different opinion of the middle strata, especially of the peasantry. Whereas the vulgar Marxists, having washed their hands of the peasantry and left them to the complete political sway of capital, noisily bragged of their "consistency of principle," Marx, the most consistent in principle of all Marxists, urgently advised the party of the Communists not to lose sight of the peasants, to win them over to the side of the proletariat and to make sure of their support in the coming 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, saying:

"The whole thing in Germany will depend on the possibility to back the proletarian revolution by some second edition of the Peasants' War."<sup>80</sup>

This was written in reference to the Germany of the fifties, a peasant country, where the proletariat comprised an insignificant minority, where the proletariat was less organised than the proletariat of Russia in 1917, and where the peasantry, because of its status, was less disposed to support a proletarian revolution than was the case in Russia in 1917.

The October Revolution undoubtedly represented that happy combination of a "peasant war" and a "proletarian revolution" of which Marx wrote, all the "highly principled" chatterboxes notwithstanding. The October Revolution proved that such a combination is both possible and feasible. The October Revolution proved that the proletariat can seize power and retain it, provided it is able to sever the middle strata, especially the peasantry, from the capitalist class and provided it is able to convert 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 give prominence to the problem of the middle strata, and primarily of the peasantry, and the first to solve it successfully, despite the "theories" and jeremiads of the heroes of the Second International.

That was the first merit of the October Revolution, if one may speak of merit at all 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. It has already been said that nine-tenths of these nationalities consist of peasants and of the petty working trades folk of the towns. This, however, does not exhaust the concept "oppressed nationality." Oppressed nationalities are usually oppressed not only as peasants and as urban working tradesfolk, but also as nationalities, i.e., as the toilers of a definite state, language, culture, manner of life, customs and habits. The double burden of oppression cannot but tend to revolutionise the toiling masses of the oppressed nationalities, cannot but drive them to fight the principal force of oppression—capital. This formed the basis on which the proletariat managed to achieve a combination of 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 confines of Russia; it could not fail to jeopardise the most deep-seated reserves of capital. Whereas the fight for the middle strata of a given dominant nationality is a fight for the direct reserves of capital, the fight for the emancipation of the oppressed nationalities could not but become a fight for certain of the most deep-seated reserves of capital, a fight for the emancipation of the colonial and non-sovereign nations from the yoke of capital. This latter fight is still far from ended—more, it has not yet yielded even the first decisive successes. But this fight for the deep-seated reserves was started by the October Revolution, and it will undoubtedly unfold itself step by step with the development of imperialism, with the growing power of our Union of Republics and the development of the proletarian revolution in the West.

In brief, the October Revolution did in fact start the fight of the proletariat for the deep-seated reserves of capitalism among the masses of the oppressed and non-sovereign countries; it was the first to raise the standard of war for the conquest of these reserves. That is its second merit.

The winning of the peasantry in our country was effected under the banner of socialism. The peasantry, having received land from the proletariat, having defeated the landlords with the aid of the proletariat, and having risen to power under the leadership of the proletariat, could not but feel, could not but realise, that the process of its emancipation was proceeding, and would continue to proceed, under the banner of the proletariat, under its red banner. This could not but convert the banner of socialism, which had formerly been a bogey to the peasantry, into a banner which claimed its attention and aided its emancipation from its downtrodden condition, its state of destitution 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 evacuation 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 cry was first sounded by the people who were the victors in the October Revolution. The fact that Russia, which formerly served as a symbol of oppression in the eyes of the oppressed nationalities, has now, after it has become socialist, been transformed into a symbol of emancipation cannot be said to be a mere chance. Nor is it a mere chance that the name of the leader of the October Revolution, Comrade Lenin, is now a name highly cherished by the downtrodden, browbeaten peasants and revolutionary intelligentsia of the colonial and non-sovereign countries.

If Christianity was formerly regarded by the oppressed and downtrodden slaves of the vast Roman Empire as a rock of salvation, we are now reaching a point where socialism may serve (in fact, is already beginning to serve) as a banner of liberation for the millions of the vast colony-owning states of imperialism. It can hardly be doubted that this circumstance considerably served to facilitate the work of combating the prejudices against socialism, and to open the way for socialist ideas in the most remote corners of the oppressed countries. If it was formerly difficult for a Socialist to come out openly among the non-proletarian middle strata of the oppressed or oppressor countries, today he can openly come forward and advocate socialist ideas among these strata and expect to be listened to, ay, and even hearkened to; 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 has cleared a way for the penetration of socialist ideas to the middle, non-proletarian, peasant strata of all nationalities and tribes; it has made the banner of socialism a popular banner among them—and that is the third merit of the October Revolution.

## The National Problem

*Extract from a Series of Lectures on the Foundations of Leninism  
Delivered at the Sverdlov University  
April 1924*

From this theme I take the two main questions: (a) the presentation of the problem; (b) the liberation movement of the oppressed peoples and the proletarian revolution.

1. *The presentation of the problem.* During the last twenty years the national problem has undergone a number of very important changes. The national problem in the period of the Second International and the national problem in the period of Leninism are far from being the same thing. They differ profoundly from each other, not only in their scope, but also in their intrinsic character.

Formerly, the national problem was usually confined to a narrow circle of questions, concerning, primarily, "cultured" nationalities. The Irish, the Hungarians, the Poles, the Finns, the Serbs, and several other European nationalities—that was the circle of disfranchised peoples in whose destinies the heroes of the Second International were interested. The scores and hundreds of millions of Asiatic and African peoples who are suffering national oppression in its most savage and cruel form usually remained outside of their field of vision. They hesitated to put white and black, "civilised" and "uncivilized" on the same plane. Two or three meaningless, lukewarm resolutions, which carefully evaded the question of liberating the colonies—that was all the leaders of the Second International could boast of. Now we can say that this duplicity and half-heartedness in dealing with the national problem has been brought to an end. Leninism laid bare this crying incongruity, broke down the wall between whites and blacks, between Europeans and Asiatics, between the "civilized" and "uncivilized" slaves of imperialism, and thus linked

the national problem with the problem of the colonies. The national problem was thereby transformed from a particular and internal state problem into a general and international problem, into a world problem of emancipating the oppressed peoples in the dependent countries and colonies from the yoke of imperialism.

Formerly, the principle of self-determination of nations was usually misinterpreted, and not infrequently it was narrowed down to the idea of the right of nations to autonomy. Certain leaders of the Second International even went so far as to represent the right to self-determination as meaning the right to cultural autonomy, i.e., the right of oppressed nations to have their own cultural institutions, leaving all political power in the hands of the ruling nation. As a consequence the idea of self-determination stood in danger of becoming transformed from an instrument for combating annexations into an instrument for justifying them. Now we can say that this confusion has been cleared up. Leninism broadened the conception of self-determination and interpreted it as the right of the oppressed peoples of the dependent countries and colonies to complete secession, as the right of nations to independent existence as states. This precluded the possibility of justifying annexations by interpreting the right of self-determination to mean the right of autonomy. Thus the principle of self-determination itself was transformed from an instrument for deceiving the masses which it undoubtedly was in the hands of the social-chauvinists during the imperialist war, into an instrument for exposing all and sundry imperialist aspirations and chauvinist machinations, into an instrument for the political education of the masses in the spirit of internationalism.

Formerly, the question of the oppressed nations was usually regarded as purely a juridical question. Solemn proclamations regarding "national equality," innumerable declarations about the "equality of nations"—that was the fare of the parties of the Second International which glossed over the fact that "equality of nations" under imperialism, where one group of nations (a minority) lives by exploiting another group of nations, is sheer mockery of the oppressed nations. Now we can say that this bourgeois-juridical point of view on the national question has been exposed. Leninism brought the national problem down from the lofty heights of high-sounding declarations to solid ground, and declared that pronouncements about the "equality of nations" which are not backed by the direct support of the proletarian parties for the liberation struggle of the oppressed nations are meaningless and false. In this way the question of the oppressed nations became a question of supporting, of rendering real and continuous assistance to the oppressed nations in their struggle against imperialism for real equality of nations, for their independent existence as states.

Formerly, the national problem was regarded from a reformist point of view, as an independent problem having no connection with the general problems of the rule of capital, of the overthrow of imperialism, of the proletarian revolution. It was tacitly assumed that the victory of the proletariat in Europe was possible without a direct alliance with the liberation movement in the colonies, that the national-colonial problem could be solved on the quiet, "of its own accord," off the high road of the proletarian revolution, without a revolutionary struggle against imperialism. Now we can say that this anti-revolutionary point of view has been exposed. Leninism has proved, and the imperialist war and the revolution in Russia have confirmed, that the national problem can be solved

only in connection with and on the basis of the proletarian revolution, and that the road to victory of the revolution in the West lies through the revolutionary alliance with the liberation movement of the colonies and dependent countries against imperialism. The national problem is a part of the general problem of the proletarian revolution, a part of the problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The question presents itself as follows: Are the revolutionary possibilities latent in the revolutionary liberation movement of the oppressed countries *already exhausted* or not; and if not, is there any hope, any ground to expect that these possibilities can be utilized for the proletarian revolution, that the dependent and colonial countries can be transformed from a reserve of the imperialist bourgeoisie into a reserve of the revolutionary proletariat, into an ally of the latter?

Leninism replies to this question in the affirmative, i.e., it recognises the latent revolutionary capacities of the national liberation movement of the oppressed countries and the possibility of utilising these capacities for the purpose of overthrowing the common enemy, for the purpose of overthrowing imperialism. The mechanics of the development of imperialism, the imperialist war and the revolution in Russia wholly confirm the conclusions of Leninism on this score.

Hence the necessity for the proletariat to support—resolutely and actively to support—the national liberation movement of the oppressed and dependent peoples.

This does not mean, of course, that the proletariat must support *every* national movement, everywhere and always, in every single concrete case. It means that support must be given to such national movements as tend to weaken, to overthrow imperialism, and not to strengthen and preserve it. Cases occur when the national movements in certain oppressed countries come into conflict with the interests of the development of the proletarian movement. In such cases support is, of course, entirely out of the question. The question of the rights of nations is not an isolated, self-sufficient question; it is a part of the general problem of the proletarian revolution, subordinate to the whole, and must be considered from the point of view of the whole. In the forties of the last century Marx supported the national movement of the Poles and Hungarians and was opposed to the national movement of the Czechs and the South Slavs. Why? Because the Czechs and the South Slavs were then “reactionary nations,” “Russian outposts” in Europe, outposts of absolutism; whereas the Poles and the Hungarians were “revolutionary nations,” fighting against absolutism. Because support of the national movement of the Czechs and the South Slavs was at that time equivalent to indirect support for tsarism, the most dangerous enemy of the revolutionary movement in Europe.

“The various demands of democracy,” writes Lenin, “including self-determination, are not an absolute, but a *small part* of the general democratic (now: general socialist) *world* movement. In individual concrete cases, the part may contradict the whole; if so, it must be rejected.” (“The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up,” *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX).

This is the position in regard to the question of certain national movements, of the possible reactionary character of these movements—if, of course, they are appraised not from the formal point of view, not from the point of view of abstract rights, but concretely, from the point of view of the interests of the revolutionary movement.

The same must be said of the revolutionary character of national movements in general. The unquestionably revolutionary character of the overwhelming majority of national movements is as relative and peculiar as is the possible reactionary character of certain particular national movements. The revolutionary character of a national movement under the conditions of imperialist oppression does not necessarily pre-suppose the existence of proletarian elements in the movement, the existence of a revolutionary or a republican program of the movement, the existence of a democratic basis of the movement. The struggle the Emir of Afghanistan is waging for the independence of Afghanistan is objectively a *revolutionary* struggle, despite the monarchist views of the Emir and his associates, for it weakens, disintegrates and undermines imperialism; whereas the struggle waged by such “desperate” Democrats and “Socialists,” “revoutlionaries” and republicans as, for example, Kerensky and Tsereteli, Renaudel and Scheidemann, Chernov and Dan, Henderson and Clynes during the imperialist war was a *reactionary* struggle, for its result was the whitewashing, the strengthening, the victory of imperialism. For the same reasons, the struggle the Egyptian merchants and bourgeois intellectuals are waging for the independence of Egypt is objectively a *revolutionary* struggle, despite the bourgeois origin and bourgeois title of the leaders of the Egyptian national movement, despite the fact that they are opposed to Socialism; whereas the fight the British Labour Government is waging to perpetuate Egypt’s dependent position is for the same reason a *reactionary* struggle, despite the proletarian origin and the proletarian title of the members of that government, despite the fact that they are “for” Socialism. I need not speak of the national movement in other, larger, colonial and dependent countries, such as India and China, every step of which along the road to liberation, even if it runs counter to the demands of formal democracy, is a steam-hammer blow at imperialism, i.e., is undoubtedly a *revolutionary* step.

Lenin was right in saying that the national movement of the oppressed countries should be appraised not from the point of view of formal democracy, but from the point of view of the actual results obtained, as shown by the general balance sheet of the struggle against imperialism, that is to say, “not in isolation, but on...a world scale.” (*Ibid.*)

2. *The liberation movement of the oppressed peoples and the proletarian revolution.* In solving the national problem Leninism proceeds from the following theses:

(a) The world is divided into two camps: the camp of a handful of civilised nations, which possess finance capital and exploit the vast majority of the population of the globe; and the camp of the oppressed and exploited peoples in the colonies and dependent countries, who comprise that majority;

(b) The colonies and the dependent countries, oppressed and exploited by finance capital, constitute a very large reserve and a very important source of strength for imperialism;

(c) The revolutionary struggle of the oppressed peoples in the dependent and colonial countries against imperialism is the only road that leads to their emancipation from oppression and exploitation;

(d) The most important colonial and dependent countries have already taken the path of the national liberation movement, which cannot but lead to the crisis of world capitalism;

(e) The interests of the proletarian movement in the developed countries and of the national liberation movement in the colonies call for the amalgamation of these two forms of the revolutionary movement into a common front against the common enemy, against imperialism;

(f) The victory of the working class in the developed countries and the liberation of the oppressed peoples from the yoke of imperialism are impossible without the formation and the consolidation of a common revolutionary front;

(g) The formation of a common revolutionary front is impossible unless the proletariat of the oppressor nations renders direct and determined support to the liberation movement of the oppressed peoples against the imperialism of its "own country," for "no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations" (*Marx*);

(h) This support implies the advocacy, defence and carrying out of the slogan of the right of nations to secession, to independent existence as states;

(i) Unless this slogan is carried out, the union and collaboration of nations within a single world economic system, which is the material basis for the victory of Socialism, cannot be brought about;

(j) This union can only be voluntary, and can arise only on the basis of mutual confidence and fraternal relations among nations.

Hence the two sides, the two tendencies in the national problem; the tendency towards political emancipation from the shackles of imperialism and towards the formation of an independent national state—a tendency which arose as a consequence of imperialist oppression and colonial exploitation; and the tendency towards an economic rapprochement among nations, which arose as a result of the formation of a world market and a world economic system.

"Developing capitalism," says Lenin, "knows of two historical tendencies in the national problem. First: the awakening of national life and of national movements, the struggle against all national oppression, the creation of national states. Second: the development and growing frequency of all sorts of intercourse among nations: the breaking down of national barriers; the creation of the international unity of capital, of economic life in general, of politics, of science, and so forth. Both tendencies are the universal law of capitalism. The first predominates at the beginning of the development of capitalism; the second characterises mature capitalism, heading towards its transformation into socialist society." ("Critical Remarks on the National Question," *Collected Works*, Vol. XVII.)

For imperialism these two tendencies represent irreconcilable contradictions; because imperialism cannot exist without exploiting colonies and forcibly retaining them within the framework of the "integral whole"; because imperialism can bring nations together only by means of annexations and colonial conquest, without which it is, generally speaking, inconceivable.

For Communism, on the contrary, these tendencies are but two sides of a single cause—the cause of the emancipation of the oppressed peoples from the yoke of imperialism; because Communism knows that the union of the nations in a single world economic system is possible only on the basis of mutual confidence and voluntary agreement, and that the road to the formation of a voluntary union of nations lies through the separation of the colonies from the "integral" imperialist "whole," through the transformation of the colonies into independent states.

Hence the necessity of a stubborn, continuous and determined struggle against the imperialist chauvinism of the "Socialists" of the ruling nations (Great Britain, France, America, Italy, Japan, etc.) who do not want to fight their imperialist governments, who do not want to support the struggle of the oppressed peoples in "their" colonies for emancipation from oppression, for secession.

Without such a struggle the education of the working class of the ruling nations in the spirit of true internationalism, in the spirit of rapprochement with the toiling masses of the dependent countries and colonies, in the spirit of real preparation for the proletarian revolution, is inconceivable. The revolution would not have been victorious in Russia, and Kolchak and Denikin would not have been crushed, had not the Russian proletariat enjoyed the sympathy and support of the oppressed peoples of the former Russian empire. But to win the sympathy and support of these peoples it had first of all to break the fetters of Russian imperialism and free these peoples from the yoke of national oppression. Without this it would have been impossible to consolidate the Soviet power, to implant true internationalism and to create that remarkable organisation for the collaboration of nations which is called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—the living prototype of the future union of nations in a single world economic system.

Hence the necessity of fighting against the national insularity, narrowness and aloofness of the Socialists in the oppressed countries, who do not want to rise above their national steeple and who do not understand the connection between the liberation movement in their various countries and the proletarian movement in the ruling countries.

Without such a struggle it is inconceivable that the proletariat of the oppressed nations can maintain an independent policy and its class solidarity with the proletariat of the ruling countries in the fight for the overthrow of the common enemy, in the fight for the overthrow of imperialism; without such a struggle, internationalism would be impossible.

This is how the toiling masses of the ruling nations and of the oppressed nations should be educated in the spirit of revolutionary internationalism.

Here is what Lenin says about this twofold task of Communism in educating the workers in the spirit of internationalism:

"...Can such education...be *concretely identical* in great, oppressing nations and in small, oppressed nations, in annexing nations and in annexed nations?"

"Obviously not. The way to the one road—to complete equality, to the closest intimacy and the subsequent *amalgamation* of all nations—obviously proceeds here by different routes in each concrete case: in the same way, let us say, as the route to a point in the middle of a given page lies towards the left from one edge and towards the right from the opposite edge. If a Socialist belonging to a great, oppressing, annexing nation, while advocating the amalgamation of nations in general, were to forget even for one moment that 'his' Nicholas II, 'his' Wilhelm, George, Poincaré etc., *also stand for amalgamation* with small nations (by means of annexations)—Nicholas II being for 'amalgamating' with Galicia, Wilhelm II for 'amalgamating' with Belgium, etc.—such a Socialist would be a ridiculous doctrinaire in theory and an abettor of imperialism in practice.

"The weight of emphasis in the internationalist education of the workers in the oppressing countries must necessarily consist in advocating and urging them to demand freedom of secession for oppressed countries. Without this there can be *no inter-*



nationalism. It is our right and duty to treat every Socialist of an oppressing nation who *fails* to conduct such propaganda as an imperialist and a scoundrel. This is an absolute demand, even if the *chance* of secession being possible and 'feasible' before the introduction of Socialism is only one in a thousand....

"On the other hand a Socialist belonging to a small nation must emphasize in the agitation the second word of our general formula: 'voluntary *union*' of nations. He may, without violating his duties as an internationalist, be in favour of *either* the political independence of his nation *or* its inclusion in a neighbouring state X, Y, Z, etc. But in all cases he must fight *against* small-nation narrow-mindedness, insularity and aloofness, he must fight for the recognition of the whole and the general, for the subordination of the interests of the particular to the interests of the general.

"People who have not gone thoroughly into the question think there is a 'contradiction' in Socialists of oppressing nations insisting on 'freedom of *secession*', while Socialists of oppressed nations on 'freedom of *union*.' However, a little reflection will show that there is not, nor can there be, any *other* road leading from the *given* situation to internationalism and the amalgamation of nations, any other road to this goal." ("The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up," *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX).

## The National Question in Yugoslavia

*Speech Delivered in the Yugoslav Commission of the E.C.C.I.,  
March 30, 1925*

Comrades, I think Semich has not fully understood the essence of the Bolshevik presentation of the national question. Neither before nor after the October Revolution did the Bolsheviks ever separate the national question from the general question of revolution. The essential feature of the Bolshevik approach to the national question was that the Bolsheviks always considered the national question in inseparable connection with the prospects of the revolution.

Semich quoted Lenin and said that Lenin was in favour of embodying some solution of the national question in the constitution. By this he, Semich, meant to say that Lenin as it were regarded the national question as a constitutional question, that is, not as a question of revolution, but as a question of reform. That is entirely wrong. Lenin never suffered nor could he have suffered from constitutional illusions. We have only to consult his works to be convinced of this. When Lenin spoke of a constitution, he had in mind, not the constitutional way of settling the national question, but the revolutionary way, that is to say, he conceived a constitution as resulting from the victory of the revolution. We in the U. S. S. R. also have a constitution, and it reflects a certain solution of the national question. However, this constitution came into being not as a result of a deal with the bourgeoisie, but as a result of a victorious revolution.

Semich further referred to Stalin's pamphlet on the national question written in 1912, in which he tried to find corroboration, even if indirect corroboration, of his point of view. But this reference served no purpose, because he did not and could not find, not only a quotation, but even a remote hint that would in the least justify his "constitutional" approach to the national question. In confirmation of this, I might remind Semich of the passage in Stalin's pamphlet where a contrast is

drawn between the Austrian method of settling the national question (constitutional) and the method of the Russian Marxists (revolutionary).

Here it is:

"The Austrians hope to achieve the 'freedom of nationalities' by means of petty reforms, by slow steps. While they propose national autonomy as a practical measure, they do not count on any radical change, on a democratic movement for liberation, which they do not even contemplate. The Russian Marxists, on the other hand, associate the 'freedom of nationalities' with a probable radical change and a democratic movement for liberation, having no grounds for counting on reforms. And this essentially alters matters in regard to the probable fate of the nations of Russia."

Clear, one would think.

And this is not Stalin's personal view, but the general view of the Russian Marxists, who consider and have always considered the national question in inseparable connection with the general question of revolution.

It can be said without straining the point that in the history of Russian Marxism there were two stages in the presentation of the national question, the first, or the pre-October stage, and the second, or the October stage. In the first stage, the national question was regarded as part of the general question of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, that is to say, as part of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. In the second stage, when the national question assumed wider scope and became a question of colonies, when it became transformed from an internal political question into a world question, it came to be considered as part of the general question of the proletarian revolution, as part of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In both stages, it will be seen, the approach was strictly revolutionary.

In my opinion, Semich has not yet quite grasped all this. Hence his attempt to reduce the national question to the level of a constitution, i.e., to regard it as a question of reform.

From this mistake follows another, which is that he is loth to regard the national question as being virtually a peasant question; not an agrarian, but a peasant question, for, these are two different things. It is quite true that the national question must not be identified with the peasant question, for, in addition to peasant questions, it includes such questions as national culture, national statehood, etc. But it is also undoubted that the peasant question after all constitutes the basis and essence of the national question. It is this that explains the fact that the peasantry represents the main army of the national movement; that without the peasant army, there is not nor can there be a powerful national movement. This is what is meant by saying that the national question is *virtually* a peasant question. I think Semich's reluctance to accept this formula is due to an underestimation of the inherent strength of the national movement and a lack of understanding of the profoundly popular and profoundly revolutionary nature of the national movement. This lack of understanding and this underestimation represent a grave danger, for, in practice, they imply an underestimation of the potential might latent, for instance, in the movement of the Croats for national emancipation. This underestimation is pregnant with serious complications for the entire Yugoslav Communist Party.

That is Semich's second error.

His attempt to deal with the national question in Yugoslavia without reference to the international situation and the probable course of

events in Europe must, undoubtedly be regarded as an error too. Starting from the fact that at the present moment there is no serious popular movement for independence among the Croats and the Slovenes, Semich arrives at the conclusion that the question of the right of nations to secession is an academic question, that, at any rate, it is not an immediate one. That, of course, is incorrect. Even if we admit that at the moment this question is not an immediate one, it might definitely become so if war were to begin, or when war begins, or if a revolution were to break out in Europe, or when it breaks out. That war will inevitably begin, and that *they* over there are bound to come to blows, there can be no doubt, in view of the nature and development of imperialism.

When in 1912 we Russian Marxists were drawing up the first draft of our national programme, no serious movement for national independence yet existed in any of the border regions of the Russian Empire. Nevertheless, we deemed it necessary to include in our programme the point on the right of nations to self-determination, i.e., the right of every nationality to secede and exist as an independent state. Why? Because we based ourselves not only on what then existed, but also on what was developing and impending in the general system of international relations; that is, we took into account not only the present, but also the future. We knew that if any nationality were to demand secession, the Russian Marxists would fight to ensure the right to secede for every such nationality. Semich in the course of his speech referred repeatedly to Stalin's pamphlet on the national question. But here is what is said about self-determination and independence in Stalin's pamphlet:

"The growth of imperialism in Europe is not fortuitous. In Europe capital finds itself too restricted, and it is striving towards foreign countries in search of new markets, cheap labour and new fields of investment. But this leads to external complications and to war... It is quite possible that a combination of internal and external factors may arise in which one or another nationality in Russia may find it necessary to raise and settle the question of its independence. And, of course, it is not for Marxists to create obstacles in such cases."

This was written as far back as 1912. You know that subsequently this view was entirely corroborated, both during the war and afterwards, and particularly after the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia.

All the more reason, therefore, why we must reckon with such possibilities in Europe in general, and in Yugoslavia in particular, especially now, when the national revolutionary movement is becoming ever more acute in the oppressed countries, and after the victory of the revolution in Russia. We must also bear in mind that Yugoslavia is not a fully independent country, that she is tied up with certain imperialist groups, and that, consequently, she cannot escape the great play of forces that is at work outside of Yugoslavia. If you are drawing up a national programme for the Yugoslavian Party (and that is precisely what we are now dealing with), you must remember that this programme must proceed not only from what exists at present, but also from what is developing and what will inevitably occur by virtue of international relations. That is why I think that the question of the right of nations to self-determination should be regarded as an immediate and burning question.

Now about the national programme. As the starting point of the national programme we must postulate a Soviet revolution in Yugoslavia,

we must postulate that without the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the victory of the revolution the national problem cannot be solved at all satisfactorily. Of course, there may be exceptions; there was such an exception, for instance, before the war when Norway separated from Sweden—of which Lenin treats in detail in one of his articles. But that was before the war and under an exceptional combination of favourable circumstances. After the war, and particularly after the victory of the Soviet revolution in Russia, such cases are hardly likely to occur. At any rate, the chances of their occurring are so slight that they can be placed at zero. But if that is so, it is clear that we cannot build our programme on a zero magnitude. That is why the postulate of a revolution must be the starting point of the national programme.

Further, it is imperative to include in the national programme a special point on the right of nations to self-determination, including the right of secession. I have already said why such a point cannot be omitted in the present internal and international conditions.

Finally, the programme should include a special point providing for national territorial autonomy for those nationalities in Yugoslavia which may not find it necessary to secede from that country. Those who think that such a contingency should be precluded are wrong. That is a mistake. Under certain circumstances, as a result of the victory of the Soviet revolution in Yugoslavia, it may well be that on the analogy of what occurred in Russia certain nationalities will not desire to secede. It is therefore clear that it is necessary to provide for such a contingency and have in the programme a point on autonomy, with a view to the transformation of the state of Yugoslavia into a federation of autonomous national states based on the Soviet system.

Thus, the right of secession must be provided for those nationalities that may desire secession, and the right of autonomy for those nationalities that may prefer to remain within the Yugoslavian state.

To avoid all misunderstanding, I must say that the *right* to secession must not be understood as an *obligation*, as a duty to secede. A nationality may take advantage of this right and secede, but it may also forego the right, and if it does not wish to exercise it, that is its business, and we cannot but take cognisance of the fact. Some comrades turn this right of secession into an obligation, and demand from the Croats, for instance, that they secede *at all costs*. That position is wrong, and must be rejected. We must not confuse a right with an obligation.

## The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East

*Speech Delivered at a Meeting of the Students of the  
University, May 18, 1925*

Comrades, first of all allow me to offer my congratulations on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the foundation of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East. I need hardly say that I wish your university every success in the difficult task of training Communist cadres for the East.

Furthermore, I want to make my excuses for having visited you so seldom, although it is my duty to visit you more often. But what would you have? Pressure of affairs makes it impossible for me to visit you more often.

And now let us proceed to consider the political tasks of the University of the Toilers of the East.

If we analyse the student body of the University of the Toilers of the East, we cannot help noting a certain duality in its composition. This university embraces representatives of not less than fifty nationalities and ethnic groups of the East. The students of the university are all children of the East. But that definition is not yet finished and clear-cut. The point is that among the students of the university there are two main groups representing two series of absolutely distinct conditions of development. The first group is composed of people who came to us from the Soviet East, from lands where the rule of the bourgeoisie no longer exists, where the yoke of imperialism has been overthrown and where the workers are in power. The second group of students is composed of people who have come to us from colonial and dependent countries, from countries where capitalism still reigns, where the oppression of imperialism has preserved all its severity, and where independence has still to be won by driving out the imperialists.

Thus we have before us two Easts, living different lives and developing under different conditions.

Needless to say, this dual character of the student body cannot but leave its impress on the work of the University of the Toilers of the East. It is this that explains why the university has one foot on Soviet soil and the other on the soil of the colonies and dependent countries.

Hence the two lines of activity of the university: one, the purpose of which is to train cadres competent to minister to the needs of the Soviet republics of the East, and the other, the purpose of which is to train cadres competent to minister to the revolutionary needs of the toiling masses in the colonies and dependent countries of the East.

Hence, also, the two kinds of tasks that confront the University of the Toilers of the East.

Let us examine each of these tasks of the U. T. E. separately.

### 1. Tasks of the U. T. E. in Relation to the Soviet Republics of the East

What are the characteristic features of the existence and development of these countries, of these republics, that distinguish them from the colonial and dependent countries?

Firstly, these republics are free from the yoke of imperialism.

Secondly, they are developing and consolidating themselves as nations not under the aegis of the bourgeois regime, but under the aegis of Soviet government. That is a fact without precedent in history, yet it is a fact.

Thirdly, inasmuch as they are but slightly developed industrially, they can, in their development, rely fully and completely on the support of the industrial proletariat of the Soviet Union.

Fourthly, being free of the colonial yoke, finding themselves under the aegis of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and being members of the Soviet Union, these republics can and should become fellow-builders of socialism in our country.

The fundamental task is to help the workers and peasants of these republics to become fellow-builders of socialism in our country; to create and develop conditions, adapted to the special circumstances in each of these republics, that will promote and accelerate this fellowship.

Hence the immediate tasks which confront active workers in the Soviet East:

1. To create industrial centres in the Soviet republics of the East as bases for rallying the peasants around the working class. You know that this work has already begun and that it will progress with the economic growth of the Soviet Union. The fact that these countries possess all kinds of raw materials is a guarantee that in time this work will be completed.

2. To advance agriculture and above all irrigation. As you know, this work, too, is progressing, at least in Transcaucasia and in Turkestan.

3. To improve and advance co-operative organisation among the broad masses of the peasants and handicraftsmen as the most reliable way of bringing the Soviet republics of the East into the general system of Soviet economic development.

4. To bring the Soviets into closer touch with the masses; to make them national in composition, and in this way implant a Soviet national state organisation that will be close and comprehensible to the toiling masses.

5. To develop national culture; to build up a wide system of courses and schools for both general education and vocational and technical training, teaching in the native languages, with the purpose of training Soviet, Party, trade union and economic cadres from among the native people.

It is the accomplishment of these tasks that will facilitate the work of socialist construction in the Soviet republics of the East.

People talk of model republics in the Soviet East. But what is a model republic? A model republic is one that honestly and conscientiously performs all these tasks, thereby creating an impulsion among the workers and peasants of neighbouring colonial and dependent countries towards the movement for emancipation.

I have spoken of bringing the Soviet into closer touch with the toiling masses of the nationalities, of naturalising the Soviets. But what does that mean, and how does it manifest itself in practice? I think that the recent delimitation of national frontiers in Turkestan may be regarded as an excellent example of how the Soviets can be brought into closer touch with the masses. The bourgeois press regards this delimitation of frontiers as "Bolshevik trickery". Yet it is clear that this is a manifestation not of "trickery", but of the profound aspiration of the masses of the people of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to have their own organs of government, which would be close and comprehensible to them. In the pre-revolutionary era, both these countries were torn into fragments, into various khanates and states, and were a convenient field for the exploitative machinations of the "powers that be". The time has now come when these scattered fragments can be reunited into independent states, so that the toiling masses of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan can be united and welded with the organs of government. The delimitation of frontiers in Turkestan is primarily the *reunion* of the scattered parts of these countries into independent states. The fact that these states then desired to join the Soviet Union as equal members thereof merely signifies that the Bolsheviks have found the key to the profound aspirations of the masses of the East, and that the Soviet Union is the only voluntary union

of the toiling masses of various nationalities in the world. In order to reunite Poland, the bourgeoisie required a series of wars. But in order to reunite Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the Communists required only a few months of explanatory propaganda.

That is the way to bring the organs of administration, in this case the Soviets, into close touch with the broad masses of the toilers of the various nationalities.

That is the proof that the Bolshevik national policy is the only right policy.

I further spoke of raising the level of national culture in the Soviet republics of the East. But what is national culture? How is it to be made compatible with proletarian culture? Did not Lenin, even before the war, say that there are two cultures—bourgeois and socialist—and that the demand for national culture is a reactionary demand of the bourgeoisie, which strives to infect the minds of the workers with the virus of nationalism? How are we to render the development of national culture, the development of schools and courses in the native languages, and the training of Communist cadres from among local people, compatible with the building of socialism, with the building of a proletarian culture? Is this not an irreconcilable contradiction? Of course not! We are building a proletarian culture. That is quite true. But it is also true that proletarian culture, which is socialist in content, assumes different forms and modes of expression among the various peoples that have been drawn into the work of socialist construction, depending on differences of language, customs, and so forth. Proletarian in content and national in form—such is the universal human culture towards which socialism is marching. Proletarian culture does not cancel national culture, but lends it content. National culture on the other hand, does not cancel proletarian culture, but lends it form. The demand for national culture was a bourgeois demand as long as the bourgeoisie was in power and the consolidation of nations proceeded under the aegis of the bourgeois system. The demand for national cultural became a proletarian demand when the proletariat came into power and the consolidation of nations began to proceed under the aegis of Soviet government. Whoever has not grasped the fundamental difference between these two situations will never understand either Leninism or the essence of the national question from the standpoint of Leninism.

Certain persons (Kautsky, for instance) talk of the creation of a single universal language and the dying away of all other languages in the period of socialism. I have little faith in this theory of a single, all embracing language. Experience, at any rate, speaks against rather than for such a theory. Until now the situation has been that the socialist revolution has not diminished but rather increased the number of languages; for, by stirring up the lower ranks of humanity and pushing them into political arena, it awakens to new life a number of hitherto unknown or little known nationalities. Who could have imagined that old, tsarist Russia consisted of no less than fifty nationalities and ethnic groups? However, by breaking the old chains and bringing a number of forgotten peoples and nationalities on the scene, the October Revolution gave them new life and a new development. Today, India is spoken of as a single whole. Yet there can be hardly any doubt that in the event of a revolutionary upheaval in India many hitherto unknown nationalities, each with its own language and its own distinctive culture, will emerge on the scene. And if it is a question of the

participation of various nationalities in the proletarian culture, there can be hardly any doubt that such participation will assume forms corresponding to the languages and the customs of these nationalities.

Not long ago I received a letter from some Buryat comrades asking me to explain some serious and difficult questions concerning the relation between universal culture and national culture. Here it is:

"we earnestly request you to explain the following, for us very serious and difficult, questions. The ultimate aim of the Communist Party is to achieve a single universal culture. How is the transition to the single universal culture through the national cultures, which are developing in our various autonomous republics, conceived? How is the assimilation of the peculiarities of the various national cultures (language and so forth) to take place?"

I think that what has just been said might serve as an answer to the question that is agitating these Buryat comrades.

The Buryat comrades raise the question of the assimilation of individual nationalities in the process of formation of a universal proletarian culture. Undoubtedly, certain nationalities may, and even certainly will, undergo a process of assimilation. Such processes have occurred before. But the point is that the process of assimilation of certain nationalities does not preclude, but rather presupposes, the opposite process of reinforcement and development of a number of powerful nationalities, for the partial process of assimilation is a result of the general process of development of nationalities. It is because of this that the possible assimilation of individual nationalities does not weaken, but, on the contrary, confirms the proposition, an absolutely correct proposition, that universal proletarian culture does not preclude, but rather presupposes and fosters national culture, just as national culture does not nullify, but rather supplements and enriches universal proletarian culture.

Such, in general, are the immediate tasks confronting the active workers of the Soviet republics of the East.

Such is the character and substance of these tasks.

The period of intense economic development and fresh concessions to the peasantry that has supervened must be turned to account in order to hasten the fulfilment of these tasks and thus help the Soviet republics of the East, which are principally peasant countries, in becoming fellow-builders of socialism in the Soviet Union.

It is said that the new policy of the Party towards the peasantry, by making a number of concessions (short-term leases, permission to employ hired labour), involves certain elements of retreat. Is that true? Yes, it is true. But these are elements of retreat which are conceded by us while the overwhelming superiority of forces is retained by the Party and the Soviet government. A stable currency, developing industry, developing transport, a credit system growing ever stronger, with the aid of which, by granting credits on favourable terms, one can ruin any given stratum of the population or raise it to a higher level without the least disturbance—all these are such reserves in the hands of the proletarian dictatorship that thanks to them certain elements of retreat on one sector of the front can but facilitate the preparations for a general offensive along the whole front. That is why certain fresh concessions made by the Party to the peasantry should at the present time help rather than hinder the peasantry in becoming fellow-builders of socialism.

What significance can this circumstance have for the Soviet republics

of the East? Its significance can only be that it places in the hands of the active workers in these republics a new weapon with which to facilitate and accelerate the work of linking these countries with the general system of Soviet economic development.

Such is the connection between the policy of the Party in the rural districts and the immediate tasks confronting the active workers in the Soviet East.

In this connection, the task of the University of the Peoples of the East in relation to the Soviet republics of the East is to train cadres for these republics in such a way as to ensure the fulfilment of those immediate tasks which have been enumerated.

The University of the Peoples of the East cannot cut itself off from life. It is not and must not be an institution standing aloof from life. It must be bound to real life with every fibre of its being. It cannot, therefore, abstract itself from the immediate tasks confronting the Soviet republics of the East. That is why the task of the University of the Peoples of the East is to take account of the immediate tasks of these republics when training the appropriate cadres for them.

And one must bear in mind the two deviations revealed in the practice of active workers in the Soviet East, deviations which must be combated within the walls of this university if real cadres and real revolutionaries are to be trained for the Soviet East.

The first deviation lies in an over-simplification of the tasks I have spoken of, in an attempt mechanically to transplant models of economic development which are quite comprehensible and practicable in the centre of the Soviet Union but which are absolutely inapplicable to the conditions of development of what are known as the border regions. The comrades who commit this deviation fail to understand two things. They do not understand that conditions in the centre and in the "border regions" are not the same and are far from being identical. They do not understand, furthermore, that the Soviet republics of the East themselves are not all alike, that some of them, for instance Georgia and Armenia, are at a higher stage of national formation, others, such as Chechnya and Kabarda, are at a lower stage of national formation, while others, such as Kirghizistan, occupy a position midway between these two extremes. These comrades do not understand that unless the work is adapted to local conditions, unless each and every peculiarity of each country is taken into account, nothing solid and stable can be built up. The result of this deviation is that they become divorced from the masses and degenerate into Left phrasemongers. The task of the University of the Peoples of the East is to train cadres in a spirit of irreconcilable warfare against such over-simplification.

The second deviation, on the contrary, lies in an exaggeration of local peculiarities, in the fact that the common and main thing which links these Eastern Soviet republics with the industrial regions of the Soviet Union is forgotten, that socialist tasks are hushed up and that adaptations are made to the aims of a narrow and restricted nationalism. The comrades who commit this deviation are little concerned about the internal development of their country, they prefer to leave this development to the natural course of events. The most important thing for them is not internal development but "foreign" policy, the extension of the frontiers of their republic, litigation with neighbouring republics, the desire to filch territory from their neighbours, and thereby to find favour with the bourgeois nationalists in their country. The result of this devia-

tion is that they become divorced from socialism and degenerate into ordinary bourgeois nationalists. The task of the University of the Peoples of the East is to train cadres in a spirit of irreconcilable warfare against this concealed nationalism.

Such are the tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East in relation to the Soviet republics of the East.

## II. Tasks of the U. T. E. in Relation to the Colonies and Dependent Countries of the East

Let us now pass to the second question, the question of the tasks of the University of the Toilers of the East in relation to the colonies and dependent countries of the East.

What are the characteristic features in the life and development of these countries that distinguish them from the Soviet republics of the East?

Firstly, these countries are living and developing under the yoke of imperialism.

Secondly, the existence of a double yoke, the internal yoke (of their own bourgeoisie) and the external yoke (of the foreign imperialist bourgeoisie) intensifies and deepens the revolutionary crisis in these countries.

Thirdly, in certain of these countries, India for instance, capitalism is growing very rapidly and is engendering and causing to crystallise a more or less numerous class of native proletarians.

Fourthly, as the revolutionary movement progresses, the national bourgeoisie in such countries splits into two sections, a revolutionary section (the petty bourgeoisie) and a compromising section (the big bourgeoisie), the former of which continues the revolutionary struggle, while the latter enters into a bloc with imperialism.

Fifthly, besides the imperialist bloc another bloc is formed in these countries, a bloc of the workers and the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie, an anti-imperialist bloc which aims at complete liberation from imperialism.

Sixthly, the question of the hegemony of the proletariat in such countries and of the emancipation of the masses from the influence of the compromising national bourgeoisie assumes an increasingly urgent character.

Seventhly, the last-named circumstance greatly facilitates the work of linking the national liberation movement in these countries with the proletarian movement in the more advanced countries of the West.

From this follow at least three deductions:

1. It is impossible to achieve the liberation of colonies and dependent countries from imperialism without a victorious revolution: you will not get independence gratis!

2. The revolution cannot be advanced and the complete independence of capitalistically developed colonies and dependent countries achieved unless the compromising national bourgeoisie is isolated, unless the petty-bourgeois revolutionary masses are freed from the influence of this bourgeoisie, unless the hegemony of the proletariat is established and unless the advanced elements of the working class are organized in an independent Communist Party.

3. No lasting victory can be achieved in colonial and dependent countries unless a real bond is established between the movement for

emancipation in these countries and the proletarian movement in the advanced countries of the West.

The fundamental task of Communists in the colonies and dependent countries is to base their revolutionary work on these deductions.

What are the immediate tasks of the revolutionary movement in the colonies and dependent countries in view of these circumstances?

The peculiarity of the colonies and dependent countries at the present time is that a single and all-embracing colonial East no longer exists. In earlier days the colonial East was pictured as something single and homogeneous. This picture no longer corresponds to the truth. We now have at least three categories of colonies and dependent countries. Firstly, there are countries like Morocco, which have no proletariat or almost no proletariat, and which industrially are completely undeveloped. Secondly, there are countries like China and Egypt, which are industrially little developed, and which have a comparatively small proletariat. Thirdly, there are countries like India, which are capitalistically more or less developed, and which possess a more or less numerous national proletariat.

Clearly, it is quite impossible to put all these countries in the same category.

In countries like Morocco, where the national bourgeoisie has yet no ground for splitting into a revolutionary party and a compromising party, the task of the Communist elements is to do everything to create a united national front against imperialism. The separation of the Communist elements into a single party can take place in these countries only in the course of the struggle against imperialism, especially after a successful revolutionary war against imperialism.

In such countries as Egypt or China, where the national bourgeoisie has already split into a revolutionary party and a compromising party, but where the compromising section of the bourgeoisie cannot yet become welded with imperialism, the Communists can no longer make it their aim to form a united national front against imperialism. In such countries the Communists must pass from the policy of a united national front to the policy of a revolutionary bloc of the workers and petty bourgeoisie. In such countries this bloc may assume the form of a single party of workers and peasants, like the Kuomintang,<sup>81</sup> on the condition, however, that this peculiar kind of party shall actually represent a bloc of two forces—the Communist Party and the party of the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie. The task of this bloc is to expose the temporising spirit and inconsistency of the national bourgeoisie and to wage a determined struggle against imperialism. A party with such a dual composition is both necessary and expedient, as long as it does not bind the Communist Party hand and foot, as long as it does not restrict the freedom of the Communist Party to carry on agitation and propaganda, as long as it does not hinder the rallying of the proletarians around the Communist Party, and as long as it facilitates the actual leadership of the revolutionary movement by the Communist Party. A party with such a dual composition is neither necessary nor expedient if it does not answer all these requirements; for it can only lead to the Communist elements becoming dissolved in the ranks of the bourgeoisie, to the Communist Party losing the proletarian army.

The situation is somewhat different in countries like India. The fundamental and new feature in the conditions of existence of such colonies as India is not only that the national bourgeoisie has split into a

revolutionary party and a compromising party, but primarily, that the compromising section of this bourgeoisie has already managed in the main to come to an agreement with imperialism. Dreading revolution more than imperialism, concerned more about its moneybags than about the interests of its own country, this section of the bourgeoisie, the wealthiest and most influential section, is completely going over to the camp of the irreconcilable enemies of the revolution, having entered into a bloc with imperialism against the workers and peasants of its own country. The victory of the revolution cannot be achieved unless this bloc is broken. But in order to break this bloc fire must be concentrated on the compromising national bourgeoisie: its treachery must be exposed, the toiling masses must be emancipated from its influence, and the conditions necessary for the hegemony of the proletariat must be systematically prepared. In other words, it is a question of preparing the proletariat of such colonies as India for the role of leader in the liberation movement, and of dislodging, step by step, the bourgeoisie and its spokesmen from this honourable position. The task is to create a revolutionary anti-imperialist bloc and to ensure the hegemony of the proletariat within this bloc. This bloc may assume, but not always necessarily, the form of a joint workers' and peasants' party formally bound by a single platform. The independence of the Communist Parties in such countries must be the basic slogan of the advanced Communist elements, for the way for the hegemony of the proletariat can be prepared and the latter can be achieved only by the Communist Party. But the Communist Party can and must enter into an open bloc with the revolutionary wing of the bourgeoisie in order, after having isolated the compromising national bourgeoisie, to lead the vast masses of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie in the struggle against imperialism.

Hence, the immediate tasks of the revolutionary movement in capitalistically developed colonial and dependent countries are as follows:

1. To win over the best elements of the working class to the side of Communism and to form independent Communist Parties.
2. To set up a national revolutionary bloc of workers, peasants, and the revolutionary intelligentsia against the bloc of the compromising national bourgeoisie and imperialism.
3. To ensure the hegemony of the proletariat in this bloc.
4. To strive to emancipate the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie from the influence of the compromising national bourgeoisie.
5. To achieve a bond between the liberation movement and the proletarian movement in the advanced countries.

Such are the three groups of immediate tasks which face the active workers in the colonial and dependent countries of the East.

These tasks assume a particularly important character and particular significance when considered in the light of the present international situation. The international situation at the present time is marked by the fact that the revolutionary movement has entered a period of temporary lull. But what is a lull, what can it signify at the present time? It can signify only that increased pressure will be brought to bear on the workers of the West, on the colonies of the East, and, primarily, on the Soviet Union, the standard-bearer of the revolutionary movement in all countries. There can be hardly a doubt that preparations for bringing such pressure to bear on the Soviet Union have already begun in the ranks of the imperialists. The campaign of calumny launched in connection with the rising in Esthonia, the fraudulent campaign waged



against the U. S. S. R. in connection with the explosion in Sofia, the general campaign against our country carried on by the bourgeois press—all this is but the preparatory stage for an offensive. It is an artillery barrage put up with the purpose of preparing public opinion, with the purpose of getting the ordinary public accustomed to attacks on the Soviet Union, with the purpose of creating the moral atmosphere for intervention. What will come of this campaign of lies and calumines and whether the imperialists will venture on a serious offensive remains to be seen. But that these attacks bode no good to the colonies can hardly be doubted. Therefore the question of preparing a counter-blow by the united forces of the revolution to the probable blow of imperialism is an urgent and unavoidable question of the day.

That is why the unswerving fulfilment of the urgent tasks of the revolutionary movement in the colonies and dependent countries assumes particular importance at the present moment.

In view of all these circumstances, what is the mission of the University of the Peoples of the East in relation to the colonies and dependent countries? Its mission is to take account of all the specific characteristics of the revolutionary development of these countries and to train cadres coming from these countries in a way that will ensure the fulfilment of the diverse tasks I have enumerated.

In the University of the Peoples of the East there are about ten different groups of students who have come to us from colonial and dependent countries. We all know that these comrades thirst for light and knowledge. The task of the University of the Peoples of the East is to forge them into genuine revolutionaries, armed with the theory of Leninism, equipped with the practical experience of Leninism and capable of conscientiously fulfilling the immediate tasks facing the liberation movement in the colonies and dependent countries.

In this connection one must not lose sight of two deviations in the practice of active workers of the colonial East, which must be combated if genuinely revolutionary cadres are to be trained.

The first deviation consists in underrating the revolutionary potentialities of the liberation movement and in overrating the idea of a united all-embracing national front in the colonies and dependent countries, without due regard for the state and degree of development of these countries. That is a deviation to the Right, which threatens to degrade the revolutionary movement and to submerge the Communist elements in the general welter of bourgeois nationalists. It is the direct duty of the University of the Peoples of the East to combat this deviation with the utmost determination.

The second deviation consists in overrating the revolutionary potentialities of the liberation movement and in underrating the importance of an alliance between the working class and the revolutionary bourgeoisie against imperialism. The Communists in Java, who recently erroneously put forward the slogan of a Soviet government for their country, suffer, it seems, from this deviation. That is a deviation to the Left, which threatens to isolate the Communist Party from the masses and to transform it into a sect. A determined struggle against this deviation is an essential condition for the training of really revolutionary cadres for the colonies and dependent countries of the East.

Such, in general, are the political tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East in relation to the peoples of the Soviet East and the colonial East.

Let us hope that the University of the Peoples of the East will fulfil these tasks with credit.

## Deviations on the National Question

*Extract from a Report Delivered at the Sixteenth Congress of the C. P. S. U. (B.), June 27, 1930*

The picture of the struggle against deviations in the Party will be incomplete if we do not touch upon the deviations on the *national question* which exist in the Party. I have in mind, firstly, the deviation towards Great-Russian chauvinism and, secondly, the deviation towards local nationalism. These deviations are not so noticeable and insistent as the "Left" and Right deviations. They might be called creeping deviations. But this does not mean that they do not exist. They do exist and, what is more, they are growing. Of this there can be no doubt. There can be no doubt of this, because the general atmosphere of accentuated class struggle is bound to lead to a certain accentuation of national friction, which is reflected in the Party. Therefore, we must lay bare the nature of these deviations and expose them to the light of day.

What is the essence of the deviation towards Great-Russian chauvinism in our present-day conditions?

The essence of the deviation towards Great-Russian chauvinism is an endeavour to ignore national differences of language, culture and mode of life; an endeavour to prepare the way for the liquidation of the national republics and regions; an endeavour to undermine the principle of national equality and bring into disrepute the Party policy of naturalising the administrative apparatus, and naturalising the press, schools and other state and public organisations.

The deviators of this type proceed from the argument that since with the victory of socialism nations must become fused into a single whole, and their national languages converted into a single, common language, the time has come to put an end to national differences and to renounce the policy of fostering the development of the national culture of the formerly oppressed peoples. In this connection they usually refer to Lenin, misquoting him, and sometimes directly distorting and slandering him. Lenin said that under socialism the interests of nationalities will become fused into a single whole—does it not follow from this that it is time to put an end to the national republics and regions, in the interests of....internationalism? Lenin said in 1913 in the controversy with the Bundists that the watchword of national culture is a bourgeois watchword—does it not follow from this that it is time to put an end to the national culture of the peoples of the U. S. S. R., in the interest of....internationalism? Lenin said that national oppression and national barriers will be abolished under socialism—does it not follow from this that it is time to put an end to the policy of reckoning with the national peculiarities of the peoples of the U. S. S. R., and to adopt the policy of assimilation, in the interests of....internationalism? And so on, and so forth.

There can be no doubt that this deviation in the national question, which, moreover, is decked by a mask of internationalism and the name

of Lenin, is the most subtle and therefore the most dangerous form of Great-Russian nationalism.

Firstly, Lenin never said that national differences must disappear and national languages become fused into one common language within the boundaries of a *single state, before the victory of socialism on a world scale*. Lenin, on the contrary, said something diametrically opposite, namely, that "national and state differences among peoples and countries . . . will continue to exist for a very long time, even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a world scale." ("Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder," *Collected Works*, Vol. XXV.) [My italics—J. S.] How can people refer to Lenin and forget this cardinal statement of his?

True, one of the former Marxists, today a renegade and a reformist, Mr. Kautsky, says something which is quite contrary to what Lenin teaches us. He asserts, despite Lenin, that the victory of the proletarian revolution in a united Austro-German state in the middle of the last century would have led to the creation of a *single, common* German language, and to *Germanising* of the Czechs, because "the force of unfettered intercourse alone, the force of the modern culture brought by the Germans alone, without any forcible Germanisation, would have transformed into Germans the backward Czech petty bourgeois, peasants and proletarians, who could expect nothing from their shabby nationality." (See his preface to the German edition of *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*.) Naturally, such a "conception" fully harmonises with Kautsky's social-chauvinism. It was these views of Kautsky's that I combated in 1925, in my speech to the University of the Peoples of the East. But can we, Marxists, who desire to be consistent internationalists, really attach any positive significance to such anti-Marxist rubbish of an arrant German social-chauvinist? Who is right, Kautsky or Lenin? If Kautsky is right, how can we explain the fact that such relatively backward nationalities as the Byelorussians and the Ukrainians, which are closer to the Great-Russians than the Czechs are to the Germans, were not Russified as a result of the victory of the proletarian revolution in the U. S. S. R., but, on the contrary, were regenerated and developed as independent nations? How are we to explain the fact that, in spite of their backwardness, such nations as the Turkmens, the Kirghiz, the Uzbeks, the Tadzhiks (not to mention the Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaidjanians, and so on), far from being Russified in consequence of the victory of socialism in the U. S. S. R., were regenerated and developed into independent nations? Is it not obvious that our worthy deviators, in their chase after sham internationalism, have been caught in the tails of Kautskian social-chauvinism? Is it not clear that in agitating for one common language within the boundaries of a *single state*, within the boundaries of the U. S. S. R., they are in fact striving for the restoration of the *privileges* of the formerly dominant language, namely, the *Great-Russian language*? Where does internationalism come in here?

Secondly, Lenin never said that the abolition of national oppression and the fusion of the interests of nationalities into a single whole is equivalent to the abolition of national differences. We have abolished national oppression, we have abolished national privileges and established national equality. We have abolished state frontiers in the old sense of the term, frontier posts and customs barriers between the nationalities of the U. S. S. R. We have established a unity of economic and political interests of the peoples of the U. S. S. R. But does that

mean that we have thereby abolished national differences: national languages, culture, customs, and so on? Obviously, it does not mean that. But if national differences, language, culture, customs, and so on, remain, is it not obvious that the demand for the abolition of the national republics and regions in the present period of history is a reactionary demand, directed against the interests of the proletarian dictatorship? Do our deviators realise that to abolish the national republics and regions now would mean to deprive the vast masses of the peoples of the U. S. S. R. of the opportunity of receiving education in their *native* language, to deprive them of the opportunity of having their schools, courts, administration, public and other organisations and institutions operating in their *native* language, and to deprive them of the possibility of partaking in socialist construction? Is it not obvious that in the chase after a sham internationalism our deviators have fallen into the clutches of the reactionary Great-Russian chauvinists and have forgotten, completely forgotten, the watchword of cultural revolution in the period of proletarian dictatorship, which applies equally to *all* the peoples of the U. S. S. R., both to the Great-Russians and to the non-Great-Russians?

Thirdly, Lenin never said that the watchword of developing national culture under the proletarian dictatorship is a reactionary watchword. On the contrary, Lenin was always in favour of *helping* the peoples of the U. S. S. R. to develop their national culture. It was under the guidance of none other than Lenin that the Tenth Party Congress drew up and adopted a resolution on the national question which explicitly states that:

"The task of the Party is to *help* the toiling masses of the non-Great-Russian peoples to catch up with Central Russia, which is ahead of them, and to *help* them a) to develop and consolidate their own Soviet state system in forms consistent with the national social conditions of these peoples; b) to develop and consolidate their own courts, administrative bodies, economic organs and government organs, functioning in the native language and recruited from among local people acquainted with the customs and psychology of the local population; c) to develop a press, schools, theatres, clubs and cultural and educational institutions generally, functioning in the native language, and d) to organise and develop an extensive system of courses and schools, both for general education and for vocational and technical training given in the native languages."

Is it not obvious that Lenin was entirely and completely in favour of the watchword of developing national culture *under the dictatorship of the proletariat*?

Is it not obvious that the denial of the watchword of national culture under the dictatorship of the proletariat is a denial of the necessity for the cultural progress of the non-Great-Russian peoples in the U. S. S. R., the denial of the necessity for universal compulsory education for these peoples, and their consignment to spiritual enslavement by the reactionary nationalists?

Lenin, it is true, described the watchword of national culture *under the supremacy of the bourgeoisie* as a reactionary watchword. But could it have been otherwise? What is national culture under the supremacy of the national bourgeoisie? A culture *bourgeois* in content and national in form, the aim of which is to infect the masses with the virus of nationalism and to consolidate the supremacy of the bourgeoisie. What is national culture under the dictatorship of the proletariat? A culture

*socialist* in content and national in form, the aim of which is to educate the masses in the spirit of internationalism and to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat. How can these two fundamentally different things be confused, unless one renounces Marxism? Is it not obvious that in fighting the watchword of national culture under the bourgeois system Lenin was striking at the bourgeois *content* of national culture, and not at its national form? It would be foolish to imagine that Lenin considered socialist culture to be a *non-national* culture, which did not possess a definite national form. The Bundists in fact did at one time attribute such nonsensical views to Lenin. But from Lenin's works we know that he vigorously protested against this slander and resolutely dissociated himself from such nonsense. Can it be that our worthy deviators have after all followed in the footsteps of the Bundists?

What remains, after what has been said, of the arguments of our deviators?

Nothing, except a juggling with the flag of internationalism and slanders against Lenin.

The deviators towards Great-Russian chauvinism are profoundly mistaken if they think that the period of the building of socialism in the U. S. S. R., is a period of decay and liquidation of national cultures. Quite the opposite is the case. As a matter of fact, the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the building of socialism in the U. S. S. R. is a period in which national culture, socialist in content and national in form, *blossoms*. Apparently they do not realise that the development of national cultures is bound to proceed *with a new impetus* when universal compulsory elementary education in the native languages has been introduced and has taken root. They fail to realise that only if the national cultures develop will it be possible to secure the real participation of the backward nationalities in the work of socialist construction. They do not realise that this is the very basis of the Leninist policy of *assisting* and *supporting* the development of the national cultures of the peoples of the U. S. S. R.

It may seem strange that we, who are in favour of the *fusion* of national cultures in the future into one common culture (both in form and in content), with a single, common language, are at the same time in favour of *blossoming* of national cultures at the present time, in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But there is nothing strange in this. The national cultures must be permitted to develop and expand and to reveal all their potential qualities, in order to create the conditions necessary for their fusion into a single, common culture with a single, common language. The blossoming of cultures national in form and socialist in content under a proletarian dictatorship in one country, *with the object of* their fusion into a single, common, socialist (both in form and content) culture, with a single, common language, when the proletariat is victorious throughout the world and socialism becomes an everyday matter—such is the dialectical nature of the Leninist presentation of the question of national culture.

It may be said that such a presentation of the question is “self-contradictory.” But is there not the same sort of “self-contradiction” in our treatment of the question of the state? We are in favour of the withering away of the state, yet we are at the same time in favour of strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat, which represents the most powerful and mighty of all forms of state power that have hitherto existed. The supreme development of the power of the state, with the

object of preparing the way for the withering away of state power—such is the Marxist formula. Is that “self-contradictory”? Yes, it is “self-contradictory.” But this contradiction is a living thing, and it is a complete reflection of Marxian dialectics.

Or take, for example, the way Lenin presents the question of the right of nations to self-determination, including secession. Lenin sometimes expressed the thesis of national self-determination in the form of a simple formula: “disunion for the purpose of union.” Just think—disunion for the purpose of union! It even smacks of the paradoxical. And yet this “self-contradictory” formula reflects that living truth of Marxian dialectics which enables the Bolsheviks to capture the most impregnable fortresses in the sphere of the national question.

The same must be said of the formula of national culture: the blossoming of national cultures (and languages) in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country, with the object of preparing the way for their dying away and fusion into a single, common, socialist culture (and a single, common language) in the period of the victory of socialism all over the world.

Whoever has failed to understand this peculiarity and this “self-contradictory” nature of our transitional times, whoever has failed to understand this dialectical character of historical processes, is lost to Marxism.

It is the misfortune of our deviators that they do not understand and do not want to understand Marxian dialectics.

That is the position with regard to the deviation towards Great-Russian chauvinism.

It is not difficult to understand that this deviation reflects the striving of the moribund classes of the formerly dominant Great-Russian nation to win back their lost privileges.

Hence the danger of Great-Russian chauvinism, the principal danger in the Party in the sphere of the national question.

What is the essence of the deviation towards local nationalism?

The essence of the deviation towards local nationalism consists in the attempt to isolate oneself and shut oneself up within one's own national shell, in the attempt to gloss over class differences within one's own nation, in the attempt to resist Great-Russian chauvinism by turning aside from the general current of socialist construction, in the attempt to shut one's eyes to that which brings together and unites the toiling masses of the nationalities of the U. S. S. R., and to see only that which tends to estrange them.

The deviation towards local nationalism reflects the dissatisfaction of the moribund classes of the formerly oppressed nations with the regime of the proletarian dictatorship, their endeavour to separate themselves off into their national state and there to establish their own class supremacy.

The danger of this deviation lies in the fact that it cultivates bourgeois nationalism, weakens the unity of the toiling peoples of the U. S. S. R. and plays into the hands of the interventionists.

That is the essence of the deviation towards local nationalism.

The task of the Party is to wage a resolute struggle against this deviation and to create the conditions necessary for the international education of the toiling masses of the peoples of the Soviet Union.

### Extract from the reply to the discussion

The second group of written questions concerns the national problem. One of these written questions, which I regard as the most interesting of all, compares the treatment of the problem of national languages in my report at the Sixteenth Congress with the treatment of it in my lecture at the University of the Peoples of the East in 1925 and finds a certain lack of clarity requiring elucidation. The note says: "You objected then to the theory [Kautsky's] about the dying away of national languages and the creation of a single, common language in the period of socialism [*in one country*], while now, in your report at the Sixteenth Congress, you declare that Communists favour the fusion of the national cultures and national languages into a single, common culture with a single, common language [*in the period of the victory of socialism on a world scale*]. Is there not a lack of clarity here?"

I think there is neither a lack of clarity nor a contradiction here. When I spoke in 1925, I was opposing Kautsky's national-chauvinist theory, according to which a victory of the proletarian revolution in the middle of the last century in a united Austro-German state would have led to the fusion of nations into a single, common *German* nation with a single, common *German* language and to the *Germanising* of the Czechs. I objected to this theory on the grounds that it was an anti-Marxist and anti-Leninist theory, and cited facts from the life of our country after the victory of socialism in the U. S. S. R. which refute this theory. I still object to this theory, as is evident from my report at this Sixteenth Congress. I object to it because the theory of the fusion of all the nations of, say, the U. S. S. R. into a single, common *Great-Russian* nation with a single, common *Great-Russian* language is a national-chauvinist, anti-Leninist theory which is contrary to the cardinal principle of Leninism that national differences cannot disappear in the near future, and that they are bound to remain for a long time, even after the victory of the proletarian revolution *on a world scale*. As to the remoter prospects of national cultures and national languages, I have always maintained, and continue to maintain, the Leninist view that in the period of the victory of socialism *on a world scale*, when socialism has been consolidated and has become a matter of everyday life, the national languages will inevitably fuse into a single, common language, which, of course, will be neither Great-Russian nor German, but something new. Of this I also spoke quite definitely in my report at the Sixteenth Congress.

Where then is the lack of clarity here, and what is it really that requires elucidation?

I think the writers of the note are not entirely clear on at least two points.

*Firstly*, they have not realised that we in the U. S. S. R. have already entered the period of socialism, and that in spite of the fact that we have entered this period the nations, far from dying away, are developing and blossoming. Have we, in fact, entered the period of socialism? Our period is usually called a period of transition from capitalism to socialism. It was called a transition period in 1918, when Lenin, in his famous article, "Left-Wing Childshness," first described this period with its five forms of economic life. It is called a transition period today, in 1930, when some of these forms, having become obsolescent, are already going to the bottom, while one of them, namely, the new form in industry and agriculture, is growing and developing with unprecedented speed.

Can it be said that these two transitional periods are identical, that they do not radically differ from each other? Clearly not. What did we have in 1918 in the economic sphere? A ruined industry and mechanical cigarette-lighters,\* no collective or state farms as a mass phenomenon, the growth of the "new" bourgeoisie in the towns and of the kulaks in the country. What have we today? A socialist industry, restored and being reconstructed, a developed system of state and collective farms embracing over forty per cent of the total sown area of the U. S. S. R. for spring crop alone, a moribund "new" bourgeoisie in the town and a moribund kulak class in the country. The first was a transitional period, the second is a transitional period. And yet they are as far removed as heaven and earth. And yet no one can deny that we are on the eve of liquidating the last important capitalist class, the kulak class. It is obvious that we have already emerged from the transitional period in the old sense and have entered a period of direct and extensive socialist construction along the whole line. It is obvious that we have already entered the period of socialism, for the socialist sector now controls all the economic levers of the entire national economy, although we are still a long way from the completion of a socialist society and the abolition of class differences. And yet, despite this, far from the national languages dying away and fusing into a single, common language, we find that the national cultures and the national languages are developing and blossoming. Is it not obvious that the theory of the dying away of national languages and their fusion into a single, common language within a *single* state in the period of extensive socialist construction, in the period of socialism in *one* country, is an incorrect, anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist theory?

*Secondly*, the writers of the note have not realised that the dying away of national languages and their fusion into a single, common language is not an *internal state question*, not a question of the victory of socialism in *one* country, but an *international* question, a question of the victory of socialism on an *international* scale. The writers of the note have failed to realise that we must not confuse the victory of socialism *in one country* with the victory of socialism *internationally*. It was not without good reason that Lenin said that national differences will remain for a long time even after the victory of the proletarian dictatorship on an international scale. Furthermore, we must bear in mind another circumstance which affects a number of nationalities of the U. S. S. R. There is a Ukraine in the U. S. S. R. But there is another Ukraine in other states. There is a Byelorussia in the U. S. S. R. But there is another Byelorussia in other states. Do you imagine that the question of the Ukrainian and Byelorussian languages can be settled without taking these peculiar conditions into account? Take, further, the nationalities of the U. S. S. R. situated along the Southern frontier, from Azerbaidjan to Kazakstan and Buryat-Mongolia. They are all in the same position as the Ukraine and Byelorussia. Obviously, here too we have to reckon with peculiar conditions of development of these nationalities. Is it not clear that all these and similar questions associated with the problem of national cultures and national languages cannot be settled within the framework of one state, within the framework of the U. S. S. R.?

\* At that time, when industry was in a state of disorganisation and the factories at a standstill, the workers frequently resorted to making cigarette-lighters for a livelihood.—*Ed. Eng. ed.*

## Extract from the Party Programme

Adopted by the Eighth Congress of the R. C. P.  
March 1919

### In the Sphere of National Relations

In the national question the Russian Communist Party is guided by the following propositions:

1. The cornerstone is the policy of drawing together the proletarians and the semi-proletarians of the various nationalities for the purpose of waging a joint revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the landlords and the bourgeoisie.

2. In order to overcome the distrust felt by the toiling masses of oppressed countries towards the proletariat of states which oppressed these countries it is necessary to abolish all the privileges enjoyed by any national group whatsoever, to establish complete equality of rights for all nationalities, to recognise the right of colonies and non-sovereign nations to secession.

3. With the same aim in view the Party proposes, as one of the transitional forms towards complete unity, a federation of states of the Soviet type.

4. On the question as to who is to express the will of the nation to secede, the Russian Communist Party adopts the historical class viewpoint and in this takes into consideration the stage of historical development of the given nation: whether it is evolving from mediaevalism to bourgeois democracy or from bourgeois democracy to Soviet or proletarian democracy, etc.

In any case, the proletariat of the nations which have been oppressing nations must exercise special caution and pay special attention to the survivals of national sentiment among the toiling masses of oppressed or non-sovereign nations. Only by pursuing such a policy will it be possible to create conditions for really lasting, voluntary unity among the nationally heterogeneous elements of the international proletariat, as has been shown by the experience of uniting a number of national Soviet republics around Soviet Russia.

That is the situation, comrades, as regards the national question in general, and the note on the national question I have mentioned in particular.

## 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" revolution 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 Cooperative societies, cultural organisations, 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. The "theory" is now the cornerstone of the political "philosophy" of Social-Democracy in general, and of the Social-Democratic policy 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 and 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, 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 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 the 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 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



dent 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 both 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 progress 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 organise a *united revolutionary front of the proletarians and for 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 Revolution.

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 courage 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 perspective 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 word "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 adhorrence 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 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.*

## Problems of the Chinese Revolution

[Thesis for Propagandists approved by the C.C. of the CPSU(B)]

### I

#### Perspectives of the Chinese Revolution

The Major Facts which determine the character of the Chinese Revolution are:

- (a) China's semi-colonial status and the economic and financial domination of imperialism;
- (b) The deadweight of feudal survivals, aggravated by the oppression of militarism and the bureaucracy;
- (c) The growing revolutionary struggle of the working-class and peasant millions against feudal-bureaucratic oppression, militarism and imperialism;
- (d) The political weakness of the national bourgeoisie, its dependence on imperialism, its fear of the sweep of the revolutionary movement;
- (e) The growing revolutionary activity of the proletariat, its growing prestige among the toiling millions;
- (f) The existence of a proletarian dictatorship as a neighbour of China.

Hence the two paths of development of events in China.

*Either* the national bourgeoisie crushes the proletariat, enters into a contract with imperialism and with it launches campaign against the revolution, in order to end it with the establishment of the rule of capitalism;

*Or* the proletariat pushes aside the national bourgeoisie, consolidates its hegemony and wins the following of the toiling millions of town and country in order to overcome the resistance of the national bourgeoisie, secure the complete victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and then gradually switch it to the path of Socialist revolution, with all the consequences that follow therefrom.

One of these two paths.

The crisis of world capitalism and the existence of the proletarian dictatorship in the U. S. S. R. whose experience may be effectively utilised by the Chinese proletariat, substantially enhances the possibility of the Chinese Revolution being carried out by the second way.

On the other hand, the fact that imperialism is attacking the Chinese Revolution in the main unitedly, that amongst the imperialists there exist at present no splits or wars as there existed for example in the camp of imperialism before the October Revolution and which weakened imperialism—this fact means that the Chinese Revolution is meeting with much greater difficulties in the path of victory than the revolution in Russia and that the desertions and treacheries in the course of this Revolution will be incomparably more than in the period of the civil war in the U.S.S.R.

Therefore, the struggle between these two paths of revolution is the characteristic feature of the Chinese Revolution.

It is just because of this that the fundamental task of the Communists consists in the struggle for the victory of the second path of the Chinese Revolution.

## II

## First stage of the Chinese Revolution

In the first period of the Chinese Revolution, in the period of the first expedition to the North, when the Nationalist Army approached the Yangtse river and attained victory after victory and a mighty movement of workers and peasants had not yet been developed, the national bourgeoisie (non-compradore) marched with the revolution.<sup>82</sup> This was revolution of the *general united national front*.

This does not mean that there were no contradictions between the revolution and the national bourgeoisie. This only means that the national bourgeoisie, while supporting the revolution, attempted to utilise it for its own aims, limiting its scope by directing it in the main along the line of territorial conquests. The struggle between the Rights and the Lefts in the Kuomintang in this period was an expression of these contradictions. The attempt of Chiang Kai-shek to expel the Communists from the Kuomintang in March, 1926, was the first serious attempt of the national bourgeoisie to curb the revolution. It is well known that the C. C. of the CPSU(B) already then considered it "necessary to carry out a line of keeping the Communist Party within the Kuomintang," and that it considered it necessary "that matters must be so arranged as to secure the resignation or expulsion of Rights from the Kuomintang" (April, 1926).

This was a line of the further development of the revolution, of close cooperation of the Lefts and the Communists within the Kuomintang and within the national Government, of the consolidation of the unity of the Kuomintang and simultaneously an exposure and isolation of the Right-wing Kuomintang elements, of subjugating the Rights to the discipline of the Kuomintang, the utilisation of the Rights, their connections and their experience in so far as they are subject to the discipline of the Kuomintang or the expulsion of the Rights from the Kuomintang in so far as they break this discipline and betray the interests of the revolution.

The subsequent events fully confirmed the correctness of this line. The powerful development of the peasant movement and the organisation of peasant unions and peasant committees in the countryside, the powerful strike-wave in the towns and the formation of Councils of Trade Unions, the victorious advance of the national troops on Shanghai, which was besieged by the navy and troops of the imperialists—all these and similar such facts testify to the fact that the line adopted was the only correct line.

Only this circumstance can explain the fact that the attempts of the Rights in February, 1927, to split the Kuomintang and create a new centre in Nanchang suffered defeat in face of the united rebuff of the revolutionary Kuomintang in Wuhan.

But this attempt was an indication of the fact that a regrouping of class forces was taking place in the country, that the Rights and the national bourgeoisie were not keeping quiet and that they would intensify their work against the revolution.

The C. C. of the CPSU(B) was, therefore, right when in March, 1927, it said that:

"(a) At the present moment, with the regrouping of class forces and the concentration of imperialist armies, the Chinese Revolution is living through a critical period and that its further victories are possible only if a definite line towards development of the mass movement is adopted;

(b) It is necessary to take to the course of arming the workers and peasants, and converting the peasant committees in the localities into actual organs of power with armed self-defence;

(c) The Communist Party must not screen the treacherous and reactionary policy of the Right-wing Kuomintang elements and must mobilise the masses round the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party for an exposure of the Rights." (March 3, 1927.)

It can, therefore, be easily understood that in the future the powerful sweep of the revolution on the one hand, and the onslaught of the imperialists in Shanghai on the other, cannot but throw the Chinese national bourgeoisie into the camp of counter-revolution, while the seizure of Shanghai by the national troops and the strikes of the Shanghai workers cannot but unite the imperialists for stifling the revolution.

This was just what happened. The Nanking shootings served in this respect as a signal for a new demarcation of fighting forces in China. By the shooting in Nanking and by presenting ultimatums, the imperialists wanted to say that they were seeking the support of the national bourgeoisie for a common struggle against the Chinese Revolution.

By opening fire at workers' meetings and organising a *coup*, Chiang Kai-shek as though said in reply to the appeal of the imperialists that he was prepared to enter into a compromise with imperialists along with the national bourgeoisie against the workers and peasants of China.

## III

## The Second stage of the Chinese Revolution

The *coup* of Chiang Kai-shek marks the departure of the national bourgeoisie from the revolution, the birth of a centre of national counter-revolution and a deal by the Right-wing Kuomintang elements with imperialism against the Chinese Revolution.

Chiang Kai-shek's *coup* signifies that in South China there will be henceforth two camps, two governments, two armies, two centres—the centre of revolution in Wuhan and the centre of counter-revolution in Nanking.

Chiang Kai-shek's *coup* signifies that the revolution has entered the second stage of its development, that the *turn* has commenced from a revolution of a *general and united national front* to a revolution of the many millions of *workers and peasants*, to an *agrarian* revolution, which is intensifying and extending the struggle against imperialism, against the gentry and the feudal landlords, against the militarists and the counter-revolutionary group of Chiang Kai-shek.

This means that the struggle between the two paths of revolution, between the adherents of its further development and the adherents of its liquidation, will become sharper from day to day, and cover the entire present period of revolution.

This means that the revolutionary Kuomintang in Wuhan, by waging a resolute struggle against militarism and imperialism, will be converted in practice into an organ of the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry and the counter-revolutionary group of Chiang Kai-shek in Nanking, by breaking away from the workers and peasants and making a rapprochement with imperialism will share finally the fate of the militarists.

But from this it follows that the policy of preserving the unity of the Kuomintang, the policy of isolating the Right-wing elements within the Kuomintang and utilising them for the aims of the revolution has already ceased to correspond to the new tasks of the revolution. This policy must be substituted by a policy of a resolute expulsion of the Right-wing elements from the Kuomintang, a policy of a determined struggle against them down to their complete political elimination, a policy of concentrating the entire power in the country in the hands of the *revolutionary* Kuomintang, the Kuomintang without its Right-wing elements and the Kuomintang as a bloc of the Left-wing Kuomintang elements and the Communists.

From this it follows further that the policy of close co-operation of the Left-wing elements and the Communists within the Kuomintang assumes a special force and a special importance at the present stage, that this co-operation reflects the alliance of the workers and peasants formed outside the Kuomintang, and that without such a co-operation, the victory of the revolution is impossible. From this it follows further that the main source of the force of the revolutionary Kuomintang is the further unfolding of the revolutionary movement of the workers and peasants and the consolidation of their mass organisations—the revolutionary peasant committees, trade unions of workers and other mass revolutionary organisations as preparatory elements of the Soviets in the future, that the main guarantee of the victory of the revolution is the growth of the revolutionary activity of the millions of toiling masses and the main antidote against counter-revolution—the arming of workers and peasants.

Finally, from this follows that while fighting shoulder to shoulder with the revolutionary Kuomintang elements, the Communist Party must more than ever before retain its independence, as a condition necessary for ensuring the hegemony of the proletariat in the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

#### IV

##### The Mistakes of the Opposition

The fundamental mistake of the Opposition (Radek and Co.) consists in not understanding the character of the revolution in China, in not understanding which is the stage that the revolution is passing through at the present time, and in not understanding its present international set up.

The Opposition demands that the Chinese Revolution should develop at approximately the same speed as the October Revolution did. The Opposition is dissatisfied that the Shanghai workers did not take up a resolute fight against the imperialists and their myrmidons.

But it does not understand that the revolution in China cannot develop with a rapid speed because among other things, the international situation at present is less favourable than in 1917 (there is no war between the imperialists).

It does not understand that one must not wage a decisive battle under unfavourable conditions, when the reserves are still not drawn in, just as the Bolsheviks, for instance, did not take up decisive battles either in April or in July 1917.

The Opposition does not understand that not to avoid a decisive battle under unfavourable conditions (when it can be avoided) means facilitating the cause of the enemies of the revolution.

The Opposition demands the immediate formation of Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies in China. But what does the formation of Soviets *now* signify?

In the first place, Soviets cannot be formed at any moment; they are formed only in the period of a special upsurge of the revolutionary wave.

Secondly, Soviets are not formed for babble, they are primarily formed as organs of struggle against the existing power, as organs of struggle for power. It was so in 1905. It was so in 1917.

But what does the formation of Soviets *at the present moment* in the region of the activities, for example of the Wuhan Government, mean? It means giving the slogan of struggle against the existing power in this region. It means giving a slogan for the creation of new organs of power, giving a slogan of struggle against the power of the revolutionary Kuomintang, which the Communists who have formed a bloc with the Kuomintang Lefts, have joined and since there is no other power now in this region apart from the power of the revolutionary Kuomintang.

This means further to confuse the task of forming and strengthening the mass organisations of workers and peasants in the form of strike committees, peasant unions and committees, trade union councils, factory and mill committees, etc. on which the revolutionary Kuomintang is now already relying, with the task of the creation of a Soviet system as a new type of State power substituting the power of the revolutionary Kuomintang.

This means, finally, not to understand which is the stage of the revolution that is taking place in China at the present moment. This means giving the enemies of the Chinese people a new weapon for struggle against the revolution, for creating new legends that it is not a national revolution which is taking place in China but an artificial implantation of "Moscow Sovietisation".

Thus the Opposition by advancing the slogan of the formation of Soviets *at the present moment* is playing into the hands of the enemies of the Chinese Revolution.

The Opposition considers it inexpedient for the Communists to participate in the Kuomintang. The Opposition therefore considers it expedient for the Communist Party to leave the Kuomintang. But what does withdrawal by the Communist Party from the Kuomintang signify now when the whole pack of imperialists with all their hangers-on are demanding the expulsion of the Communists from the Kuomintang? This means to abandon the field of battle and to throw our allies in the Kuomintang at the mercy of the enemies of the revolution. This means weakening the Communist Party, undermining the revolutionary Kuomintang, facilitating the task of the Shanghai Cavaignacs and giving away opposition, is playing into the hands of the enemies of the Chinese in China, into the hands of the Right-wing Kuomintang elements.

This is just what the imperialists, the militarists and the Right-wing Kuomintang elements are demanding at the present time.

Thus it turns out that by speaking in favour of the withdrawal of the Communist Party from the Kuomintang *at the present moment* the opposition is playing into the hands of the enemies of the Chinese Revolution.

The recent Plenum of the CC of our Party was, therefore, absolutely right in rejecting resolutely the platform of the Opposition.<sup>83</sup>

## Talk with Students of the Sun Yat-sen University (13 May 1927)

### Is a Kemalist Revolution Possible In China?

I consider it improbable and hence impossible in China.

A Kemalist revolution is possible only in such countries as Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan where an industrial proletariat is completely or almost non-existent and where a powerful agrarian-peasant revolution does not exist. A Kemalist revolution is a revolution from the top, of the national mercantile bourgeoisie, a revolution which arises in the struggle against foreign imperialists and which is directed in its further development essentially against the peasants and workers, and against the very possibilities of an agrarian revolution.

A Kemalist revolution is impossible in China because:

(a) there exists in China a certain minimum of militant and active industrial proletariat, enjoying tremendous authority amongst the peasantry;

(b) there is a developing agrarian revolution, sweeping away from its path the survivals of feudalism.

The many millions of peasantry, who have already seized the land in a whole number of provinces and who are led in their struggle by the revolutionary proletariat of China—here lies the antidote against the possibilities of a so-called Kemalist revolution.

One must not place the party of the Kemalists and the party of the left-Kuomintang in Wuhan on the same plane, in the same way as we cannot place Turkey and China on the same plane. In Turkey, there are no such centres as Shanghai, Wuhan, Nanking, Tientsin, etc. Angora is as far removed from Wuhan as is the Kemalist party from the left-Kuomintang.

One must also bear in mind the difference between China and Turkey from the point of view of the international situation. With respect to Turkey, imperialism has already won a whole number of its main demands and snatched away from Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia and other centres important for imperialists. Turkey is now reduced to the dimensions of a small state with a population of 10-12 million. It constitutes neither a serious market nor a decisive base for imperialism. Among other things, this could happen because the old Turkey represented a conglomeration of nationalities and there was a compact Turkish population only in Anatolia.

It is not so with China. From the nationality view-point China constitutes a compact country with a population of several hundred millions and constitutes the most important market for their sales and for export of capital over the entire world. While in Turkey imperialism could be satisfied by tearing away a number of the most important regions in the East, by utilising the national antagonisms in the old Turkey between the Turks and the Arabs, here in China, imperialism had to beat the living body of national China, hacking it into small pieces and wresting away entire provinces in order to maintain its old positions or at least a part of them.

Hence, though in Turkey the struggle against imperialism could end with the unfinished anti-imperialist revolution of the Kemalists, in China it must adopt a profoundly popular and clearly national character, and must deepen step by step until it reaches a desperate battle with imperialism, shaking the very foundations of imperialism throughout the world.

The greatest mistake of the opposition (Zinoviev, Radek, Trotsky) lies in that it does not see this whole difference between Turkey and China, confuses the Kemalist with the agrarian revolution and lumps them all indiscriminately into one heap.

I know that amongst the Chinese nationalists there are people who nurse the idea of Kemalism. There are at present quite a few pretenders to the role of Kemal. The first amongst these is Chiang Kai-shek. I know that certain Japanese journalists are inclined to consider Chiang Kai-shek a Chinese Kemal. But all these are the dreams, the illusions of the frightened bourgeoisie. In China, *either* Chinese Mussolinis like Chang Tso-lin and Chang Tsung-chang will win and thereafter be overthrown by the sweep of the agrarian movement, or Wuhan will win.

Chiang Kai-shek and his followers, in trying to find a middle road between the two camps, must inevitably collapse sharing the fate of Chang Tso-lin and Chang Tsung-chang.

## Comments on Current Affairs on China

[Article in "Pravda", July 28th, 1927]

Now, when the Revolution in China has entered a new stage of development, we can sum up to some extent the path that has been traversed and consider the question of examining the line of the Comintern in China.

There are certain tactical principles of Leninism, and without taking them into account, neither a correct leadership of the revolution nor a verification of the line of Comintern in China is possible. Our oppositionists have already forgotten these principles long ago. But it is just because the opposition suffers from forgetfulness that it is necessary to recall them again and again.

I have in view such tactical principles of Leninism as:

(a) The principle of the necessity of taking into account the national peculiarities and the national characteristics of each nation while working out the guiding instructions of the Comintern for the workers movement of that nation.

(b) The principle of the necessity for the Communist Party in every country of utilising the smallest possibilities of securing mass allies for the proletariat, even if they are temporary, vacillating, wavering or unreliable.

(c) The principle of the necessity of taking into account the truth that propaganda and agitation alone are not enough for the political education of millions of the masses, but that this demands the political experience of the masses themselves.

I think that the taking into account of these tactical principles of Leninism is the necessary condition without which a Marxist verification of the line of the Comintern on the Chinese revolution is impossible.

Let us examine the problems of the Chinese revolution in the light of these tactical principles.

Notwithstanding the ideological growth of our Party, it unfortunately still contains a certain type of 'leaders' who sincerely believe that it is possible to direct the revolution in China, so to speak, by telegraph on the basis of the well-known universally acknowledged general principles of the Comintern, and *who do not consider* the national peculiarities of Chinese economics, Chinese politics, Chinese culture, Chinese customs and traditions. These leaders are distinguished from the real leaders by the fact that they always have in their pockets two or three ready-made formulae which are suitable for all countries and 'obligatory' under all conditions. For them, there is no problem of taking into account the national character and national peculiarities of each country. For them there is no problem of linking the general principles of the Comintern with the national peculiarities of the revolutionary movement in each country and no problem of adopting the general principles of the Comintern to the national state peculiarities of each country.

They do not understand that the main task of leadership at the present time, when Communist parties have already grown up and become mass parties, consists in finding out, mastering and skilfully combining the national peculiarities of the movement in each country with the general principles of the Comintern in order to further and carry out in practice the basic objectives of the Communist movement.

From this follows the attempt to stereotype the leadership for all countries. From this follows the attempt to apply mechanically certain general formulae regardless of the concrete conditions of the revolutionary movement in each country. From this follows the endless conflict between formulae and the revolutionary movement in each country, which is the essential outcome of the leadership of these unfortunate leaders.

Our oppositionists belong to the category of such unfortunate leaders.

The opposition heard that a bourgeois revolution was going on in China. It knows, besides, that the bourgeois revolution in Russia took place against the bourgeoisie. Hence, the ready-made formula for China: "Down with any joint actions with the bourgeoisie!" "Long live the immediate exit of the Communists from the Kuomintang!" (April 1926.)

But the opposition forgot that China as distinct from Russia in 1905, constitutes a semi-colonial country, oppressed by imperialism, that because of this the revolution in China is not just a bourgeois revolution but a bourgeois revolution of an anti-imperialist type, that in China imperialism holds in its hands the main threads of industry, trade and transport, that imperialist oppression affects not only the toiling masses of China but also certain sections of the Chinese bourgeoisie, that in view of this the Chinese bourgeoisie can under certain conditions and for certain period support the Chinese revolution.

As is well known, this was what happened in actual practice. If we take the Canton period of the Chinese revolution, the period when the nationalist troops reached the Yangtse, the period before the split in Kuomintang, it is impossible not to admit that the Chinese bourgeoisie supported the revolution in China, that the line of the Comintern on the permissibility of joint actions with this bourgeoisie for certain period and under certain conditions, turned out to be completely correct.

The result was the retreat of the opposition from its old formula and

the proclamation of a 'new' formula—joint actions with the Chinese bourgeoisie are necessary, the Communists must not leave the Kuomintang. (April 1927.)

This was the first penalty suffered by the opposition because it did not wish to take into account the national peculiarities of the Chinese revolution.

The opposition heard that the Peking Government was quarrelling with the representatives of the imperialist states on the question of the customs autonomy of China. The opposition knows that customs autonomy is necessary, above all, to the Chinese capitalists. Hence, the ready-made formula: The Chinese revolution is national, anti-imperialist, because it has as its main aim the attainment of customs autonomy for China.

But the opposition forgot that the strength of imperialism in China consists in the main not in the customs restrictions of China, but in that it owns there factories, mills, mines, railroads, steamers, banks, commercial houses, which suck dry the blood of millions and millions of Chinese workers and peasants.

The opposition forgot that the revolutionary struggle of the Chinese people against imperialism is to be explained above all and in the main, by the fact that in China, imperialism is that force which supports and inspires the direct exploiters of the Chinese people—the feudalists, the militarists, the capitalists, the bureaucrats, etc., that the Chinese workers and peasants cannot conquer these exploiters of theirs without waging at the same time a revolutionary struggle against imperialism.

The opposition forgets that precisely this circumstance is one of those most important factors, which make possible the growing over of the bourgeois revolution in China into a Socialist revolution.

The opposition forgets that he who stands for the Chinese anti-imperialist revolution as a revolution for customs autonomy, denies the possibility of the growing over of the bourgeois revolution in China into a Socialist revolution, for he restores the Chinese revolution to the leadership of the Chinese bourgeoisie.

And, indeed, facts show why customs autonomy is in actual practice the platform of the Chinese bourgeoisie, since even such hardened reactionaries like Chang Tso-lin and Chiang Kai-shek declare now for the abolition of the unequal treaties and the establishment of customs autonomy in China.

Hence the double-facedness of the opposition, the attempts to wriggle out from their own formula on customs autonomy, the attempts to renounce it on the quiet and to stick to the Comintern position on the possibility of the growing over of the bourgeois revolution in China into a Socialist revolution.

This is the second penalty that the opposition has suffered because it does not wish to study seriously the national peculiarities of the Chinese Revolution.

The opposition had heard that the mercantile bourgeoisie had penetrated into the Chinese countryside and had rented the land to the propertyless peasants. The opposition knows that the merchant is not feudal. Hence the ready-made formula: The remnants of feudalism—meaning also the struggle of the peasantry against the survivals of feudalism—has no serious significance in the Chinese revolution, that the main thing in China at present is not the agrarian revolution, but the question of the state—customs independence of China from imperialist countries.



But the opposition does not see that the peculiarity of Chinese economy does not consist in the penetration of mercantile capital in the countryside but in the combination of the *domination* of feudal survivals and the existence of mercantile capital in the Chinese countryside *with the preservation* of the feudal and mediaeval methods of exploitation and oppression of the peasantry.

The opposition does not understand that the entire present-day military bureaucratic machine in China, which despoils and oppresses the Chinese peasantry inhumanly is in essence the political superstructure over this combination of the *domination* of feudal survivals and feudal methods of exploitation with the existence of commercial capital in the countryside.

And, indeed, facts showed later that a great agrarian revolution developed in China which was directed, above all and in the main, against the small and the big feudalists of China. Facts showed that this revolution embraced tens of millions of peasants and it tends to extend over the whole of China.

Facts showed that feudalists, real and live feudalists, not only exist in China but also hold power in their hands in a whole number of provinces. They are subjecting to their will the command of the army, are subjecting to their influence the leadership of the Kuomintang and are dealing blow after blow to the Chinese revolution.

After this to deny the presence of feudal survivals and the feudal system of exploitation as the main form of oppression in the Chinese countryside, not to admit after this the agrarian revolution as the main fact of the Chinese revolutionary movement at the present moment, would mean going against obvious facts.

Hence the retreat of the opposition from its old formula on the question of feudal survivals and the agrarian revolution. Hence the attempts of the opposition to depart on all fours from its own old formula and tacitly admit the correctness of the Comintern position.

This is the third penalty that the opposition suffered for its reluctance to reckon with the national peculiarities of China's economy. And so on and so forth.

Discord between formulae and reality—such is the lot of the unfortunate leaders in the opposition.

And this discord is the direct result of the break made by the opposition from the famous tactical principle of Leninism, of the necessity of taking into account the national peculiarities and the national-specific features in the revolutionary movement of each individual country.

This is how Lenin formulates this principle:

"The whole point now is that the Communists of every country should quite consciously take into account both the main fundamental tasks of the struggle against opportunism and 'Left' doctrinairism and the *specific features* which this struggle assumes and inevitably must assume in each separate country in conformity with the peculiar features of its economics, politics, culture, national composition (Ireland, etc.), its colonies, religious divisions, etc. Everywhere we observe that dissatisfaction with the Second International is spreading and growing both because of its opportunism and because of its inability, or incapacity, to create a really centralised, a really leading centre that would be capable of directing the international tactics of the revolutionary proletariat in its struggle for a world Soviet republic. We must clearly realise that *such a leading centre cannot under any circumstances be built on stereotyped, mechanically equalised and identical tactical rules of struggle.* (Emphasis mine—J. S.) As

long as national and state differences exist among peoples and countries—and these differences will continue to exist for a very long time even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a world scale—the unity of international tactics of the Communist working-class movement of all countries demands, not the elimination of variety, not the abolition of national differences (that is a foolish dream at the present moment), but such an application of the *fundamental* principles of Communism (Soviet Power and the dictatorship of the proletariat) as will *correctly modify* these principles in *certain particulars*, correctly adapt and apply them to national and national state differences. The main task of the historical period through which all the advanced countries (and not only the advanced countries) are now passing is to *investigate, study, seek, divine, grasp that which is peculiarly national, specifically national in the concrete manner in which each country approaches the fulfilment of the single international task, the victory over opportunism and 'Left' doctrinairism within the working-class movement, the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a Soviet republic and a proletarian dictatorship.*" (Emphasis Mine—J. S.)\*

The line of the Comintern is the line of necessarily taking into consideration this tactical principle of Leninism.

The line of the opposition is, on the contrary, a line of break with this tactical principle.

In this break also lies the root of mishap of the opposition on questions on the character and perspectives of the Chinese revolution.

Let us pass on to the second tactical principle of Leninism.

From the character and perspectives of the Chinese revolution arises the question of the allies of the proletariat in its struggle for the victory of the revolution.

The question of the allies of the proletariat is one of the fundamental questions of the Chinese revolution. The Chinese proletariat is confronted with powerful opponents; the small and the big feudalists, the military bureaucratic machine of the old and new militarists, the counter-revolutionary national bourgeoisie, the imperialists of the East and the West, who have taken into their own hands the main threads of the economic life of China and who have reinforced with army and navy their right to exploit the Chinese people.

In order to defeat these powerful opponents, what is necessary, apart from anything else, is a flexible and well-considered policy of the proletariat, the ability to utilise every fissure in the camp of the opponents, the ability to find allies for itself, even if these allies are vacillating and wavering allies, on condition that these allies are *mass* allies, that they do not *restrict* the revolutionary propaganda and agitation of the party of the proletariat, *do not restrict* the work of the Party in organising the working class and the toiling masses.

Such a policy is the basic requirement of the second tactical principle of Leninism. Without such a policy, the victory of the proletariat is impossible.

The opposition considers such a policy incorrect and un-Leninist. But this only speaks of the fact that it has lost the last remnants of Leninism, that it is as far removed from Leninism as heaven from the earth.

Were there such allies for the Chinese proletariat in the recent past? Yes, there were such allies.

In the period of the first stage of the revolution, when the revolution

\* Lenin: Selected Works, Moscow 1947, Vol. 2 p. 626.

was revolution of a nationwide *united* Front (Canton period) the allies of the proletariat were the peasantry, the urban poor, the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia and the national bourgeoisie.

One of the distinctive features of the Chinese revolutionary movement consists in that the representatives of these classes worked jointly with the Communists within one bourgeois-revolutionary organisation called the Kuomintang.

These allies were not and could not be uniformly reliable. Certain of them were more or less reliable allies (the peasantry, the town poor), the others less reliable and vacillating (the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia), the rest completely unreliable (the national bourgeoisie).

Then the Kuomintang was indisputably a more or less mass organisation. The policy of the Communists within the Kuomintang consisted in isolating the representatives of the national bourgeoisie (the Rights), utilising them in the interests of the revolution, impelling the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia (the Lefts) to the Left and rallying the peasantry and the urban poor round the proletariat.

Was Canton then the centre of the revolutionary movement of China? Undoubtedly, yes. Indeed, only the insane can deny this now.

What were the gains of the Communists in this period? The expansion of the territory of the revolution inasmuch as the Canton troops reached the Yangtse, the opportunity of openly organising the proletariat (trade unions, strike committees), the formation of Communist organisations into the Party, the creation of the first nuclei of peasant organisations (the peasant unions), the penetration of Communists inside the army.

It turns out that the guidance of the Comintern was absolutely correct in this period.

In the period of the second stage of the revolution, when Chiang Kai-shek and the national bourgeoisie went over to the camp of counter-revolution and the centre of the revolutionary movement was shifted from Canton to Wuhan, the allies of the proletariat were the peasantry, the urban poor and the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia.

How can we explain the going over of the national bourgeoisie to the camp of counter-revolution? In the first place, by the fear of the national bourgeoisie in face of the sweep of the revolutionary movement of the workers, and secondly, by the pressure of the imperialists in Shanghai upon the national bourgeoisie.

Thus, the revolution lost the national bourgeoisie. This was a partial loss for the revolution, but it entered now into a higher phase of its development, the phase of the agrarian revolution, drawing more closely towards itself the broad masses of the peasantry. This was a gain for the revolution.

Was the Kuomintang then, in the period of the second stage of the revolution, a mass organisation? Yes, undoubtedly it was. It was indisputably more of a mass organisation than the Kuomintang of the Canton period.

Was Wuhan then the centre of the revolutionary movement? Yes, undoubtedly, it was. Only the blind can deny this now. Otherwise, the territory of Wuhan (Hupei, Hunan) would not then have been the base of the maximum development of the agrarian revolution led by the Communist Party.

The policy of the Communists with respect to the Kuomintang consisted then in impelling it to the Left and converting it into the core of

the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.

Was there then the possibility of such a transformation? Yes, there was. In any case, there was no ground to consider this possibility as ruled out; at that time, we said plainly that for the conversion of the Wuhan Kuomintang into a core of the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, at least two conditions were necessary: a radical democratisation of the Kuomintang, and the direct assistance of the Kuomintang to the agrarian revolution. It would have been stupid for the Communists to give up attempts at such a transformation.

What were the gains of the Communists in this period?

The Communist Party grew in this period from a tiny party of five to six thousand members into a big mass party of 50-60 thousand members.

The workers' trade unions developed into the tremendous all-China federation, numbering nearly three million members. The primary peasants' organisations expanded into tremendous federations, embracing several tens of millions. The agrarian movement of the peasantry developed on an immense scale and occupied a central place in the Chinese revolutionary movement. The Communist Party gained an opportunity of openly organising the revolution. The Communist Party became the leader of the agrarian revolution. The hegemony of the proletariat began to be transformed from a wish into a fact.

It is true that the Communist Party of China was not able to utilise all the opportunities of this period. It is true that the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party committed a number of very big mistakes in this period. But it would be absurd to think that the Chinese Communist Party can become a real Bolshevik party at one stroke, so to speak, on the basis of a directive from the Comintern. One has only to recall the history of our Party, which passed through a number of breaks, splits, betrayals and treacheries in order to understand that real Bolshevik parties are not born at one stroke.

Thus, it follows that the leadership of the Comintern was completely correct in this period also.

Has the Chinese proletariat allies now? Yes, it has. These allies are the peasantry and the urban poor.

The present period is characterised by the going over of the Wuhan leadership of the Kuomintang into the camp of counter-revolution, the desertion of the revolution by the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia.

This desertion can be explained, firstly, by the fear of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia in face of the growing agrarian revolution and the pressure of the feudalists on the Wuhan leadership; secondly, the pressure of the imperialists in the district of Tientsin, demanding from the Kuomintang a break with the Communists as the price for being allowed to go to the North.

The opposition doubts the existence of feudal survivals in China. But now it is clear to all that not only are feudal survivals present in China, but that at the present moment, they are even stronger than the onslaught of the revolution. And it is precisely because the imperialists and the feudalists in China turned out to be stronger for the time being that the revolution suffered a temporary defeat.

This time the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia was lost to the revolution. It is just this which is a sign of the temporary defeat of the revolution.

But then it rallied more closely around the proletariat the broad

masses of the peasantry and the urban poor, creating at the same time the basis for proletarian hegemony.

This was a gain for the revolution.

The opposition explains the temporary defeat of the revolution by the policy of the Comintern. But only people who have broken with Marxism can speak like this. Only those who have broken with Marxism can demand that a correct policy should always and necessarily lead to an *immediate* victory over the opponent.

Was the policy of the Bolsheviks correct in the 1905 revolution? Yes, it was. Why did the revolution of 1905 suffer defeat in spite of the existence of the Soviets, in spite of the correct policy of the Bolsheviks? Because the feudal survivals and the autocracy proved then to be stronger than the revolutionary movement of the workers.

Was the policy of the Bolsheviks correct in July 1917? Yes, it was. Why did the Bolsheviks suffer defeat then, in spite of the presence again of the Soviets, which then betrayed the Bolsheviks and in spite of the correct policy of the Bolsheviks? Because then Russian imperialism turned out to be stronger than the revolutionary movement of the workers.

A correct policy must not at all lead always and necessarily to an immediate victory over the opponent. Immediate victory over the opponent is determined not only by a correct policy, but also, above all and in the main, by the correlation of class forces, by the obvious preponderance of the forces on the side of the revolution, by the disintegration in the camp of the opponent and by a favourable international situation.

A correct policy of the proletariat can lead to immediate victory only under these conditions.

But there is another essential demand that a correct policy must satisfy always and in all conditions. This demand consists in the fact that the policy of the Party should raise the fighting capacity, of the proletariat, multiply its links with the toiling masses, raise the authority of the proletariat among these masses and convert the proletariat into the leader of the revolution.

Can one assert that the maximum favourable conditions for the immediate victory of the revolution in China exists in the present period? Clearly, it is impossible to assert this.

Can one assert that the Communist policy in China has not raised the fighting capacity of the proletariat, not multiplied its links with the broad masses and not raised the authority of the proletariat among these masses? Clearly, it is impossible to assert this.

Only the blind can fail to see that the Chinese proletariat has succeeded this time in weaning away the broad masses of the peasantry, both from the national bourgeoisie and from the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia in order to rally them round its banner.

The Communist Party entered into a bloc with the national bourgeoisie in Canton in the first stage of the revolution in order to extend the territory of the revolution, form itself into a mass Party, create for itself the opportunity of openly organising the proletariat and clear for itself the path towards the peasantry.

The Communist Party entered into a bloc with the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia of the Kuomintang in Wuhan in the second stage of the revolution, in order to multiply its forces, extend the organisation of the proletariat, wean away the broad masses of the peasantry from the Kuo-

mintang leadership and create the conditions for the hegemony of the proletariat.

The national bourgeoisie passed over into the camp of counter-revolution and lost its links with the broad masses of the people.

The petty-bourgeois intelligentsia of the Kuomintang in Wuhan, alarmed at the agrarian revolution and having finally discredited itself in the eyes of the millions of masses of the peasantry, followed the national bourgeoisie.

But, on the other hand, the millions of masses of the peasantry rallied round the proletariat more closely, looking upon it alone as their reliable leader and guide.

Is it not clear that only a correct policy could lead to such result?

Is it not clear that only such a policy could raise the fighting capacity of the proletariat?

Who, except the unfortunate leaders of our opposition, can deny the correctness and the revolutionary nature of such a policy?

The opposition affirms that the turning of the Wuhan Kuomintang leadership to the side of the counter-revolution speaks of the incorrectness of the policy of a bloc with the Wuhan Kuomintang at the second stage of the revolution.

But only those who have forgotten the history of Bolshevism and lost the last remnants of Leninism can speak in this way.

Was the Bolshevik policy of a revolutionary bloc with the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries in October and after October, right up to the spring of 1918, correct? I think that no one has yet decided to deny the correctness of this bloc. What did this bloc end in? In the revolt of the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries against the Soviet Power. Can one assert, *on the basis of this*, that the policy of a bloc with the Socialist-Revolutionaries was incorrect? Clearly, it is impossible to assert this.

Was the policy of a revolutionary bloc with the Wuhan Kuomintang in the second stage of the Chinese revolution correct? I think that nobody has yet decided to deny the correctness of such a bloc during the second stage of the revolution. The opposition itself asserted then (in April 1927) that such a bloc was correct. How can one now, after the desertion of the revolution by the Wuhan leadership of the Kuomintang and on the basis of this desertion, assert that the revolutionary bloc with the Wuhan Kuomintang was incorrect?

Is it not clear that only men without character can manipulate with the help of such "arguments"?

Has anybody asserted that the bloc with the Wuhan leadership is permanent and interminable? Do such permanent and interminable blocs exist at all in actual fact? Is it not clear that the opposition has understood nothing, positively nothing, of the second tactical principle of Leninism on the revolutionary bloc of the proletariat with the non-proletarian classes and groups?

This is how Lenin formulates this tactical principle:

"The more powerful enemy can be conquered only by exerting the utmost effort, and by *necessarily*, thoroughly, carefully, attentively and skilfully taking advantage of every, even the smallest, 'rift' among the enemies, of every antagonism of interest among the bourgeoisie of the various countries and among the various groups or types of bourgeoisie within the various countries, and *also by taking advantage of every, even the smallest opportunity of gaining a mass ally, even though this ally be temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable and conditional. Those who do not understand this do*

not understand even a particle of Marxism, or of scientific, modern Socialism in general. (Emphasis mine—J. S.) Those who have not proved by deeds over a fairly considerable period of time, and in fairly varied political situations, their ability to apply this truth in practice have not yet learned to assist the revolutionary class in its struggle for the emancipation of toiling humanity from the exploiters. And this applies equally to the period before and to the period after the conquest of political power by the proletariat.”\*

Let us pass on to the third tactical principle of Leninism.

This tactical principle concerns the question of change of slogans and of the form and methods of this change. It concerns the question of how to transform the slogans for the Party into slogans for the masses, the question of how and in what manner to bring the masses to revolutionary positions, so that the masses should become convinced through their own political experience of the correctness of the Party slogans.

But propaganda and agitation alone cannot convince the masses. For this, the political experience of the masses themselves is necessary. For this it is necessary that the broad masses should realise through their own experience the inevitability of overthrowing the present system and establishing new political and social order.

It is good that the advanced group, the Party, was already convinced of the inevitability of overthrowing, say, the Provisional Government of Milyukov and Kerensky in April 1917. But this was still inadequate for them to come forward for the overthrow of this Government in order to put forward the slogan of overthrow of the Provisional Government and the establishment of Soviet Power as the *slogan of the day*. In order to convert the formula “all power to the Soviets” from a *perspective* of the immediate period, into the *slogan of the day*, into a slogan of immediate action, one more decisive circumstance was necessary, namely, that the masses themselves should be convinced of the correctness of these slogans and render the Party some kind of support or the other in carrying them out in practice.

One must differentiate strictly between a formula, as a *perspective* for the immediate future and a formula as the *slogan of the day*. The group of Bolsheviks in Petrograd headed by Bagdatyev failed precisely in this in April 1917, when they raised *prematurely* the slogans “Down with the Provisional Government, All power to the Soviets!” At that time, Lenin characterised this attempt of the Bagdatyev group as dangerous adventurism and stigmatised it publicly. (Cf. Lenin: *Collected Works*, 3rd Russian ed., Vol. XX, pp. 224-25.)

Why? Because the broad masses of the toilers in the rear and at the front were not yet prepared for the adoption of this slogan. Because this group confused the formula of “All power to the Soviets!” as a perspective, with the slogan of “All power to the Soviets” as a slogan of the day. Because it *ran ahead*, threatening the Party with complete isolation from the broad masses, from the Soviets who then still believed in the revolutionary character of the Provisional Government.

Should the Chinese Communists have, say, six months back, raised the slogan of “Down with the Kuomintang leadership in Wuhan”? No. They should not have done this.

They ought not to have done this, since this would have been dangerous *running ahead*: it would have made it more difficult for the Communists to reach the broad masses of toilers, who still believed in the

Kuomintang leadership and this would have isolated the Communist Party from the broad peasant masses.

They ought not to have done this since the Wuhan Kuomintang leadership, the Wuhan C.C. of the Kuomintang had not yet managed to exhaust all possibilities as a bourgeois-revolutionary Government and had not yet disgraced and discredited itself in the eyes of the broad masses of toilers by its struggle against the agrarian revolution, by its struggle against the working class and by its turn to the side of counter-revolution.

We have always said that it is impossible to take the course of discrediting and substituting the Wuhan Kuomintang leadership till it has not as yet exhausted its possibility as a bourgeois-revolutionary Government, that it must be allowed to exhaust all its possibilities before posing, in a practical manner, the question of changing it.

Should the Chinese Communists now raise the slogan of “Down with Kuomintang leadership in Wuhan”? Yes, they must necessarily do this.

Now, when the Kuomintang leadership has already discredited itself by its struggle against the revolution, taken up an attitude hostile towards the broad worker and peasant masses, this slogan will find a powerful response amongst the mass of people.

Now every worker and every peasant understands that the Communists acted correctly in quitting the Wuhan Government and the Wuhan C.C. of the Kuomintang and advancing the slogan of “Down with the Kuomintang leadership in Wuhan.” Because the question confronting the peasant and working class masses is to make a choice between *either* the present-day leadership of the Kuomintang—and, in that case, a refusal to satisfy the urgent demands of these masses, a renunciation of agrarian revolution—or the agrarian revolution and a radical improvement in the position of the working class—and, in that case, a change in the Kuomintang leadership in Wuhan becomes the slogan of the day for the masses.

Such are the requirements of the third tactical principle of Leninism on the question of change of slogan, on the question of the methods and the paths of leading the broad masses to new revolutionary positions, on the question of assisting the broad masses of toilers to perceive through their own experience the correctness of the line of the Party, by its policy, its activity and *timely* substitution of certain slogans by other slogans.

This is how Lenin formulates this tactical principle:

“Victory cannot be won with the vanguard alone. To throw the vanguard alone into the decisive battle, before the whole class, before the broad masses have taken up a position either of direct support of the vanguard, or at least of benevolent neutrality towards it, and one in which they cannot possibly support the enemy, would be not merely folly but a crime. And in order that actually the whole class, that actually the broad masses of toilers and those oppressed by capital may take up such a position, propaganda and agitation alone are not enough. For this the masses must have their own political experience. (Emphasis mine—J.S.) Such is the fundamental law of all great revolutions, now confirmed with astonishing force and vividness not only in Russia but also in Germany. Not only the uncultured, often illiterate masses of Russia, but the highly cultured, entirely literate masses of Germany had to realise, through their own painful experience, the absolute impotence and spinelessness, the absolute helplessness and servility to the bourgeoisie, the utter vileness of the Government of the Knights of the Second International, the absolute inevitability of a dictatorship of the extreme reactionaries (Kornilov in Russia, Kapp and Co. in Germany) as the only

\* Lenin: *Selected Works*, Moscow 1947, Vol. 2, pp. 609-10.

alternative to a dictatorship of the proletariat, in order to turn them resolutely toward Communism.

"The immediate task that confronts the class-conscious vanguard of the international labour movement, i.e., the Communist Parties, groups and trends, is to be able to lead the broad masses (now, for the most part, slumbering, apathetic, hidebound, inert and dormant) to their new position, or, rather, to be able to lead *not only* their own party, but also these masses, in their approach, their transition to the new position."\*

The main mistake of the opposition consists in that it does not understand the sense and the importance of this tactical principle of Leninism, it does not admit it and systematically violates it.

They (Trotskyites) violated this tactical principle in the beginning of 1917, when they attempted to skip over the still uncompleted agrarian movement. (Cf. Lenin.)

They (Trotsky-Zinoviev) violated it when they attempted "to skip over" the reactionary nature of the trade unions by not admitting the expediency of communists working in reactionary trade unions and denying the necessity of temporary blocs with them.

They (Trotsky-Zinoviev-Radek) violated it when they attempted "to skip over" the national peculiarities of the Chinese revolutionary movement (Kuomintang), the backwardness of the mass of people in China, by demanding in April 1926 the immediate exit of the Communists from the Kuomintang, and raising the slogan of the immediate organisation of Soviets in April 1926, under the condition of the still unfinished, unexhausted Kuomintang phase of development.

The opposition thinks that if it has understood, perceived the half-heartedness, the vacillation and the unreliability of the Kuomintang leadership, if it has perceived the provisional and the conditional character of the bloc with the Kuomintang (and it is not difficult for any qualified political worker to perceive this) —then this is quite sufficient to start "decisive actions" against the Kuomintang, against the power of the Kuomintang, and that it is quite sufficient in order that the masses, the broad masses of workers and peasants, should "immediately" support "us" and "our" "decisive actions."

The opposition forgets that "our" understanding is far from adequate in order that the Chinese Communists should be able to bring the masses behind themselves. The opposition forgets that for this it is necessary still that the masses should perceive, through their own experience, the unreliability, the reactionary and counter-revolutionary character of the Kuomintang leadership.

The opposition forgets that revolutions "are made" not only by the advanced group, not only by the Party, not only by individual, and, howsoever "big" "personalities" but, above all and in the main, by the millions of masses of people.

It is strange that the opposition forgets the state of the millions of masses of people, their understanding and their preparedness for decisive actions.

Did we, the Party and Lenin, know in April 1917 that we would have to overthrow the Provisional Government of Milyukov and Kerensky, that the existence of the Provisional Government is incompatible with the activity of the Soviets, that power must pass into the hands of the Soviets? Yes, we knew this.

Why then did Lenin brand as adventurist a certain group of Bolsheviks in Petrograd with Bagdatyev at their head in April 1917, when this group put forward the slogan of "Down with the Provisional Government, All power to the Soviets!" and when they attempted to overthrow the Provisional Government?

Because the broad masses of the toilers, a certain section of the workers, millions among the peasantry, the broad masses in the army and finally the Soviets themselves, were not yet ready to adopt this slogan as the slogan of the day.

Because the Provisional Government and the petty-bourgeois parties of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, had not yet exhausted their possibilities, were not as yet sufficiently discredited in the eyes of the millions of masses of toilers.

Because Lenin knew that for the overthrow of the Provisional Government and the establishment of Soviet power, only the understanding, the consciousness of the advanced group of the proletariat, the party of the proletariat, alone is insufficient, for this it is still necessary that the masses should themselves be convinced through their own experience of the correctness of such a line.

Because it was necessary to pass through the whole coalition bacchanalia, through the betrayals and treacheries of the petty-bourgeois parties in June, July, August 1917, it was necessary to go through the infamous attack on the front in June 1917, through the "honourable" coalition of the petty-bourgeois parties with Kornilov and Milyukov, through the Kornilov revolt, etc. in order that millions of toiling masses could be convinced of the inevitability of the overthrow of the Provisional Government and the establishment of Soviet power.

Because only in these conditions the slogan of Soviet power, as a *perspective* would be converted into the slogan of Soviet power as the *slogan of the day*.

The misfortune of the opposition lies in that it very often commits the very same mistake that was committed by the Bagdatyev group in its time, that it, while abandoning the path of Lenin, prefers "to march" along the Bagdatyev path.

Did we, the Party and Lenin, know that a Constituent Assembly is incompatible with the system of Soviet power when we took part in the elections to the Constituent Assembly and when we convened it in Petrograd? Yes, we knew this.

Why then did we convene it? How could it happen that the Bolsheviks, the enemies of bourgeois parliamentarism, after having built a Soviet power, not only took part in the elections, but also themselves convened the Constituent Assembly? Was this not "*Khvostism*" (tailism), lagging behind events, "holding back the masses" and violation of the tactics of "distant aim"? Of course not.

The Bolsheviks took this step in order to make it easy for the backward masses of the people to be convinced of the ineffectiveness of the Constituent Assembly after seeing this with their own eyes, and of its reactionary and counter-revolutionary character. Only in this way was it possible to draw millions and millions of peasant masses towards themselves and to facilitate the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly.

This is what Lenin writes of this:

"We took part in the elections of the Russian bourgeois parliament, the Constituent Assembly, in September-November 1917. Were our tactics correct or not? Did not

\* Lenin: Selected Works, Moscow, 1947, Vol. 2, p. 627.

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 did, for the point is not whether bourgeois parliaments have existed for a long or a short time, but how far the broad mass 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 urban working class 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*....

"The conclusion which follows from this is absolutely incontrovertible; it has been proved that participation in a bourgeois-democratic parliament even a few weeks before the victory of a Soviet republic, and even *after* such a victory, not only does not 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."\*

This is how the Bolsheviks applied in practice the third tactical principle of Leninism.

This is how the tactics of Bolshevism must be applied in China, whether it is a question of the agrarian revolution, or the Kuomintang or the slogan of Soviets.

The opposition is apparently inclined to think that the revolution in China has already sustained a complete defeat. This, of course, is not true. There is no doubt that the revolution in China has sustained a temporary defeat, but what this defeat is like and how deep it is, that is the question now.

It is possible that it is almost as prolonged a defeat as that which took place in Russia in 1905, when the revolution was interrupted for a whole twelve years for it to burst forth later in February 1917 with renewed force, to remove autocracy and clear the path for a new Soviet revolution.

This perspective cannot be considered as ruled out. As yet, there is no complete defeat of the revolution in the same way as the defeat in 1905 could not be considered as the final defeat. There is no complete defeat since the main tasks of the Chinese revolution at the present phase of development—the agrarian revolution, the revolutionary unification of China, the liberation from imperialist yoke still await their solution. And if this perspective were to become a reality, then there can be no question of the immediate creation of soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies in China since soviets are formed and flourish only in a situation of a revolutionary upsurge.

But that prospect can scarcely be considered a likely one. At all events, there are no grounds so far from considering it likely. There are none, because the counter-revolution is not yet united, and will not be soon, if indeed it is ever destined to be united.

For the war of the old and the new militarists among themselves is flaring up with fresh force and cannot but weaken the counter-revolution, at the same time as it ruins and infuriates the peasantry.

In China there is not yet any group or government capable of carry-

ing out reforms similar to Stolypin's which will serve as a lightning conductor for the ruling group.

It is not easy to bridle and suppress the millions of peasants who have taken possession of the land of the landlords. The prestige of the proletariat among the working masses is rising from day to day and its strength is far from being destroyed.

It is possible that the defeat of the Chinese revolution is similar in its extent to the defeat sustained by the Bolsheviks in July 1917, when the Menshevik and the Socialist-Revolutionary soviets betrayed them, when they were forced to go underground and when a few months later the revolution once again came out in the open in order to sweep off the imperialist government of Russia.

Of course, this analogy is conditional. I admit it only with all the reservations which are necessary if we bear in mind the difference in the situation in China of our day and Russia in 1917. I draw this analogy only to depict approximately the extent of the defeat of the Chinese revolution.

I think that this prospect is the more likely one. And if it should become a reality, if in the near future—not necessarily in a couple of months, but in six months or a year from now—a new upsurge of the revolution should become a fact, the question of forming Soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies may become a live issue, as a slogan of the day, and as a counterpoise to the bourgeois government.

Because, in the conditions of a *new upsurge of the revolution* in the present stage of development, the formation of soviets will become an absolutely urgent question.

Yesterday, a few months ago, the Communists of China ought not to have raised the slogan of the formation of soviets since it would have been the adventurism peculiar to our opposition and since the Kuomintang leadership had not still discredited itself as the enemy of the revolution.

Now, on the contrary, the slogan of the formation of soviets can become a really revolutionary slogan, *if* (if!) in the near future a new and powerful revolutionary upsurge is set ablaze.

It is, therefore, that till the advent of the upsurge along with the struggle for the substitution of the present Kuomintang leadership by a revolutionary leadership, we must carry on the broadest propaganda among the broad masses of the toiling people for the idea of the soviets, without running ahead and without forming soviets right now, with the knowledge that soviets can flourish only in conditions of a mighty revolutionary upsurge.

The opposition may say that it was "the first" to say this and that it is what they termed as the tactics of a "distant aim".

That is not true, my dear ones. It is completely untrue! These are not the tactics of "distant aim" but the tactics of groping, the tactics of perpetual over-stepping or of falling short of the mark.

When the opposition demanded the immediate withdrawal of the Communists from the Kuomintang in April 1926, then these were the tactics of *over-stepping* the mark since the opposition itself was compelled to admit later that the Communists must remain in the Kuomintang.

When the opposition declared the Chinese revolution to be a revolution for customs autonomy, then these were the tactics of falling short of the mark, since the opposition itself was compelled later to crawl away from its own formula.

\* Lenin: Selected Works, Moscow 1947, Vol. 2. p. 601.



When the opposition declared in April 1927 that feudal survivals were an exaggeration in China having forgotten about the existence of the mass agrarian movement, then these were the tactics of *falling short of the mark* since the opposition itself was compelled later to admit the mistake tacitly.

When in April 1927 the opposition raised the slogan of the immediate formation of the soviets, then these were the tactics of over-stepping the mark, since the oppositionists were themselves compelled to recognise then the contradictions in their camp, among whom some (Trotsky) demanded that the line of overthrowing the Wuhan Government be adopted, and others (Zinoviev), on the contrary, demanded "every assistance" to this very same Wuhan Government.

But since when have we begun to proclaim the tactics of groping, the tactics of perpetual over-stepping and of falling short of the mark, the tactics of "distant aim"?

As regards the soviets, it is necessary to say that the Comintern had spoken of the soviets in China as the *perspective* in its documents long before the opposition. As regards soviets *as the slogan of the day*, as raised by the opposition in the spring of this year, as opposed to the revolutionary Kuomintang (the Kuomintang was revolutionary at that time; otherwise, what was there for Zinoviev to shout about "every assistance to the Kuomintang"), that was an adventure vociferously running ahead, the same kind of adventure and the same running ahead which Bagdatyev practised in April 1917.

From the fact that the slogan of soviets can become the slogan of the day *in the near future* in China, it does not at all follow that the slogan of soviets raised by the opposition *in spring of this year* was not dangerous and harmful adventurism.

Similarly, from the fact that the slogan "All power to the Soviets" was recognised by Lenin as necessary and timely in *September 1917* (the famous decision of the C.C. on the uprising)<sup>84</sup> it does not at all follow that the raising of this slogan by Bagdatyev in April 1917 was not harmful and dangerous adventurism.

Bagdatyev could have also said in September 1917 that he was "the first" to speak of the power of the Soviets already in April 1917. Does that mean that Bagdatyev was right and Lenin wrong in characterising this action as adventurism in April 1917?

Evidently the "laurels" of Bagdatyev do not give any rest to our opposition.

The opposition does not understand that the question is not at all one of saying things "first" by running ahead and spoiling the cause of the revolution, but of saying a thing *in time* and saying it in a manner as would be caught up by the masses and *transformed into deeds*.

Such are the facts.

The departure of the opposition from Leninist tactics and the "ultra-Left" adventurism of its policy—such are the results!

## Speech at the 19th Congress of the CPSU

Comrades, permit me to express the gratitude of our Congress to all the fraternal Parties and groups whose representatives have honoured our Congress with their presence, or who have sent greetings to the Congress—gratitude for their friendly felicitations, for their wishes of success, for their confidence.

It would be a mistake to think that, having become a mighty force, our Party is no longer in need of support. That is not true. Our Party and our country have always needed, and will need, the confidence, the sympathy and the support of fraternal peoples abroad.

The distinguishing feature of this support is that whenever any fraternal Party supports the peaceable aspirations of our Party, it is at the same time supporting its own people in their struggle for the preservation of peace. When, in 1918-19, at the time of the armed attack on the Soviet Union of the British bourgeoisie, the British workers organized a struggle against war under the watchword of "Hands off Russia!", this was support—support, primarily, for the struggle of their own people for peace, and support also for the Soviet Union. When Comrade Thorez or Comrade Togliatti declare that their peoples will not fight the peoples of the Soviet Union, that is support—support, primarily, for the workers and peasants of France and Italy who are fighting for peace, and support also for the peaceful aspirations of the Soviet Union. This distinguishing feature of mutual support is to be explained by the fact that the interests of our Party do not contradict, but, on the contrary, merge with the interests of the peace-loving peoples. As to the Soviet Union, its interests are altogether inseparable from the cause of worldwide peace.

Naturally, our Party cannot remain indebted to the fraternal Parties, and it must in its turn render support to them and also to their peoples in their struggle for emancipation, and in their struggle for the preservation of peace. As we know, that is exactly what it is doing. After our Party had assumed power in 1917, and after it had taken effective measures to abolish capitalist and landlord oppression, representatives of the fraternal Parties, in their admiration for the daring and success of our Party, conferred upon it the title of the "Shock Brigade" of the world revolutionary and labour movement. By this, they were expressing the hope that the successes of the "Shock Brigade" would help to ease the position of the peoples languishing under the yoke of capitalism. I think that our Party has justified these hopes, especially so in the Second World War, when the Soviet Union, by smashing the German and Japanese fascist tyranny, delivered the peoples of Europe and Asia from the menace of fascist slavery.

It was very hard, of course, to perform this honourable mission so long as ours was a single and solitary "Shock Brigade", so long as it had to perform this mission of vanguard almost alone. But that was in the past. Today the situation is quite different. Today, when from China and Korea to Czechoslovakia and Hungary, new "Shock Brigades" have appeared in the shape of the People's Democracies—now it has become easier for our Party to fight, ay, and the work is going more merrily.

Those Communist, democratic, and workers' and peasants' parties which have not yet come to power and are still working under the heel of bourgeois draconic laws are deserving of particular attention. For them, of course, the work is harder. But it is not as hard for them to work as it was for us, the Russian Communists, in the period of tsarism, when the slightest movement forward was declared a severe crime. However, the Russian Communists stood their ground, were not daunted by difficulties, and achieved victory. So it will be with these parties.

Why will it not be so difficult for these Parties to work as it was for the Russian Communists in the period of tsarism?

Firstly, because they have before their eyes such examples of struggle and achievement as are to be seen in the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies. Consequently, they are in a position to learn from the mistakes and achievements of these countries and thus lighten their own work.

Secondly, because the bourgeoisie—the chief enemy of the emancipation movement—has itself become different, has changed substantially, has become more reactionary, has lost its ties with the people, and has thereby weakened itself. Naturally, this circumstance, too, should lighten the work of the revolutionary and democratic parties.

Formerly, the bourgeoisie could afford to play the liberal, to uphold the bourgeois-democratic liberties, and thus gain popularity with the people. Now not a trace remains of this liberalism. The so-called "liberty of the individual" no longer exists—the rights of the individual are now extended only to those who possess capital, while all other citizens are regarded as human raw material, fit only to be exploited. The principle of equal rights for men and nations has been trampled in the mud; it has been replaced by the principle of full rights for the exploiting minority and no rights for the exploited majority. The banner of bourgeois-democratic liberties has been thrown overboard. I think that it is you, the representatives of the Communist and democratic parties, who will have to raise this banner and carry it forward, if you want to gather around you the majority of the people. There is nobody else to raise it.

Formerly, the bourgeoisie was regarded as the head of the nation; it upheld the rights and independence of the nation and placed them "above all else." Now not a trace remains of the "national principle." Now the bourgeoisie sells the rights and independence of the nation for dollars. The banner of national independence and national sovereignty has been thrown overboard. There is no doubt that it is you, the representatives of the Communist and democratic parties, who will have to raise this banner and carry it forward if you want to be patriots of your country, if you want to become the leading force of the nation. There is nobody else to raise it.

That is how matters stand today.

Naturally, all these circumstances should lighten the work of the Communist and democratic parties which have not yet come to power.

Consequently, there is every reason to count upon the success and victory of our fraternal Parties in the lands where capital holds sway.

Long live our fraternal Parties!

May the leaders of our fraternal Parties live and flourish!

Long live peace among nations!

Down with warmongers!

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

- 1 The article "Critical Remarks on the National Question" was written by Lenin in October-December 1913 and published the same year in the Bolshevik legal journal *Prosveshcheniye* Nos. 10, 11 and 12.

In the summer of 1913 Lenin delivered lectures on the national question in a number of Swiss cities—Zurich, Geneva, Lausanne and Berne.

In the autumn of 1913 Lenin made a report on the national question at the "Poronin" meeting of the Central Committee of the R. S. D. L. P. with the Party workers. The meeting adopted a resolution drafted by Lenin. After the meeting Lenin started work on his article "Critical Remarks on the National Question".

- 2 The *Black Hundreds*—monarchist gangs formed by the tsarist police to fight the revolutionary movement. They murdered revolutionaries, assaulted progressive intellectuals and staged anti-Jewish pogroms.
  - 3 *Russkoye Slovo* (Russian Word)—a liberal-bourgeois daily published in Moscow from 1895 to November 1917 when it was closed down.
  - 4 *Dyen* (The Day)—a daily newspaper of a liberal-bourgeois trend published in St. Petersburg from 1912. Among its contributors were Menshevik Liquidators, who took over complete control of the paper after February 1917. Closed down by the Revolutionary Military Committee of the Petrograd Soviet on October 28 (November 8) 1917.
  - 5 *Russkaya Mysl* (Russian Thought)—a literary and political monthly published in Moscow from 1880 to 1918; until 1905 it showed liberal Narodnik leanings. After the 1905 revolution it became the organ of the Right wing of the Cadet Party, under the editorship of P. B. Struve. It propagated nationalism, clericalism and supported the preservation of landed estates.
  - 6 This reference is to the Congress of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party held in Brünn (Austria) from September 24 to 29, 1899. The national question was the principal item on the agenda. Two resolutions expressing different points of view were submitted to the Congress: (1) the resolution of the Central Committee of the Party which upheld the territorial autonomy of nations, and (2) the resolution of the Committee of the South-Slav Social-Democratic Party which upheld extra-territorial cultural-national autonomy.
- The Congress unanimously rejected the programme of cultural-national autonomy and adopted a compromise resolution recognising national autonomy within the boundaries of the Austrian state. (See Lenin's article "A Contribution to the History of the National Programme in Austria and in Russia".)
- 7 J. S. L. P. (Jewish Socialist Labour Party)—a petty-bourgeois nationalist organisation, founded in 1906. Its programme included a demand for national autonomy for the Jews—the creation of extra-territorial Jewish parliaments (sejms), authorised to settle questions concerning the political organisation of the Jews in Russia. The J. S. L. P. was close to the Socialist-Revolutionaries and together they waged a struggle against the R. S. D. L. P.
  - 8 Lenin is referring to the conference of the C. C. R. S. D. L. P. with the Party workers, which took place in Poronin near Cracow from September 23 to October 1 (October 6-14), 1913 and for reasons of secrecy was called the "August" ("Summer") Conference. The resolution on the national question mentioned here was drawn up by Lenin.
  - 9 *Przegląd Socjaldemokratyczny* (Social-Democratic Review)—a magazine published in Cracow by the Polish Social-Democrats, in close co-operation with Rosa Luxemburg, from 1902 to 1904 and from 1908 to 1910.
  - 10 *Die Neue Zeit*—a theoretical journal of the German Social-Democratic Party, published in Stuttgart from 1883 to 1923. It was edited by K. Kautsky until October

1917, and then by H. Cunow. Some of the writings of Marx and Engels, the founders of Marxism, were first published in this journal. Engels helped the editors with his advice and often criticised them for their deviations from Marxism.

In the late nineties, after the death of Engels, the journal regularly published articles by revisionists, among them a series of articles by E. Bernstein "Problems of Socialism", which launched a revisionist campaign against Marxism. During the First World War (1914-18) the journal took up a Centrist stand and actually supported social-chauvinists.

- 11 *Nauchnaya Mysl* (Scientific Thought)—a Menshevik journal published in Riga in 1908. p. 14
- 12 See Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1966, p. 765. p. 15
- 13 Lenin quotes here from Griboyedov's comedy *Wit Works Woe*. p. 22
- 14 Reference is to the abolition of serfdom in Russia in 1861. p. 24
- 15 *The Times*—a daily published since 1785 in London; one of the largest conservative newspapers of the British bourgeoisie. p. 25
- 16 *Fenians*—members of a secret Irish revolutionary organisation; they demanded national independence for their country, the establishment of a democratic republic, the transformation of peasant tenants into proprietors of the land they tilled, etc. They intended to carry out their political programme by means of an armed uprising. Their plot, however, was a failure. In 1867 the Fenians started to prepare for an insurrection, but in September that year the English Government managed to arrest the leaders of the Fenian movement and tried them. The Fenians were subjected to mass repressions. The campaign launched in England in defence of the condemned Fenians was supported by the General Council of the First International. p. 25
- 17 In the summer and autumn of 1869 a wide campaign for an amnesty for the convicted Fenians started in Ireland. Numerous meetings adopted petitions to the English Government with a demand for the Irish revolutionaries to be set free. Gladstone, the head of the English Government, rejected all the demands and this gave rise to protest demonstrations in London. p. 26
- 18 *The New York Daily Tribune*—an American newspaper published from 1841 to 1924. Until the mid 1850s it was the organ of the Left wing of the American Whigs, and later the organ of the Republican Party. Karl Marx contributed to the paper from August 1851 to March 1862. Many articles for it were written by Engels at Marx's request. p. 27
- 19 See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Correspondence* Moscow, 1965, pp. 229-30. p. 27
- 19 Labour Popular Socialist Party separated from the Right wing of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in 1906. Its members were in favour of a bloc with the Cadets. Lenin called them "Social-Cadets", "petty-bourgeois opportunists", "S. R. Mensheviks", vacillating between the Cadets and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, and stressed that this party "differs very little from the Cadets, for it deletes from its programme both republicanism and the demand for all the land." The party was headed by A. V. Peshekhonov, N. F. Annensky, V. A. Myakotin and others. After the October Socialist Revolution they participated in counter-revolutionary conspiracies and armed actions against Soviet power. p. 30
- 20 *Russkoye Bogatstvo* (Russian Wealth)—a monthly journal published from 1876 to 1918 in St. Petersburg. In the early nineties the journal was the organ of the liberal Narodniks. In 1906 the journal became the organ of the semi-Cadet Labour Popular Socialist Party. p. 30
- 21 *The Dreyfus case*—a frame-up trial instituted in 1894 by reactionary-royalist circles of the French militarists against Dreyfus, a Jewish officer of the General Staff, who was falsely accused of espionage and high treason. A court martial sentenced him to life imprisonment. The public movement in France to revise

the case took the form of a fierce struggle between the republicans and royalists and eventually led to the release of Dreyfus in 1906.

Lenin said that the Dreyfus case was "one of the many thousands of fraudulent tricks of the reactionary military caste". p. 33

- 22 This incident took place in Zabern (Alsace) in November 1913, and was caused by the brutality of a Prussian officer against Alsatians. This aroused a burst of indignation among the local, mainly French, population against the oppression of Prussian militarists. On the Zabern incident, see Lenin's article "Zabern". p. 33
- 23 See Marx's letter to Engels of November 30, 1867. p. 33
- 24 For the critique of Renner's and Bauer's reactionary concept of so-called cultural-national autonomy see Lenin's work, "Critical Remarks on the National Question" (pp. 1-40 of this book). p. 33
- 25 Marx, "Konfidentielle Mitteilung" and Engels, "Flüchtlingsliteratur" I Polish Proclamation. p. 35
- 26 See Marx's letter to Engels of November 2, 1867. p. 35
- 27 *Augean stables*—in Greek mythology, large stables of King Augeas, which were kept uncleaned for many years. They were cleaned by Hercules and this was considered one of his feats. The expression used figuratively denotes extreme neglect, disorder and filth. p. 36
- 28 *Die Glocke* (Bell)—a magazine published in Munich, and then in Berlin from 1915 to 1925 by a German Social-Democrat and social-chauvinist Parvus (Gelfand). p. 36
- 29 See Engels's "Democratic Pan-Slavism." Lenin used the book *Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Ferdinand Lassalle* (hrsg. von Franz Mehring, Stuttgart, 1902, Bd. III, S. 246-64) which did not give the author's name. p. 36
- 30 *Fabians*—members of the Fabian Society, a British reformist organisation, founded in 1884; it got its name from the Roman commander of the third century B. C. Fabius Maximus, surnamed Cunctator ("Delayer") for his procrastination tactics when he postponed pitched battle against Hannibal. The Fabians denied the need for the class struggle of the proletariat and a socialist revolution and asserted that the transition from capitalism to socialism was possible only through petty reforms and a gradual transformation of society. Lenin said that it was "an extremely opportunist trend" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 358). In 1900 the Fabian Society was affiliated to the Labour Party. Fabian socialism is one of the sources of Labour Party ideology.

During the First World War (1914-18) the Fabians took a social-chauvinist stand. p. 37

- 31 This reference is to the Sixth (Prague) All-Russian Conference of the R. S. D. L. P. held from January 5 to 17 (18-30), 1912 in Prague. p. 38
- 32 *Nashe Dyelo* (Our Cause)—a Menshevik monthly, the chief organ of the liquidators and social-chauvinists in Russia; it was put out in 1915 in Petrograd instead of *Nasha Zarya* (Our Dawn) which was closed down in October 1914. p. 38
- 33 This reference is to the International Socialist Conference in Zimmerwald held from September 5 to 8, 1915.

The Conference witnessed a struggle between the revolutionary internationalists headed by Lenin and the Kautskyite majority. From Left-wing internationalists Lenin formed the Zimmerwald Left group in which the Bolsheviks alone took the only correct and fully consistent internationalist stand against the war.

The Conference adopted a Manifesto which recognised that the war was an imperialist one. It condemned the behaviour of socialists who voted for the war credits and worked within bourgeois governments; it called upon the European workers to unfurl a struggle against war, for peace without annexations and indemnities.

- The Conference adopted a resolution of sympathy with the victims of the war and elected the International Socialist Commission (I. S. K.). p. 39
- 34 See Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Moscow, 1967, pp. 2-3. p. 40
- 35 See note No. 25. p. 43
- 36 Engels, "What Has the Working Class To Do with Poland?" p. 43
- 37 Reference is to the *Declaration of the Polish Social-Democrats at the International Socialist Conference in Zimmerwald* (1915) expressing protest against the oppressive policy of the tsarist autocracy, and the German and Austrian governments who "deprived the Polish people of the chance to decide their own destiny and regard the Polish regions as a stake in the subsequent compensation negotiations". "This", the Declaration said, "especially rudely reveals the essence of the policy of the capitalist governments who send the masses to the slaughter and go out of their way to determine the destiny of the peoples for several generations to come." The Polish Social-Democrats expressed their certainty that only participation in the coming struggle of the revolutionary international proletariat for socialism, "in the struggle which will smash the shackles of national oppression and destroy all forms of foreign domination, will assure the Polish people the possibility of the all-round development as an equal member in the union of the peoples". p. 47
- 38 *Lichtstrahlen* (Rays of Light)—a monthly, organ of the German Left Social-Democrats (Internationalist Socialists of Germany), edited by J. Borchardt. It appeared in Berlin irregularly from 1913 to 1921. p. 48
- 39 Reference is to Rosa Luxemburg's article "The National Question and Autonomy", published in *Przegląd Socjaldemokratyczny* Nos. 6, 7, 8-9, 10, 12 and 14-15, for 1908-09. p. 48
- 40 *Nashe Slovo* (Our Word)—a Menshevik newspaper, issued in Paris from January 1915 to September 1916 in place of the newspaper *Golos* (Voice). Trotsky was one of the editors. p. 51
- 41 *Vorwärts* (Forward)—a daily, the central organ of the German Social-Democratic Party, published under the name of *Vorwärts-Berliner Volksblatt* in Berlin from 1891 on the decision of the Halle Congress as the continuation of *Berliner Volksblatt* (Berlin People's Newspaper), which had been published from 1884. Engels used the columns of the paper to fight all manifestation of opportunism. After the death of Engels, in the late nineties, *Vorwärts* fell into the hands of the Party's Right wing and regularly published articles by the opportunists. During the First World War *Vorwärts* took up a social-chauvinist stand, and after the Great October Socialist Revolution carried out anti-Soviet propaganda. It appeared in Berlin till 1933. p. 52
- 42 *Nash Golos* (Our Voice)—a Menshevik paper of a social-chauvinist bent published in Samara from 1915 to 1916. p. 54
- 43 Notes to "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions" were received by Lenin from G. V. Chicherin, N. N. Krestinsky, J. V. Stalin, M. G. Rafes, Y. A. Preobrazhensky, N. D. Lapinsky, and I. Nedelkov (N. Shablin), representative of the Bulgarian Communists, as well as from a number of leaders in Bashkiria, Kirghizia, and Turkestan. Along with correct ideas, the notes contained certain grave errors. Thus, Chicherin gave a wrong interpretation to Lenin's theses on the necessity of support for national liberation movements and on agreements with the national bourgeoisie, without due regard for Lenin's distinction between the bourgeoisie and the peasantry. With regard to this Lenin wrote: "I lay greater stress on the alliance with the peasantry (which does not quite mean the bourgeoisie)" (Central Party Archives of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the C. C. C. P. S. U.). Referring to the relations between the future socialist Europe and the economically underdeveloped and dependent countries, Preobrazhensky wrote: "...if it proves impossible to reach economic agreement with the leading national groups, the latter will inevitably be suppressed by

- force and economically important regions will be compelled to join a union of European Republics." Lenin decisively objected to this remark: "...it goes too far. It cannot be proved, and it is wrong to say that suppression by force is 'inevitable'. That is radically wrong" (see *Voprosy Istorii KPSS* [Problems of the C. P. S. U. History] 1958, No. 2, p. 16). P. 55
- 44 As a result of the revolution which commenced in Finland on January 27, 1918, the bourgeois government of Svinhufvud was overthrown and the working class assumed power. On January 29, the revolutionary government of Finland, the Council of People's Representatives was formed by Edvard Gylling, Yrjö Sirola, Otto Kuusinen, A. Taimi and others. The following were among the most important measures taken by the workers' government: the law on the transfer to landless peasants, without indemnification, of the land they actually tilled; tax-exemption for the poorest sections of the population; the expropriation of enterprises whose owners had fled the country; the establishment of state control over private banks (their functions being assumed by the State Bank).
- On March 1, 1918, a treaty between the Finish Socialist Workers' Republic and the R. S. F. S. R. was signed in Petrograd. Based on the principle of complete equality and respect for the sovereignty of the two sides, this was the first treaty in world history to be signed between two socialist countries.
- The proletarian revolution, however, was victorious only in the south of Finland. The Svinhufvud government concentrated all counter-revolutionary forces in the north of the country, and appealed to the German Kaiser's government for help. As a result of German armed intervention, the Finnish revolution was put down in May 1918, after a desperate civil war. White terror reigned in the country; thousands of revolutionary workers and peasants were executed or tortured to death in the prisons. p. 57
- 45 As a result of mass action by the Lettish proletariat and peasantry against the German invaders and the counter-revolutionary government of Ulmanis, a provisional Soviet government was established in Latvia on December 17, 1918, which issued a Manifesto on the assumption of state power by the Soviets. Soviet Russia gave fraternal help to the Lettish people in their struggle to establish Soviet rule and strengthen the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic.
- Under the leadership of the Latvian Communist Party and the Latvian Soviet Government, a Red Army was formed, the landed estates were confiscated, the banks and big commercial and industrial enterprises were nationalised, social insurance and an eight-hour working day were introduced, and a system of public catering for working people was organised.
- In March 1919, German troops and the whiteguards, armed and equipped by the U. S. and the Entente imperialists, attacked Soviet Latvia. In May they captured Riga, the capital of Soviet Latvia. After fierce fighting the entire territory of Latvia had been overrun by the interventionists by beginning of 1920. The counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie established a regime of bloody terror, thousands of revolutionary workers and peasants being killed or thrown into prison. p. 57
- 46 The commission on the national and the colonial questions, formed by the Second Congress of the Communist International, included representatives of the Communist parties of Russia, Bulgaria, France, Holland, Germany, Hungary, the U. S. A., India, Persia, China, Korea and Britain. The work of the commission was guided by Lenin, whose theses on the national and the colonial questions were discussed at the fourth and fifth sessions of the Congress, and were adopted on July 28. p. 60
- 46 The *Basle Manifesto* was adopted by the Extraordinary International Socialist Congress held in Basle on November 24-25, 1912. It gave a warning against the imminent world imperialist war, whose predatory aims it unmasked, and called upon the workers of all countries to wage a determined fight for peace and "to

pit against the might of capitalist imperialism the international solidarity of the proletariat". The Manifesto denounced the expansionist policy of the imperialist countries and urged socialists to fight against all oppression of small nations and manifestations of chauvinism. p. 63

- 47 "Marxism and the National Question" was written at the end of 1912 and the beginning of 1913 in Vienna. It first appeared in the Bolshevik magazine *Prosveshcheniye* (Enlightenment), 1913, Nos. 3-5, under the title "The National Question and Social-Democracy" and signed K. Stalin. In 1914 it was published by the Priboy Publishing House in St. Petersburg as a separate pamphlet entitled *The National Question and Marxism*.

In 1920 the article was republished by the People's Commissariat of Nationalities in a *Collection of Articles* by Stalin on the national question. It was supplied with a preface by the author explaining the circumstances in which each of the articles in the volume was written.

In reference to the present article, "Marxism and the National Question," Stalin said in the preface:

"The article reflects the period when a controversy on the fundamental principles of the national problem was being waged within the ranks of the Russian Social-Democratic Party; it was the era of the landlord-tsarist reaction, a year and a half before the outbreak of the imperialist war, the era of the growth of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia. At that time there were two conflicting theories of nations and, correspondingly, two national programmes: the *Austrian* programme, supported by the Bund and the Mensheviks, and the *Russian* programme, the programme of the Bolsheviks. The reader will find a description of these two currents in this article. Subsequent events, particularly the imperialist war and the disintegration of Austria-Hungary into several national states, clearly demonstrated which side was right. Now, when Springer and Bauer are standing over the spilt milk pail of their national programme, there can hardly be room for doubt that history has condemned the 'Austrian school.' Even the Bund has been obliged to admit that the 'demand for national cultural autonomy [i.e., the Austrian national programme—J. S.] which was put forward under the capitalist system, loses all meaning in the conditions of a socialist revolution.' (*The Twelfth Conference of the Bund*, 1920). The Bund does not even suspect that it thereby admitted (inadvertently admitted) the *fundamental* unsubstantiality of the theoretical basis of the Austrian national programme and the *fundamental* unsubstantiality of the Austrian theory of nations."

It was in reference to this article of Stalin's, "Marxism and the National Question," that Lenin wrote to Gorky in February 1913: "We have a wonderful Georgian here who has sat down to write a big article for *Prosveshcheniye* and has collected all the Austrian and other material." And when the article appeared, Lenin wrote a warm appreciation of it in his article, "The National Programme of the R. S. D. L. P.," published in the *Sotsial-Demokrat*, December 15, 1913. Referring to the reasons which lent prominence to the national problem at that period, he remarked: "This state of affairs and the principles of the national programme of the Social-Democrats have already been dealt with in theoretical Marxist literature recently (prime place must here be given to Stalin's article)." p. 65

- 48 *Zionism*—a reactionary nationalist political movement which recruited its followers from the Jewish petty and middle bourgeoisie, intellectuals, business employees, artisans and the more backward sections of the Jewish workers. Its aim was to organise a Jewish bourgeois state in Palestine and it endeavoured to isolate the Jewish working-class masses from the general struggle of the proletariat. p. 65

- 49 *The Brünn Parteitag*, or Congress, of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party was held September 24-29, 1899. The discussion at the congress mainly centred around

the national question. The congress rejected the resolution of the South-Slavic Social-Democrats, which advocated extra-territorial national-cultural autonomy, and adopted a resolution proposed by the Joint Executive Committee (the Central Committee) advocating a union of nationally-delimited regions, which, of course, was a compromise between the Austro-German Social-Democrats, who advocated a centralised state, and the South-Slavic, Czech and other Social-Democrats, who held a nationalist position. On the question of Party organisation the Brünn Congress went even further than the Wimberg Congress towards forming separate national Social-Democratic groups and reformed the central administration of the Party into a federal body made up of the executive committees of the national Social-Democratic organisations (German, Czech, Polish, Ruthenian [Ukrainian], Italian and South-Slavic). p. 78

- 50 "Here there is no parliament, thank God," were the words uttered by V. Kokovtsov, the tsarist Minister of Finance (later Prime Minister), in the State Duma on April 24, 1908. p. 79

- 51 These words are taken from Chapter II ("Proletarians and Communists") of *The Communist Manifesto* of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. p. 85

- 52 *The Vienna* (or *Wimberg*—as it was called after the name of the hotel in which it met) Congress of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party was held in June 6-12, 1897. The party which had till then been united, was at this congress dismembered into six independent national Social-Democratic groups (German, Czech, Polish, Ruthenian [Ukrainian], Italian and South-Slavic), which were united only by the fact that they held joint congresses and had a joint Central Committee. p. 86

- 53 The reference is to an article by Karl Marx entitled "Zur Judenfrage" ("The Jewish Question"), published in 1844 in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (*German-French Annual*), in which Marx argued against the leader of the German free-thinking radicals, Bruno Bauer. p. 87

- 54 *The Eighth Conference of the Bund* was held in September 1910 in Lvov, Galicia. The conference chiefly devoted its attention to the questions of the Jewish community and the Sabbath rest-day, the resolutions on which were evidence of the further accentuation of nationalism in the Bund. p. 90

55. "Adapting socialism to nationalism"—this phrase was used of the Bundists and the Caucasian Social-Democrats by Plekhanov in an article entitled "Another Schismatic Conference," printed in *Za Partiyu* (*For the Party*—the organ of the Plekhanovist Party Mensheviks and the conciliationist Party Bolsheviks, published in 1912-14) of October 2, 1912, No. 3. In this article Plekhanov severely condemned both the fact of convocation and the resolutions of the August Conference of the Liquidators. p. 91

- 56 *The Seventh Congress of the Bund* was held in Lvov, Galicia, at the end of 1906. The congress declared in favour of the Bund's joining the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party on the basis of the rules adopted by the latter at its Fourth (Stockholm) Congress, with the reservation, however, that "while joining the R. S. D. L. P. and adopting its programme, the Bund holds to its own programme on the national question." After the Seventh Congress the Bund definitely and finally went over to Menshevism. p. 92

- 57 *The Old Iskra*—this was the way the *Iskra* of the period of 1900-03 (down to No. 51), when Lenin was a leading member of the editorial board, was later referred to in order to distinguish it from the *new Iskra*, the *Iskra* of the period when it had adopted the Menshevik position. The old *Iskra* vigorously combated the nationalism of the Bund. A number of articles in the *Iskra*, the most important of them by Lenin, were devoted to criticising the Bund and its views on the national question and on the organisational structure of the Party. p. 93

- 58 *Karel Vanek*—a Czech Social-Democrat member of the Austrian Reichsrat and

- the Brünn Landtag, a director of the Sick Benefit Society of Brünn and one of the leaders of the Czech separatists. p. 93
- 59 *Chveni Tskhovreba* (*Our Life*)—daily newspaper published by the Georgian Mensheviks in Kutais in 1912. Nineteen numbers appeared.

The quotations given here are taken from an article by N. (Noah Jordania) entitled "The Old and the New," which appeared in *Chveni Tskhovreba*, Nos. 11-14. p. 94

- 60 The reference is to the first Balkan War, which broke out in October 1912 between Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro on the one hand, and Turkey on the other. The war was the result of the conflict of interests in the Balkan Peninsula between the powers of the Entente (France, Great Britain, and Russia) and the Powers of the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy). This war and the second Balkan War (1913), which broke out among the former allies over the division of the spoils and which ended in the defeat of Bulgaria, only tightened the knot of imperialist contradictions in the Balkans and served as a prologue to the world imperialist war. p. 101
- 61 The reference is to the resolutions of the Fourth (also known as the Third All-Russian) Conference of the R. S. D. L. P., held November 5-12, 1907 (Old Style), and the Fifth (known as the December) Conference of the R. S. D. L. P., held December 21-27, 1908 (O. S.) p. 104
- 62 The reference is to the election to the Fourth State Duma as deputy from Warsaw of Jagiello, a member of the Left wing of the Polish Socialist Party. His election was secured with the help of a bloc of the Bundists and the Polish Socialist Party with the Jewish bourgeois nationalists as against the vote of the Polish Social-Democratic electors who comprised the majority in the workers' electoral college. The Social-Democratic fraction in the Fourth State Duma, thanks to the fact that its majority at that time consisted of Liquidators, adopted Jagiello, who was not a Social-Democrat, into its midst and thereby supported the schismatic action of the Bund and accentuated the split among the workers of Poland. p. 104
- 63 The Seventh (known as the April) All-Russian Conference of the Bolsheviks, held in Petrograd April 24-29, 1917 (O. S.), devoted considerable attention to the national question. Stalin made the report on this subject. Lenin made a big speech during the debate (see Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XX). Both he and Stalin sharply condemned the opportunist attempts of Pyatakof. Pyatakof's position, which would have condemned the revolution to isolation and defeat, was rejected by the Conference, which by an overwhelming majority adopted the resolution submitted by Stalin. p. 104
- 64 The article "*The October Revolution and the National Question*" was referred to in the author's preface to Stalin's *Collection of Articles* on the national question issued by the People's Commissariat of Nationalities in 1920 in the following way:

"The article is a reflection of the period that followed the October Revolution, when the Soviet government, having overcome counter-revolution in Central Russia, came into conflict with the bourgeois nationalist governments in the border countries, which were hotbeds of counter-revolution, when the Entente, alarmed at the growing influence of the Soviet government in its (the Entente's) colonies, began openly to support the bourgeois nationalist governments in order to stifle Soviet Russia, and when, in the course of the triumphant fight against the bourgeois nationalist governments, we were confronted with the practical problem of deciding on the concrete forms of regional Soviet autonomy, the organisation of autonomous Soviet republics in the border regions, the extension of the influence of the Soviet government to the oppressed countries of the East via the Eastern regions of Russia, and the creation of a united revolutionary front of the West and the East against world imperialism. The article notes the inseparable

connection between the national question and the question of power, and treats the national policy as part of the general problem of the oppressed peoples and colonies, i.e., that to which the 'Austrian school', the Mensheviks, the reformists, and the Second International usually objected and which was subsequently confirmed by the whole course of events". p. 109

- 65 *The Central Rada in the Ukraine* was organised at a congress of Ukrainian petty-bourgeois parties and nationalist organisations held in Kiev in April 1917. The Rada frequently came into sharp collision with the Provisional Government, which resorted to repressive measures in order to crush the national movements. After the October Revolution the Rada became the stronghold of "bourgeois counter-revolution clothed in a national democratic form" (Stalin). In his report to the Third Congress of Soviets (January 1918), Stalin thus characterised the petty-bourgeois kulak "Socialists" who controlled the Rada (Vinnichenko and others):
- "In words, in the edict, they declared themselves in favour of transferring all the land to the people, but later they published an interpretation which limited this transfer, proclaiming that a certain part of the landed estates were inviolable and not subject to transfer to the people. "In words they proclaimed their loyalty to the Soviets, but in actual fact they waged bitter war on the Soviets, disarmed Soviet troops, arrested Soviet officials, and rendered the continued existence of the Soviets impossible.

"In words, they proclaimed their fidelity to the revolution, but in actual fact they proved themselves to be malicious enemies of the revolution. They said they were neutral in the struggle against the Don, but in actual fact they rendered direct and open assistance to General Kaledin, helping him to shoot down Soviet soldiers and preventing the transport of food to the North."

In February 1918, the Rada was overthrown by the insurgent Ukrainian workers and peasants, but was shortly restored by the Austro-German troops when they invaded the Ukraine. In April 1918, peace negotiations were to have taken place (in Kursk) between representatives of the Rada and a delegation of the Council of People's Commissars headed by Stalin; however, the *coup d'état* of Hetman Skoropadsky put an end to the Central Rada once and for all before the negotiations could be held. p. 109

- 66 The Rada in Byelorussia was a petty-bourgeois nationalist organisation, formed at a congress of Byelorussian national organisations held in Minsk in July 1917. Controlled by chauvinist nationalists, the Rada after the October Revolution joined the enemies of the Soviet government, dissolved the local Soviets, proclaimed the "independence" of the Byelorussian People's Republic and sent a letter of thanks to the German Emperor, Wilhelm II, for having sent German troops to occupy Byelorussia. On January 1, 1919, the Provisional Workers' and Peasant's Government of Byelorussia outlawed the Rada and proclaimed Byelorussia a Soviet republic. p. 109

- 67 *The Sfatul Tsării* (Regional Council), the regional "parliament" organised in Kishinev (Bessarabia) by agents of the Rumanian general staff, lasted from November 1917 to November 1918 and consisted of appointed (not elected) representatives of the Moldavian "National Party," and of several bogus organisations boycotted by a number of districts and organisations. In March 1918, the Sfatul-Tsării, although a considerable number even of its own members abstained from voting, passed an act making Bessarabia an autonomous part of Rumania, and in November 1918 the Rumanian army of occupation caused a vote to be passed in the Sfatul-Tsării providing for the complete annexation of Bessarabia to Rumania without any rights of autonomy whatever. As we know, the annexation of Bessarabia, then and subsequently, has evoked energetic resistance on the part of the population to the army of occupation. This resistance at times assumed the form of open revolts, which were savagely suppressed. p. 109



- 68 *The Kurultai in the Crimea* was convoked in December 10, 1917, in Bakhchisarai (it subsequently held its sessions in Simferopol). The majority of its members reflected the aspirations and sentiments of the Tatar petty bourgeoisie, who followed the Tatar nationalist "People's Party." The Kurultai set up a Crimean Tatar "National Government" (a "Directory") headed by Chelebiyev and Saidamet and backed by armed troops (the "Squadron") under the command of Russian counter-revolutionary officers. In January 1918, when the Kurultai endeavoured to oppose its armed forces to the Sevastopol Revolutionary Military Committee, it was dispersed together with the "National Government," although it re-emerged for a brief period during the German occupation of the Crimea. p. 109
- 69 *The Kurultai in Bashkiria* was convoked in November 1917 in Orenburg. It was controlled by nationalist elements, headed by Zaki Validov, representing the interests of the bourgeois and kulak sections of the Bashkir population. The Kurultai set up a Bashkir government headed by Validov, which carried on anti-Soviet activities and established contact with Generals Dutov and Kolchak. However, the imperialist character of the policy of Kolchak, who, incidentally, issued a decree abolishing the autonomy of Bashkiria, compelled Validov's government in 1919, under the pressure of the masses, to declare adherence to the Soviet government. When the Bashkir Soviet Republic was formed, the bourgeois nationalist elements, headed by Validov, soon raised the standard of revolt against the Soviet government, but did not meet with the support of the toiling masses of Bashkiria. p. 109
- 70 *The Autonomous Government in Turkestan*, headed by Tanyshvayev, Shagi-Akhmetov and Chokayev, was formed in opposition to the Tashkent Council of People's Commissars and what was called a Pan-Mussulman Congress convened by bourgeois nationalist organisation in November 1917 in Kokand (hence the term "Kokand autonomy"). With the support of Russian Whiteguards, this government started civil war in Turkestan, but was overthrown in February 1918 by Tashkent and Samarkand Red Army divisions. p. 109
- 71 "*The Policy of the Soviet Government on the National Question in Russia*" is referred to in the author's preface to the *Collection of Articles* on the national question by Stalin issued by the People's Commissariat of Nationalities in 1920 as follows:

"This article deals with the present period of the still uncompleted administrative reconstruction of Russia on the basis of regional autonomy and the organisation in the border regions of administrative communes and autonomous Soviet republics as integral parts of the R. S. F. S. R. The central theme of the article is the question of how to put Soviet autonomy into practice, in other words, how to bring about a revolutionary alliance between the centre and the border regions as a guarantee against intervention on the part of imperialism. It may appear strange that the article emphatically rejects the demand for the separation of the border regions from Russia on the ground that it is a counter-revolutionary proposal. We are in favour of the separation of India, Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, and the other colonies from the Entente, for here separation implies the liberation of these oppressed countries from imperialism, thus undermining the position of imperialism and strengthening the position of revolution. We are against the separation of the border regions from Russia, since separation would here involve imperialist servitude for the border regions, thus undermining the revolutionary power of Russia and strengthening the position of imperialism. It is precisely for this reason that the Entente, while resisting the separation of India, Egypt, Arabia, and the other colonies, is working for the separation of the border regions from Russia. It is precisely for this reason that Communists, while working for the separation of the colonies from the Entente, cannot but resist the separation of the border regions from Russia. Obviously, the question of separation must be

- decided in accordance with the concrete international situation and the interests of the revolution." p. 115
- 72 The reference is to certain articles by G. V. Chicherin, who at that time was People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, which appeared in the *Pravda* of March 6, 7 and 9, 1921, Nos. 50, 51 and 52, entitled "Against the Theses of Comrade Stalin." p. 131
- 73 *The Two-and-a-Half International*—the international Association of Socialist Parties formed in Vienna in February 1921 by a number of parties (including the Russian Mensheviks) which had for the time being withdrawn from the Second International during the rising tide of revolution. Among its leaders were F. Adler, O. Bauer and L. Martov. The aim of the Two-and-a-Half International was to counteract the growing influence of the Communist International among the working-class masses, who had turned away from the discredited Second International. In 1923 the Two-and-a-Half International merged with the Second International. p. 133
- 74 *Dashnaks*—the Dashnaksutyun Party, an Armenian petty-bourgeois nationalist party formed in the beginning of the nineties. Its petty-bourgeois position gradually evolved into downright nationalism and defence of the interests of the big bourgeoisie. During the years of reaction and war this party served as a militant vanguard of the big bourgeoisie and as a protector of the interests of tsarism. In 1918-20, as leaders of the bourgeois Republic of Armenia set up by the Turkish military command, the Dashnaks made Armenia a stronghold of the Anglo-French interventionists and the Russian White-guards in their war on the Soviet government and the Communist Party. After Armenia turned Soviet the leaders of this party went abroad, where they conducted a savage campaign against Soviet Armenia. p. 153
- 75 *Mussavatists*—the Mussavat Party, formed in 1912 in Baku, a Turkic bourgeois "democratic" party, infected by Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism. In 1918 it was the main counter-revolutionary force in Azerbaidjan, organised a revolt against the Baku Commune, invited the help of the Turks, and later of the British, and waged a savage fight against the working-class and peasant movement. When Azerbaidjan became Soviet in 1920, this party lost its influence. At the present time its followers are to be found only among the emigres abroad who are working for intervention against the Soviet Union. p. 153
- 76 The reference is to a statement made by Ordjonikidze at the Twelfth Party Congress to the effect that the Georgian "deviators" had issued a "monstrous" (as Stalin called it) bourgeois-nationalist decree ordering the frontiers of Georgia to be closed to famine refugees from the Northern Caucasus and the Volga Region and the establishment of cordons on the frontiers, whereby the Georgian deviators attempted to create an artificial barrier between Georgia and the other Soviet republics. p. 154
- 77 The reference is to a commission headed by F. Dzerzhinsky and a commission headed by V. Kuibyshev (at the time Secretary of the Central Committee) which had been sent to Georgia in 1923 to investigate a number of questions connected with the disorganizing activities of a small group of Georgian leaders, the "deviators" (Mdivani, Tsintsadze and others) who had frequently violated decisions of the Central Committee of the Party. Most of them have since been exposed as enemies of the people. p. 155
- 78 The quotation is taken from Lenin's article "On the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (*Collected Works*, Vol. XVII). p. 159
- 79 Both quotations are taken from Lenin's theses "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (*Collected Works*, Vol. XIX). p. 161
- 80 The quotation is from a letter written by Karl Marx to Frederick Engels, dated April 16, 1856. p. 162

- 81 For further details regarding the Kuomintang, see the excerpt "China" from Stalin's speech at the Joint Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission on August 1, 1927. p. 180
- 82 Compradores-intermediaries between foreign capital and the local market, comprising a section of the native big trading bourgeoisie in the colonial and dependent countries. The compradore bourgeoisie in China exposed itself as an agent of foreign imperialism and a sworn enemy of the Chinese Revolution in 1925-27. p. 198
- 83 The Plenum of the CC of the CPSU(B) which took place from 13th to 16th April, 1927, is referred to here. The Plenum discussed a number of questions connected with the Congress of Soviets of the U. S. S. R. and R. S. F. S. R. and decided the question of the dates for the convening of the 15th Congress of the CPSU(B). On 13th April, J. V. Stalin spoke on the agenda of the day for the Plenum and in the discussion on the Report of M. I. Kalinin "Problems of the Congress of Soviets of U. S. S. R. and R. S. F. S. R." After discussing the Report of the Polit Bureau of the CC of the CPSU (B) on the decisions adopted by them in connection with the international events—the events in China, etc.—the Plenum approved the policy of the Polit Bureau of the CC on the international question and resolutely rejected the anti-Party platform of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Opposition. p. 201
- 84 V. I. Lenin in his article and Letters from underground to the Central Committee and to the Bolshevik organisations put forward in September 1917 the slogan of "All power to the Soviets" as the immediate task for organisation of an armed uprising (cf. Collected Works, 3rd Russian edition, Vol. XXI pp. 137-148, and 193-99). At the discussion of V. I. Lenin's letter at the session of the Central Committee of the Party on 15th September, J. V. Stalin gave a resolute rebuff to the capitulator Kamenev, who demanded the cancellation of these documents, and proposed the circulation of letters of V. I. Lenin for discussion in the biggest Party organisations. On 10th October 1917, with the participation of V. I. Lenin, J. V. Stalin, Y. M. Sverdlov, F. E. Dzherzhensky, M. S. Uritsky, the historic session of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party was held at which a decision was adopted on the armed uprising about which V. I. Lenin had written (Cf. V. I. Lenin : Collected Works, Vol. XXI, 3rd Russian edition, p. 330). p. 218

