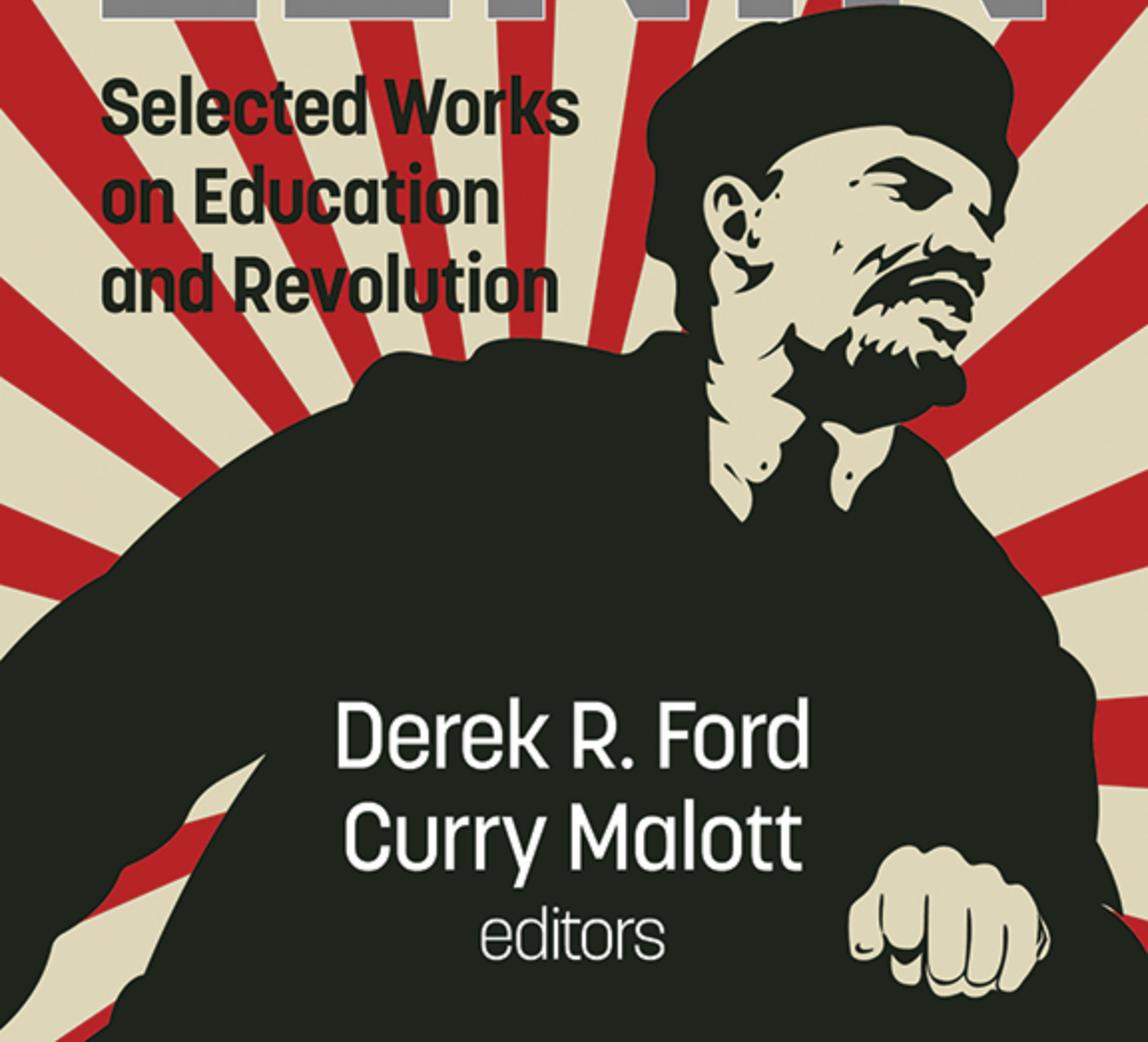


A VOLUME IN MARXIST, SOCIALIST, AND COMMUNIST STUDIES IN EDUCATION

LEARNING WITH LENIN

**Selected Works
on Education
and Revolution**



**Derek R. Ford
Curry Malott**
editors

Learning With Lenin

A volume in
Marxist, Socialist, and Communist Studies in Education
Derek R. Ford and Curry Malott, *Series Editors*

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*Selected Works on Education
and Revolution*

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Contents

Introduction xi

PART I

Educational Texts

1 The Question of the Ministry of Education: Study and Discussion Guide..... 3

The Question of Ministry of Education Policy: Supplement to the Discussion on Public Education 5

2 Speech at the First All-Russia Congress on Education: Study and Discussion Guide15

Speech at the First All-Russia Congress on Education.....17

3 Speech at the First All-Russia Congress on Adult Education: Study and Discussion Guide21

 Part 1: Speech of Greeting 21

 Part 2: Deception of the People With Slogans of Freedom and Equality 22

First All-Russia Congress on Adult Education..... 23

 1 Speech of Greeting 23

 2 Deception of the People With Slogans of Freedom and Equality 26

4	Speech at the First All-Russia Congress of Workers in Education and Socialist Culture: Study and Discussion Guide	57
	Speech at the First All-Russia Congress of Workers in Education and Socialist Culture	59
5	Speech Delivered at an All-Russia Conference of Political Education Workers of Gubernia and Uyezd: Study and Discussion Guide	67
	Speech to Congress on Political Education Workers of Gubernia and Uyezd	71
6	Instructions of the Central Committee: To Communists Working in the People’s Commissariat for Education: Study and Discussion Guide	81
	Instructions of the Central Committee: To Communists Working in the People’s Commissariat for Education	83
7	The Work of the People’s Commissariat for Education: Study and Discussion Guide	87
	The Work of the People’s Commissariat for Education	89
8	The New Economic Policy and the Tasks of the Political Education Departments: Report to the Second All-Russia Congress of Political Education Departments: Study and Discussion Guide	99
	The New Economic Policy and the Tasks of the Political Education Departments: Report to the Second All-Russia Congress of Political Education Departments	101
	Abrupt Change of Policy of the Soviet Government and the R.C.P.....	101
	The 1918 Decision of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on the Role of the Peasantry.....	102
	Our Mistake	103
	A Strategical Retreat.....	103
	Purport of the New Economic Policy.....	105
	Who Will Win, the Capitalist or Soviet Power?.....	105
	The Fight Will Be Even Fiercer.....	106
	Is This the Last Fight?.....	108
	We Must Not Count on Going Straight to Communism.....	108

The Principle of Personal Incentive and Responsibility.....	109
Shall We Be Able to Work for Our Own Benefit?.....	110
Obsolete Methods.....	112
The Greatest Miracle of All.....	113
Tasks of Political Educationalists.....	114
The Three Chief Enemies.....	115
Difference Between Military and Cultural Problems.....	116
9 Pages From a Diary: Study and Discussion Guide.....	119
Pages From a Diary.....	121

PART **II**

Foundational Texts

10 What Is to Be Done? Study and Discussion Guide.....	129
What Is to Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement.....	133
Preface.....	133
I Dogmatism and “Freedom of Criticism”.....	136
II The Spontaneity of the Masses and the Consciousness of the Social-Democrats.....	157
III Trade-Unionist Politics And Social-Democratic Politics.....	178
IV The Primitiveness of the Economists and the Organization of the Revolutionaries.....	213
V The “Plan” for an All-Russia Political Newspaper.....	255
Conclusion.....	275
Appendix: The Attempt to Unite <i>Iskra</i> With <i>Rabocheye Dyelo</i>	278
Correction to <i>What Is to Be Done?</i>	283
11 The Right of Nations to Self-Determination: Study and Discussion Guide.....	285
What is Meant by the Self-Determination of Nations?.....	285
The Historically Concrete Presentation of the Question.....	285
The Concrete Features of the National Question in Russia, and Russia’s Bourgeois-Democratic Reformation.....	286
“Practicality” in the National Question.....	286

The Liberal Bourgeoisie and the Socialist Opportunists in the National Question.....	287
Norway's Secession from Sweden	287
The Resolution of the London International Congress, 1896 ..	288
The Utopian Karl Marx and the Practical Rosa Luxemburg	288
The 1903 Program and Its Liquidators.....	289
Conclusion.....	289
The Right of Nations to Self-Determination	291
1. What Is Meant by the Self-Determination of Nations?	292
2. The Historically Concrete Presentation of the Question ...	297
3. The Concrete Features of the National Question in Russia, and Russia's Bourgeois-Democratic Reformation	300
4. "Practicality" in the National Question	304
5. The Liberal Bourgeoisie and the Socialist Opportunists in the National Question.....	309
6. Norway's Secession From Sweden.....	318
7. The Resolution of the London International Congress, 1896.....	323
8. The Utopian Karl Marx and the Practical Rosa Luxemburg.....	327
9. The 1903 Programme and its Liquidators.....	334
10. Conclusion.....	342
12 Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism: Study and Discussion Guide.....	347
Preface	347
Preface to French and German Editions	347
Concentration of Production and Monopolies	348
Banks and Their New Role.....	348
Finance Capital and the Financial Oligarchy.....	349
Export of Capital	350
Division of the World Among Capitalist Associations.....	350
Division of the World Among the Great Powers.....	351
Imperialism as a Special Stage of Capitalism	352
Parasitism and Decay of Capitalism	353
Critique of Imperialism.....	353
The Place of Imperialism in History	354

Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism	355
Preface	355
Preface to the French and German Editions.....	357
I. Concentration of Production and Monopolies	362
II. Banks and Their New Role	374
III. Finance Capital and the Financial Oligarchy	387
IV. Export of Capital.....	398
V. Division of the World Among Capitalist Associations	402
VI. Division of the World Among the Great Powers	409
VII. Imperialism As a Special Stage of Capitalism	418
VIII. Parasitism and Decay of Capitalism.....	427
IX. Critique of Imperialism	434
X. The Place of Imperialism in History.....	445
13 The State and Revolution: Study and Discussion Guide	451
Preface to the First and Second Editions.....	451
Chapter 1: Class Society and the State	451
Chapter 2: The Experience of 1848–51	452
Chapter 3: Experience of the Paris Commune of 1871	452
Chapter 4: Supplementary Explanations by Engels	452
Chapter 5: The Economic Basis of the Withering Away of the State	453
Chapter 6: The Vulgarization of Marxism by Opportunists	453
The State and Revolution	455
Preface to the First Edition	455
Preface to the Second Edition	457
Chapter One: Class Society and the State.....	457
Chapter 2: The Experience of 1848–1851.....	471
Chapter 3: Experience of the Paris Commune of 1871. Marx’s Analysis.....	481
Chapter 4: Supplementary Explanations by Engels	496
Chapter 5: The Economic Basis for the Withering Away of the State	517
Chapter 6: The Vulgarization of Marxism by the Opportunists.....	532
Postscript to the First Edition	546

14 “Left-Wing” Communism: An Infantile Disorder: Study and Discussion Guide	547
“Left-Wing” Communism: An Infantile Disorder	551
In What Sense We Can Speak of the International Significance of the Russian Revolution.....	551
An Essential Condition of the Bolsheviks’ Success	554
The Principal Stages in the History of Bolshevism	556
The Struggle Against Which Enemies Within the Working- Class Movement Helped Bolshevism Develop, Gain Strength, and Become Steeled.....	562
“Left-Wing” Communism in Germany. The Leaders, the Party, the Class, the Masses.....	570
Should Revolutionaries Work in Reactionary Trade Unions?	578
Should We Participate in Bourgeois Parliaments?	587
No Compromises?	597
“Left-Wing” Communism in Great Britian.....	607
Several Conclusions	618
Appendix	630
Letter From Wijnkoop	638

Appendix:

The Socialist Alteration of Man	641
<i>Lev Vygotsky 1930</i>	
Notes	651

Introduction

Addressing the Ideological Break in Practice and in (Educational) Theory

Lenin's contributions to Marxism, the socialist struggle, and liberatory movements more generally have revolved around true praxis: the merging of theory and practice. Marx's own theories, of course, were also based on practical experience and theoretical reflection, but in the academy Marxism has become reduced to a mode of analysis completely detached from mass movements. Perhaps this explains low interest in Lenin among academics, who in general cling to a pure kind of Marxism that, by definition, can't be changed by practice. Over the last decade, however, activists, organizers, and even younger radical academics have increasingly turned to Leninism and the practical and theoretical experience of the struggles of working class and oppressed people for inspiration and to understand their own struggles. This isn't new in the United States, of course. Throughout most of the 20th century radical organizations and individuals looked to and linked with the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, Vietnam, Ethiopia, and elsewhere. After the McCarthy witch-hunts of the 1950s, and then the neoliberal offensive in the 1970s, these links were broken.

They are re-emerging today, but there is much work to be done. Brian Becker (2016) identifies a primary task of our moment as addressing a “break in ideological continuity.” The main problem since the neoliberal era and the defeat of the people’s struggles in the United States has not been the political downturn. As he says, “setbacks and defeats are not uncommon. They are not the exception to the rule. On the contrary, *victories of the oppressed classes are the exception.*” Our problem right now is that the revolutionary theory of Marxism–Leninism is at worst discredited, and at best seen as one theory among an almost endless assortment of defeatist bourgeois academic theories. This is the reverse of the last great wave of insurrection in the United States. “If some people have criticized the idealism of the 1960s and 1970s generation, for prematurely believing that revolution was imminent,” he says, “today’s problem is the opposite and far more challenging: the assumption that socialist revolution will never happen, and the masses will always be oppressed.”

Learning with Lenin seeks to contribute to the rematerialization of a revolutionary movement in the United States by focusing on the pedagogy of Lenin. This is particularly important since there has also been a “break in ideological continuity” in the realm of education. As Marxism–Leninism suffered theoretical and political attacks, it was not only purged from working-class struggles, but it was also purged from educational theory. Rectifying this omission is a significant task given the influence of Lenin’s (and Marx’s) work on two of the twentieth century’s most significant educators: the Soviet Union’s Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) and Brazil’s Paulo Freire (1921–1997).

Through this focus, we aim to truly study and learn from Lenin’s writings from the standpoint of *today’s* social and political movements. Each text is preceded by a set of questions meant to serve as both a study and discussion guide. These can be consulted before and/or after reading the text. Reading the questions before will help you key in on certain parts of the text and may help make your reading active. Some of the questions are geared toward comprehension (“What does Lenin say about *x*?” or “What does Lenin mean by *y*?”). Other questions are intended for collective discussion (“How can we implement this lesson in our organizing today?” or “What current manifestations of this problem exist today?”). As you can see, we aren’t interested in abstract philosophical questions or detached academic debates. Lenin certainly wasn’t. Approaching Lenin as strictly a theorist or as someone intervening in intellectual arguments fixes Leninism into a dogma. This is a particularly troubling thing to do with anyone in the Marxist tradition, but especially Lenin, who was always making targeted interventions for strictly practical purposes.

The Leninist Continuity in Educational Theory

Deeply influenced and inspired by Lenin and the Russian Revolution, which coincided with his graduation from Moscow University in 1917, Lev Vygotsky also understood this opaque gap dialectically. Some of Vygotsky's (1986) most central conceptions of mind were based upon Lenin's philosophical notebooks. For example, Vygotsky quotes Lenin at length from his discussion distinguishing "primitive idealism" from Hegelian idealism. Whereas primitive idealism attempts to universalize a particular being, which Lenin calls "stupid" and "childish," Hegelian idealism distinguishes an object from the idea of it. Lenin reflects on the dialectical unity and contradiction between objects and the idea of them. Basing his complex conception of *mind in society* on this formulation as laid out by Lenin, Vygotsky explores the dialectical relationship between thought and imagination as unity and contradiction constituting another gap between. Vygotsky was taken by Lenin's observation that the distinction between objects and the idea of them is vulnerable to being consumed by an always latent element of fantasy as ideas can never mirror, with complete exactness, the objects they intend to represent. For Vygotsky, attending to the gap between objects and the ideas they intend to represent is fundamentally connected to the process of navigating the gap between what *is* and what *can be*.

So taken by the significance of the gap between what *is* and what *can be* Vygotsky named it the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and created a whole educational theory around it. The ZPD represents the gap between an existing level of development and what can be achieved with the help of more capable and differently situated peers. It is important to acknowledge that the content of this gap isn't predetermined, which is what makes it a gap and not a lack or deficiency. Navigating this gap was a real concern for Lenin after the 1917 Russian Revolution since the predominantly peasant feudalistic social formation tended to suffer from a conservative, reactionary ideology. While Lenin was conscious of the changing roles of revolutionaries at different stages in the process toward communism, Vygotsky too was attuned to the changing significance of multiple interacting factors in human cognitive processes. In laying the theoretical groundwork for his approach to educational psychology Vygotsky took up the task of challenging the world's leading educational psychologist of the day, Jean Piaget (1896–1980) of Switzerland.

Significantly, Vygotsky draws heavily on Lenin in his challenge to Piaget. For example, in *Thought and Language* Vygotsky (1986) reproduces a long quote from Lenin where he argues that Hegel's insistence that men and women's thought produces their activity must be "inverted." That is, Lenin

argues that it is the endless repetition a million times over of men and women's activity (i.e. the labor act) that produces consciousness. Similarly, Vygotsky (1986) notes that, "it was Piaget himself who clearly demonstrated that the logic of action precedes the logic of thought, and yet he insists that thinking is separated from reality" (p. 53). Sounding remarkably like Marx in his use of metaphor Vygotsky summarizes the inadequateness of Piaget's formulation: "... if the function of thinking is to reflect upon reality, this actionless thinking appears as a parade of phantoms and a chorus of shadows rather than the real thinking of a child" (p. 53). Having established the relationship between mind and society, Vygotsky took the social formation as the ultimate determining factor influencing the dynamic development of human personalities and consciousness. Producing his major works during the transition from an underdeveloped peasant-based economy to socialism, Vygotsky was deeply interested in the socialist alteration of humanity (see Appendix A). It was the intellectually exciting and creative context of the Soviet Union that Vygotsky found himself in (see Wertsch, 1985), combined with the work and example of Lenin, that offered the concrete context from which Piaget's formulation unveiled itself to Vygotsky as incorrect.

Throughout Vygotsky's body of work he explains that at "moments of revolutionary dislocation the nature of development changes" (Wertsch, 1985, p. 19). This speaks to the opacity of the gap, which can never be known in advance. Vygotsky defined transition points in development in terms of changes in mediation. A fundamental feature of Vygotsky's genetic analysis is that he did not assume one can account for all phases of development by using a "single set of explanatory principles" (Wertsch, 1985, p. 19). Instead, Vygotsky argued that the critical issue is how to account for the changing relationships among multiple forces of development and their corresponding set of explanatory principles. Thus he "rejected accounts that are based on the assumption that development can be explained solely in terms of quantitative increments of some psychological unit, such as stimulus-response bonds" (Wertsch, 1985, p. 20).

Vygotsky rejected Piaget's use of a single explanatory principle (i.e. biology) as the cause of all development. Rather, Vygotsky emphasized that "at certain points in the emergence of a psychological process new forms of development and new explanatory principles enter the picture. At these points... there is a 'change in the very type of development' and so the principles which alone had previously been capable of explaining development can no longer do so. Rather, a new set of principles must be incorporated into the overall explanatory framework, resulting in its reorganization" (Wertsch, 1985, pp. 19–20). At certain points there is a fundamental reorganization of the forces of development. This occurs naturally as language

and social interactions become more and more prominent mediators in child development through the years. The character of social mediators impacting the development of human personalities also undergo significant alteration with the transition from capitalism/feudalism to socialism.

In his last major work first published the same year he passed away, 1997, Paulo Freire (2005) stressed the importance of reading Vygotsky as contributing significantly to our understanding of literacy and comprehension as open processes intimately connected with the development of the larger social totalities literate practices are forged and practiced in. However, Freire's debt to Lenin does not just come indirectly from Vygotsky.

In his most far reaching text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire attributes the core framework of his project to Lenin's insistence that without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolution. Pedagogy of the oppressed is therefore not just an academic theory forged out of abstraction, but was developed out of an engagement with revolutionary theory read through the experience of teaching illiterate adult, peasant learners, the oppressed. What was born was a revolutionary educational praxis, a pedagogy of the oppressed.

Although he does not cite Lenin in his discussion of neutrality and education, Freire's insistence that education is unavoidably political is strikingly similar to Lenin's position. For example, in a speech at a conference of teachers after the Revolution, Lenin discusses how the bourgeoisie "lies subtly" by declaring that schools are apolitical and benefit all of society. Challenging bourgeois propaganda that dominated before the revolution Lenin comments, "in fact the schools were turned into nothing but an instrument of the class rule of the bourgeoisie." Not only does he insist that a revolutionary educational practice requires a revolutionary educational theory, following Lenin, but Freire (1970/1998) is clear that his "pedagogy of the oppressed, which is the pedagogy of the people engaged in the fight for their own liberation, has its roots" in "the revolutionary party" (p. 35).

While it is more understandable why U.S. educators tend not to be aware of the Leninism of Vygotsky since references to Lenin (as well as Marx and Engels) were eliminated from English translations of his work for decades (Au, 2007), English translations of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, however, have never had the references to Lenin removed, and yet the vast amount of scholarship that is oriented toward the legacy of Freire overwhelmingly ignore Lenin's central influence. When it is acknowledged, it tends to be discounted as an error Freire would quickly overcome. For example, Raymond Morrow (2013) acknowledges Lenin's influence on *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in a chapter in a significant edited volume focused on exploring Paulo Freire's intellectual roots. Morrow (2013) argues that Freire

“momentarily mis-recognizes” his project “as consistent with an idealized Marxism–Leninism” (p. 73). Morrow argues that because *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is conjunctural in that it is the product of a revolutionary era, it invites “retrospective criticism and reinvention” (p. 77) in non-revolutionary times. Freire, Morrow contends, alluded to such criticism and reinvention as his focus shifted from “‘revolutionary’ to ‘democratic struggle’” (p. 78). Morrow’s guess work here seems to be driven by an anti-Marxist bias.

Like Morrow (2013) Adrienne Johnstone and Elizabeth Terzakis (2012) also contend that the shift in Freire reflects a changing global situation. However, Johnstone and Terzakis do not suggest Freire was self-critical of his engagement with Lenin. Freire never denounced Lenin or the core of his project, namely, the ongoing development of theory and practice always attuned to the changing global and local situation. In this way one might infer that Freire’s re-focus reflects not a departure from Lenin but a continuity with his contextually grounded praxis. For example, during moments of revolutionary upheaval Lenin called on proletarian communists to break from trade union consciousness and exit the unions as limiting organizations committed to maintaining capitalist relations. During non-revolutionary times, on the other hand, Lenin called for communists to enter unions as organizers when the working class’s ZPD tends to be at a lower stage of development. In other words, if working class activists do not go to where their class is developmentally, they will be outside the range of their ZPD and therefore likely ineffective. Freire’s shift from revolution to democracy reflects his awareness of the changing consciousness of the poor and oppressed reflecting a change in the global situation after the fall of the Soviet Union and capital’s neoliberal counter-offensive.

Another interpretation of Freire’s shift is that he was influenced by the anti-Marxist and anti-communist bigotry of leading North American critical educators, especially Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux (see Ford, 2017; Malott, 2016), who, at least indirectly, were attempting to put pressure on him to abandon Marxism for critical pedagogy (see Aronowitz, 1981; Giroux, 1981; 1983). Perhaps Freire was politely accommodating the North American’s less developed ZPD as the balance of global forces was shifting back in capital’s favor by the 1980s. This type of critical educational theory seemed to welcome the neoliberal assault in practice while denouncing it in theory. However one interprets the changes Freire’s published work underwent, unlike Giroux and others, he never denounced Marx outright, only those who hinder the agency of the people through a vulgarization of Marx (see Freire, 2005). While there remains an anti-Marxist tendency within critical pedagogy, the field is beginning to shift back to the Marxism–Leninism of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Indeed, proletarian consciousness is moving back to the left, as the global situation continues to develop. To forge a deep comprehension of Freire (and Vygotsky) an in depth reading of Lenin is unavoidable. Of course, understanding is not enough. What Lenin offers is praxis. *Learning with Lenin* therefore stands to contribute to the revitalization of Lenin's significance in understanding Freire and Vygotsky and their dialectical contributions to navigating the gap between. We need to develop a praxis that confronts the ideological break in both practice and (educational) theory for such a navigation.

Editors' Note

These selected works are from the English translations of Lenin's *Collected Works*, including footnotes. Thus, when "the present volume" is indicated in the footnotes, this refers to the *Collected Works* and not to the present manuscript. We edited text from the Marxists Internet Archives.

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PART **I**

Educational Texts

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1

The Question of the Ministry of Education

Study and Discussion Guide

1. How does Lenin show that the government lies—or hides the truth—with statistics?
2. What significance does this have for revolutionary education today?
3. Throughout the text Lenin purposefully misnames the “Ministry of Education.” What names does he give it? What do each of these monikers mean?
4. Can you think of contemporary examples of lying with statistics?
5. To what force does Lenin attribute the increase in school attendance between 1904 and 1908?
6. What percentage of school age children attend school?
7. What other European countries, if any, have similar attendance rates?
8. What percentage of the Russian people are literate at this time?
9. Why might illiteracy not always equate to a lack of learning?
10. Why doesn’t Lenin consider the United States to be an advanced country?
11. What is the difference between Russian peasants and Black people in the United States? To what does Lenin attribute this difference?

4 ■ Learning with Lenin

12. What do you think about Lenin's statement on this difference? Is it accurate? Are there relevant issues he isn't considering?
13. What is the correlation Lenin draws between revolutionary struggle and the importance of education as expressed in the number of teachers, the total expenditure on teacher salaries, and teacher pay?
14. Given this, what do you think Lenin would say about the U.S. education system today?
15. What evidence does Mr. Klyuzhev provide for Lenin?
16. Who was put in charge of the Teachers' Seminary for Women?
17. What might this fact reveal about the priorities of the Russian government?
18. What do you think Lenin means by "*real* education"? What would *real* education look like in the United States?
19. Consider this text itself as a revolutionary educational writing about education. What tactics does Lenin deploy in the speech, and how do they help him make his case? What can we learn from these tactics?

*The Question of Ministry of Education Policy*¹

Supplement to the Discussion on Public Education

Written: April 27 (May 10), 1913

Source: *Lenin Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1977, Moscow, Volume 19, pages 137–146.

Our Ministry of Public (forgive the expression) “Education” boasts inordinately of the particularly rapid growth of its expenditure. In the explanatory note to the 1913 budget by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance we find a summary of the estimates of the Ministry of Public (so-called) Education for the post-revolutionary years. These estimates have increased from 46,000,000 rubles in 1907 to 137,000,000 in 1913. A tremendous growth—almost trebled in something like six years!

But our official praise-mongers who laud the police “law and order” or *disorder* in Russia ought not to have forgotten that ridiculously small figures always do grow with “*tremendous*” rapidity when increases in them are given as percentages. If you give five kopeks to a beggar who owns only three his “property” will immediately show a “tremendous” growth—it will be 167 per cent greater!

Would it not have been more fitting for the Ministry, if it did not aim at *befogging* the minds of the people and *concealing* the beggarly position of

Learning with Lenin, pages 5–13

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public education in Russia, to cite *other data*? Would it not have been more fitting to cite figures that do not compare today's five kopeks with yesterday's three, but compare what we have with what *is essential* to a civilised state? He who does not wish to deceive either himself or the people should admit that the Ministry was *in duty bound* to produce these figures, and that by not producing *such* figures the Ministry was not doing its duty. Instead of *making clear* to the people, and the people's representatives, what the needs of the state are, the Ministry *conceals* these needs and engages in a foolish governmental game of figures, a governmental rehash of old figures that explain nothing.

I do not have at my disposal, of course, even a hundredth part of the means and sources for studying public education that are available to the Ministry. But I have made an attempt to obtain at *least a little* source material. And I assert boldly that I can cite *indisputable* official figures that really *do make clear* the situation in our official public "miseducation."

I take the official government *Russian Yearbook* for 1910, published by the Ministry of the Interior (St. Petersburg, 1911).

On page 211, I read that the *total* number attending schools in the Russian Empire, lumping together primary, secondary and higher schools and educational establishments of all kinds, was 6,200,172 in 1904 and 7,095,351 in 1908. An obvious increase. The *year 1905*, the year of the great awakening of the masses of the people in Russia, the year of the great struggle of the people for freedom under the leadership of the proletariat, was a year that *forced* even our hidebound Ministry to make a move.

But just look at the *poverty* we are doomed to, thanks to the retention of officialdom, thanks to the almighty power of the feudal landowners, *even* under conditions of the most rapid "departmental" progress.

The same *Russian Yearbook* relates in the same place that there were 46.7 people attending school to every 1,000 in habitants in 1908 (in 1904 the figure was 44.3 to every 1,000 inhabitants).

What do we learn from these figures from a Ministry of the Interior publication that the Ministry of Public Education did not feel inclined to report to the Duma? What does that proportion mean—less *than 50 people* out of a 1,000 *attending school*?

It tells us, you gentlemen who uphold our hidebound public miseducation, of the *unbelievable* backwardness and barbarity of Russia thanks to the omnipotence of the feudal landowners in our state. The number of children and adolescents of school age in Russia amounts to over 20 per cent of the population, that is, to more than *one-fifth*. *Even* Messrs. Kasso and

Kokovtsov could without difficulty have learned these figures from their departmental clerks.

And so, we have 22 per cent of the population of school age and 4.7 per cent attending school, which is only a *little more than one-fifth!* This means that about *four-fifths* of the children and adolescents of Russia are *deprived* of public education!

There is no other country so barbarous and in which the masses of the people are *robbed* to such an extent of education, light and knowledge—no other such country has remained in Europe; Russia is the exception. This reversion of the masses of the people, especially the peasantry, to savagery, is not fortuitous, it is *inevitable* under the yoke of the landowners, who have seized tens and more tens of millions of dessiatines of land, who have, seized state power both in the Duma and in the Council of State, and not only in these institutions, which are relatively *low-ranking* institutions. . . .

Four-fifths of the rising generation are doomed to illiteracy by the feudal state system of Russia. This stultifying of the people by the feudal authorities has its correlative in the country's illiteracy. The same government *Russian Year book* estimates (on page 88) that only 21 per cent of the population of Russia are literate, and even if children of *pre-school* age (i.e., children under nine) are deducted from the total population, the number will still be only 27 per cent.

In civilised countries there are no illiterates at all (as in Sweden or Denmark), or a mere one or two per cent (as in Switzerland or Germany). Even backward Austria-Hungary has provided her Slav population with conditions *incomparably* more civilised than feudal Russia has; in Austria there are 39 per cent of illiterates and in Hungary 50 per cent. It would be as well for our chauvinists, Rights, nationalists and Octobrists *to think about* these figures, if they have not set themselves the "statesmanlike" aim of forgetting how to think, and of teaching the same to the people. But even if they have forgotten, the people of Russia *are learning* more and more to think, and to think, furthermore about which class it is that by its dominance in the state condemns the Russian peasants to material and spiritual poverty.

America is *not* among the advanced countries as far as the number of literates is concerned. There are about 11 per cent illiterates and among the Negroes the figure is as high as 44 per cent. But the American Negroes are *more than twice* as well off in respect of public education as the Russian peasantry. The American Negroes, no matter how much they may be, to the shame of the American Republic, oppressed, are better off than the Russian peasants—and they are better off because exactly half a century ago the people routed the American slave-owners, crushed that serpent and

completely swept away slavery and the slave-owning state system, and the political privileges of the slave-owners in America.

The Kassos, Kokovtsovs and Maklakovs will teach the Russian people to copy the American example.

In 1908 there were *17,000,000* attending school in America, that is, *192 per 1,000 inhabitants*—*more than four times* the number in Russia. Forty-three years ago, in 1870, when America had only just *begun* to build her free way of life after *purging* the country of the diehards of slavery—forty-three years ago there were in America 6,871,522 people attending school, i.e., more than in Russia in 1904 and *almost* as many as in 1908. But even as far back as 1870 there were 178 (*one hundred and seventy-eight*) people enrolled in schools to every 1,000 inhabitants, little short of four times the number enrolled in Russia *today*.

And there, gentlemen, you have further proof that Russia *still* has to win for herself in persistent revolutionary struggle by the people *that freedom* the Americans won for themselves half a century ago.

The estimate for the Russian Ministry of Public Miseducation is fixed at 136,700,000 rubles for 1913. This amounts to only 80 kopeks per head of the population (170,000,000 in 1913). Even if we accept the “sum-total of state expenditure on education” that the Minister of Finance gives us on page 109 of his explanatory text to the budget, that is, 204,900,000 rubles, we still have only 1 ruble 20 kopeks per head. In Belgium, Britain and Germany the amount expended on education is two to three rubles and even three rubles fifty kopeks per head of the population. In 1910, America expended 426,000,000 dollars, i.e., 852,000,000 rubles or 9 rubles 24 kopeks per head of the population, on public education. Forty-three years ago, in 1870, the American Republic was spending 126,000,000 rubles a year on education, i.e., *3 rubles 30 kopeks* per head.

The official pens of government officials and the officials themselves will object and tell us that Russia is poor, that she has no money. That is true, Russia is not only poor, she is a beggar when it comes to public education. To make up for it, Russia is very “rich” when it comes to expenditure on the feudal state, ruled by landowners, or expenditure on the police, the army, on rents and on salaries of ten thousand rubles for landowners who have reached “high” government posts, expenditure on risky adventures and plunder, yesterday in Korea or on the River Yalu, today in Mongolia or in Turkish Armenia. Russia will *always* remain poor and beggarly in respect of expenditure on public education *until* the public educates itself sufficiently to cast off the yoke of feudal landowners.

Russia is poor when it comes to the salaries of school-teachers. They are paid a miserable pittance. School-teachers starve and freeze in unheated huts that are scarcely fit for human habitation. School-teachers live together with the cattle that the peasants take into their huts in winter. School-teachers are persecuted by every police sergeant, by every village adherent of the Black-Hundreds, by volunteer spies or detectives, to say nothing of the hole-picking and persecution by higher officials. Russia is too poor to pay a decent salary to honest workers in the field of public education, but Russia is rich enough to waste millions and tens of millions on aristocratic parasites, on military adventures and on hand-outs to owners of sugar refineries, oil kings and so on.

There is one other figure, the last one taken from American life, gentlemen, that will show the peoples oppressed by the Russian landowners and *their* government, *how* the people live who have been able to achieve freedom through a revolutionary struggle. In 1870, in America there were 200,515 school-teachers with a total salary of 37,800,000 dollars, i.e., an average of 189 dollars or 377 rubles per teacher per annum. And that was *forty years* ago! In America today there are 523,210 school-teachers and their total salaries come to 253,900,000 dollars, i.e., 483 dollars or 966 rubles per teacher per annum. And in Russia, even at the present level of the productive forces, it would be quite possible at this very moment to guarantee a no less satisfactory salary to an army of school-teachers who are helping to lift the people out of their ignorance, darkness and oppression, if . . . if the whole state system of Russia, from top to bottom, were reorganised on lines as democratic as the American system.

Either poverty and barbarism arising out of the full power of the feudal landowners, arising out of the law and order or disorder of the June Third law, or freedom and civilisation arising out of *the ability and determination* to win freedom—such is *the object-lesson* Russian citizens are taught by the estimates put forward by the Ministry of Public Education.

So far I have touched upon the purely material, or even financial, aspect of the matter. Incomparably more melancholy or, rather, more disgusting, is the picture of spiritual bondage, humiliation, suppression and lack of rights of the teachers and those they teach in Russia. The whole activity of the Ministry of Public Education in this field is pure mockery of the rights of citizens, mockery of the people. Police surveillance, police violence, police *interference* with the education of the people in general and of workers in particular, police *destruction* of whatever the people themselves do for their own enlightenment—this is what the *entire* activity of the Ministry amounts to, the Ministry whose estimate will be approved by the landowning gentry, from Rights to Octobrists inclusive.

And in order to *prove* the correctness of my words, gentlemen of the Fourth Duma, I will call a witness that *even* you, the landowners, cannot object to. My witness is the Octobrist Mr. *Klyuzhev*, member of the Third and Fourth Dumas, member of the supervisory council of the Second and Third Women's Gymnasias in Samara, member of the school committee of the Samara City Council, member of the auditing board of the Samara Gubernia Zemstvo, former inspector of public schools. I have given you a list of the offices and titles (using the official reference book of the Third Duma) of this Octobrist *to prove* to you that the government *itself*, the landowners *themselves* in our landowners' Zemstvo, have given Mr. Klyuzhev most important posts in the "work" (the work of spies and butchers) of our Ministry of Public Stultification.

Mr. Klyuzhev, if anybody, has, of course, made his entire career as a law-abiding, God-fearing civil servant. And, of course, Mr. Klyuzhev, if anybody, has by his faithful service in the district earned the confidence of the nobility and the landowners.

And now here are some passages from a speech by this most thoroughly reliable (from the feudal point of view) witness; the speech was made in the *Third* Duma in respect of the estimate submitted by the Ministry of Public Education.

The Samara Zemstvo, Mr. Klyuzhev told the Third Duma, *unanimously* adopted the proposal of Mr. Klyuzhev to make application for the conversion of some village two-year schools into four-year schools. The regional supervisor, so the law-abiding and God-fearing Mr. Klyuzhev reports, *refused* this. Why? The official explanation was: "*in view of the insignificant number of children of school age.*"

And so Mr. Klyuzhev made the following comparison: *we* (he says of landowner-oppressed Russia) have *not a single* four-year school for the 6,000 inhabitants of the Samara villages. In the town of Serdobol (Finland) with 2,800 inhabitants there are *four* secondary (and higher than secondary) schools.

This comparison was made by the Octobrist, the most worthy Peredonov² . . . excuse the slip, the most worthy Mr. Klyuzhev in the Third Duma. Ponder over that comparison, Messrs. Duma representatives, if not of the people, then at least of the landowners. Who made application to open schools? Could it be the Lefts? The muzhiks? The workers? God forbid! It was the Samara Zemstvo that made the application *unanimously*, that is, it was the Samara *landowners*, the most ardent Black-Hundred adherents among them. And the government, through its supervisor, refused the request on the excuse that there was an "*insignificant*" number of children of school age!

Was I not in every way right when I said that the government *hinders* public education in Russia, that the government is the biggest enemy of public education in Russia?

The culture, civilisation, freedom, literacy, educated women and so on that we see in Finland derive *exclusively* from *there being no* such “social evil” as the Russian Government in Finland, Now you want to foist this evil on Finland and make her, too, an enslaved country. You will not, succeed in that, gentlemen! By your attempts to impose political slavery on Finland you will only accelerate the awakening of the peoples of Russia from political slavery!

I will quote another passage from the Octobrist witness, Mr. Klyuzhev. “How are teachers recruited?” Mr. Klyuzhev asked in his speech and himself provided the following answer:

“One prominent Samara man, by the name of Popov, bequeathed the necessary sum to endow a Teachers’ Seminary for Women.” And who do you think was appointed head of the Seminary? This is what the executor of the late Popov writes: “*The widow of a General of the Guard*, was appointed head of the Seminary and she herself admitted that this was the first time in her life she had heard of the existence of an educational establishment called a Teachers’ Seminary for Women”!

Don’t imagine that I took this from a collection of Demyan Bedny’s fables, from the sort of fable for which the magazine *Prosveshcheniye* was fined and its editor imprisoned. Nothing of the sort. This fact was taken from the speech of the Octobrist Klyuzhev, who fears (as a God-fearing and police-fearing man) even to *ponder* the significance of this fact. For this fact, once again, shows beyond all doubt that there is no more vicious, no more implacable enemy of the education of the people in Russia than the Russian Government. And gentlemen who bequeath money for public education should realise that they are throwing it away, worse than throwing it away. They desire to bequeath their money to provide education for the people, but *actually* it turns out that they are giving it to *Generals of the Guards* and their *widows*. If such philanthropists do not wish to throw their money away they must understand that they should bequeath it to the Social-Democrats, who *alone* are able to use that money to provide the people with *real* education that is really independent of “Generals of the Guards”—and of timorous and law-abiding Klyuzhevs.

Still another passage from the speech of the same Mr. Klyuzhev.

“It was in vain that we of the Third Duma desired free access to higher educational establishments for seminar pupils. The Ministry did not deem

it possible to accede to our wishes.” “Incidentally the government bars the way to higher education, not to seminar pupils alone, but to the children of the peasant and urban petty-bourgeois social estates in general. This is no elegant phrase but the truth,” exclaimed the Octobrist official of the Ministry of Public Education. “Out of the 119,000 Gymnasium students only 18,000 are peasants. Peasants constitute only 15 per cent of those studying in all the establishments of the Ministry of Public Education. In the Theological Seminaries only 1,300 of the 20,500 pupils are peasants. Peasants are not admitted at all to the Cadet Corps and similar institutions.” (These passages from Klyuzhev’s speech were, incidentally, cited in an article by K. Dobrosredov in *Novskaya Zvezda* No. 6, for 1912, dated May 22, 1912)

That is how Mr. Klyuzhev spoke in the Third Duma. The depositions of that witness will not be refuted by those who rule the roost in the Fourth Duma. The witness, *against* his own will and *despite* his wishes, fully corroborates the *revolutionary* appraisal of the present situation in Russia in general, and of public education in particular. And what, indeed, does a government deserve that, in the words of a prominent government official and member of the ruling party of Octobrists, *bars the way* to education for the peasants and urban petty bourgeois?

Imagine, gentlemen, what such a government deserves from the point of view of the urban petty bourgeoisie and the peasants!

And do not forget that in Russia the peasants and the urban petty bourgeoisie constitute 88 per cent of the population, that is, a little less than *nine-tenths* of the people. The nobility constitute only *one and a half per cent*. And so the government is taking money from nine-tenths of the people for schools and educational establishments of all kinds *and using that money* to teach the nobility, *barring the way* to the peasant and urban petty bourgeois! Is it not clear what this government of the nobility deserves? This government that oppresses nine-tenths of the population in order to preserve the privileges of *one-hundredth* of the population—what does it deserve?

And now, finally, for the last quotation from my witness, the Octobrist official of the Ministry of Public Education, and member of the Third (and Fourth) Dumas, Mr. Klyuzhev:

“In the five years from 1906 to 1910,” said Mr. Klyuzhev, “in the Kazan area, the following have been removed from their posts: 21 head masters of secondary and primary schools, 32 inspectors of public schools and 1,054 urban school-teachers; 870 people of these categories have been transferred. Imagine it,” exclaimed Mr. Klyuzhev, “how can our school-teacher sleep peacefully? He may go to bed in Astrakhan and not be sure that he will not be in Vyatka the next day. Try to understand the psychology of the pedagogue who is driven about like a hunted rabbit!”

This is not the exclamation of some “Left” school-teacher, but of an Octobrist. These figures were cited by a diligent civil servant. He is *your* witness, gentlemen of the Right, nationalists and Octobrists! This witness of “yours” is compelled to admit the most scandalous, most shameless and most disgusting arbitrariness on the part of the government in its attitude to teachers! This witness of *yours*, gentlemen who rule the roost in the Fourth Duma and the Council of State, has been forced to admit the fact that teachers in Russia are “*driven*” like rabbits by the Russian Government!

On the basis provided by this fact, one of thousands and thousands of similar facts in Russian life, we ask the Russian people and all the peoples of Russia: do we need a government to protect the privileges of the nobility and to “*drive*” the people’s teachers “like rabbits”? Does not this government deserve to be *driven out* by the people?

Yes, the Russian people’s teachers are driven like rabbits. Yes, the government bars the way to education to nine-tenths of the population of Russia. Yes, our Ministry of Public Education is a ministry of police espionage, a ministry that derides youth, and jeers at the people’s thirst for knowledge. But far from all the Russian peasants, not to mention the Russian workers, resemble *rabbits*, honourable members of the Fourth Duma. The working class were able to prove this in 1905, and they will be able to prove again, and to prove more impressively, and much more seriously, that they are capable of a revolutionary struggle for real freedom and for *real public* education and not that of Kasso or of the nobility.

Notes

1. Lenin prepared this draft speech for a Bolshevik deputy to the Duma; the speech was delivered on June 4 (17), 1913 by A. E. Badayev during the debate on the Budget Committee’s report on estimates of the Ministry of Education for 1913. The greater part of Lenin’s draft was read almost word for word by Badayev, but he did not finish the speech. When he read the sentence “Does not this government deserve to be driven out by the people?” he was deprived of the right to speak.
2. Peredonov—a type of teacher-spy and dull lout from Sologub’s novel *The Petty Imp*. —*Lenin*

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2

Speech at the First All-Russia Congress on Education

Study and Discussion Guide

1. What lesson did the Russian Revolution teach the world about World War I?
2. What is Lenin's appraisal of the revolutionary situation in Europe?
3. What difficulties are the Bolshevik government and Russian people facing at this moment?
4. What revolutionary realizations help them push forward?
5. What practical experiences are the source of these realizations?
6. What are the roles of education in this moment?
7. What are the lessons that the war is teaching?
8. What does Lenin mean when he states, "the more cultured the bourgeois state, the more subtly it lied when declaring that schools could stand above politics and serve society as a whole"?
9. If schools do not stand above politics and serve society as a whole, then where do schools stand, and who do they serve?
10. Where does the thirst for knowledge come from? Is it innate or natural?

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*Speech at the First All-Russia Congress on Education*¹

Delivered: 28 August, 1918

Source: *Lenin's Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, Volume 28, 1965, pages 84–87

(All rise as Comrade Lenin appears in the hail. Stormy, prolonged applause.) Comrades, we are passing through one of the most critical, important and interesting moments of history—a moment when the world socialist revolution is in the making. It is now becoming apparent even to those who stood remote from socialist theories and forecasts that this war will not end as it began, that is, by the conclusion of peace in the usual way between the old imperialist governments. The Russian revolution has shown that the war is inevitably leading to the disintegration of capitalist society in general, that it is being converted into a war of the working people against the exploiters. Therein lies the significance of the Russian revolution.

The workers of the world feel that the cause of the Russian revolution is their own cause no matter how great the obstacles in our way, no matter how many tens of millions in money are lavished in all countries to disseminate lies and slander about the Russian revolution. Parallel with the war between the two groups of imperialists, another war is beginning everywhere, the war which the working class, inspired by the example of the Russian

Learning with Lenin, pages 17–20

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revolution, is declaring against its own bourgeoisie. All the signs go to show that Austria and Italy are on the verge of revolution. The old order in these countries is disintegrating rapidly. In the stronger and more stable countries such as Germany, Britain and France, the same process is going on, although in a somewhat different and less noticeable form. The collapse of the capitalist system and the capitalist war is inevitable.

The German imperialists have been unable to stifle the socialist revolution. The price Germany had to pay for crushing the revolution in Red Latvia, Finland and the Ukraine was the demoralisation of her army. The defeat of Germany on the Western front is largely due to the fact that her old army no longer exists. What the German diplomats joked about the “Russification” of the German soldiers now turns out to be no joke at all, but the bitter truth. The spirit of protest is rising, “treason” is becoming a common thing in the German army.

On the other hand, Britain and France are making a last effort to save their own situation. They are hurling themselves on the Russian Republic and straining capitalism to breaking point. Even the bourgeois papers have to admit that a definite change of spirit has appeared among the working people: in France, the idea of “national defence” is breaking down; in Britain, the working class is denouncing the “civil truce.” That means the British and French imperialists have staked their last card—and we can say with the utmost confidence that that card will be trumped. *(Stormy applause.) No matter how loudly certain groups cry that the Bolsheviks are backed by a minority, they have to admit they cannot find the forces inside Russia to fight the Bolsheviks, and are compelled to resort to foreign intervention. The working class of France and Britain is thus being forced to take part in a blatant war of conquest, whose purpose is to crush the Russian revolution. That means that British and French, and, consequently, world imperialism is at its last gasp. (Stormy applause.)*

We have surmounted all difficulties, even though it was hard to declare martial law again in a country where the people themselves had suppressed the war and smashed the old army, and even though it was hard to form an army in the midst of acute civil war. The army has been formed, and victory over the Czechs, the whiteguards, the landowners, the capitalists and the kulaks is assured. *(Stormy applause.)* The working people realise they are fighting for their own cause and not in the interests of a handful of capitalists. The Russian workers and peasants have for the first time got a chance to run the factories and dispose of the land themselves, and that experience was bound to have its effect. Our army has been formed from chosen people, from the classconscious peasants and workers. Each of them goes to the front aware that he is fighting for the destiny of the world revolution as well as the Russian revolution; for we may rest assured that the Russian

revolution is only a sample, only the first step in the series of revolutions in which the war is bound to end.

Education is one of the component parts of the struggle we are now waging. We can counter hypocrisy and lies with the complete and honest truth. The war has shown plainly enough what the “will of the majority” means, a phrase used as a cover by the bourgeoisie. It has shown that a handful of plutocrats drag whole nations to the slaughter in their own interests. The belief that bourgeois democracy serves the interests of the majority has now been utterly discredited. Our Constitution, our Soviets, which were something new to Europe, but with which we were already acquainted from the experience of the 1905 Revolution, serve as splendid agitation and propaganda material, completely exposing the lying and hypocritical nature of bourgeois democracy. We have openly proclaimed the rule of the working and exploited people and there lies the source of our strength and invincibility.

The same is true of education: the more cultured the bourgeois state, the more subtly it lied when declaring that schools could stand above politics and serve society as a whole.

In fact the schools were turned into nothing but an instrument of the class rule of the bourgeoisie. They were thoroughly imbued with the bourgeois caste spirit. Their purpose was to supply the capitalists with obedient lackeys and able workers. The war has shown that the marvels of modern technology are being used as a means of exterminating millions of workers and creating fabulous profits for the capitalists who are making fortunes out of the war. The war has been internally undermined, for we have exposed their lies by countering them with the truth. We say that our work in the sphere of education is part of the struggle for overthrowing the bourgeoisie. We publicly declare that education divorced from life and politics is lies and hypocrisy. What was the meaning of the sabotage resorted to by the best educated representatives of the old bourgeois culture? This sabotage showed better than any agitator, better than all our speeches, better than thousands of pamphlets that these people regard learning as their monopoly and have turned it into an instrument of their rule over the so-called common people. They used their education to frustrate the work of socialist construction, and came out openly against the working people.

The revolutionary struggle has been the finishing school for the Russian workers and peasants. They have seen that our system alone assures their genuine rule, they have been able to convince themselves that the state is doing everything to assist the workers and the poor peasants in completely crushing the resistance of the kulaks, the landowners and the capitalists.

The working people are thirsting for knowledge because they need it to win. Nine out of ten of the working people have realised that knowledge is a weapon in their struggle for emancipation, that their failures are due to lack of education, and that now it is up to them really to give everyone access to education. Our cause is assured because the people have themselves set about building a new, socialist Russia. They are learning from their own experience, from their failures and mistakes, and they see how indispensable education is for the victorious conclusion of their struggle. In spite of the apparent collapse of many institutions and the jubilation of the intellectuals carrying out sabotage, we find that experience in the struggle has taught the people to take their fate into their own hands. All who really sympathise with the people, all the best teachers will come to our aid, and that is a sure pledge that the socialist cause will triumph. (Ovation.)

Note

1. The Congress was held in Moscow in the building of the Higher Women's Courses from August 26 to September 4, 1918. The 700-odd delegates represented departments of education, teachers and educationalists. Lenin was elected honorary chairman and invited to attend. He spoke at the Congress on August 28, the third day of the proceedings. The Congress discussed the Regulations on the Single Labour School of the R.S.F.S.R., which were later endorsed by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and published in *Izvestia* on October 10. The regulations played a very important part in building the Soviet education system.

In connection with the attempt on Lenin's life made by the Socialist-Revolutionary terrorist Fanny Kaplan on August 30, 1918, the Congress met in emergency plenary session the next day and adopted a resolution conveying a message of sympathy to Lenin and Krupskaya and expressing firm conviction in the triumph of the revolutionary cause.

3

Speech at the First All-Russia Congress on Adult Education

Study and Discussion Guide

Part 1: Speech of Greeting

1. How is Lenin positioning himself relative to the conference attendees? What, in other words, is the pedagogical relationship he establishes from the outset?
2. What was the first obstacle facing adult education in the revolutionary society?
3. What was the second obstacle facing adult education in the revolutionary society?
4. What complaints do the Council of People's Commissars have about libraries? Why are they justified?
5. What is the state of peasant knowledge at the time?

Part 2: Deception of the People With Slogans of Freedom and Equality

1. Right away Lenin raises a series of key questions facing adult education and the burgeoning Soviet society as a whole. How would you characterize these questions? What label—or labels—would you give them?
2. Why aren't the Bolsheviks at peace? What external and internal barriers to peace exist?
3. In what ways could the Bolshevik's be blamed for the current state of war? In what ways could they be defended from blame?
4. To explain this defense, Lenin gives the analogy of Chernyshevsky. What is the take away from this analogy?
5. To what extent is one to blame for their position on the question of war and peace?
6. How would you describe the difference between imperialist war and the civil war?
7. What is the difference between the Socialist-Revolutionaries' agreement with Entente (the forces intervening to overthrow the Bolsheviks) and the Bolshevik's agreement with the Germans?
8. What are politics to be judged by?
9. What is "pure democracy," and why is Lenin opposed to it?
10. How does talking about "pure democracy" aid the enemy?
11. What is it that Lenin says the Bolsheviks desire most of all? Why do you think this is so?
12. What must freedom be subordinated to?
13. What is wrong with freedom in the U.S. constitution?
14. At what point can we advocate for complete and total freedom?
15. Is the class struggle more severe before or after a revolution?
16. What is the position of the peasants relative to the workers and bourgeoisie?
17. What is the material basis of this position?
18. Why is the principle of equality incomplete or in need of contextualization?
19. When does a revolution triumph?
20. What is proletarian discipline? What is proletarian discipline *not*?
21. What do people believe instead of words? What significance does this have for education?
22. How would you summarize the points that Lenin raises in these two speeches?

First All-Russia Congress on Adult Education

Delivered: May 6 & May 19, 1919

Source: Lenin's *Collected Works*, 4th English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972. Volume 29, pages 333–376

Translated: George Hanna

1

Speech of Greeting

May 6

Comrades, it gives me pleasure to greet the Congress on adult education. You do not, of course, expect me to deliver a speech that goes deeply into this subject, like that delivered by the preceding speaker, Comrade Lunacharsky, who is well-informed on the matter and has made a special study of it. Permit me to confine myself to a few words of greeting and to the observations I have made and thoughts that have occurred to me in the Council of People's Commissars when dealing more or less closely with your work. I am sure that there is not another sphere of Soviet activity in which such enormous progress has been made during the past eighteen months as in the sphere of adult education. Undoubtedly, it has been easier for us and for you to work in this sphere than in others. Here we had to cast

Learning with Lenin, pages 23–56

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aside the old obstacles and the old hindrances. Here it was much easier to do something to meet the tremendous demand for knowledge, for free education and free development, which was felt most among the masses of the workers and peasants; for while the mighty pressure of the masses made it easy for us to remove the external obstacles that stood in their path, to break up the historical bourgeois institutions which bound us to imperialist war and doomed Russia to bear the enormous burden that resulted from this war, we nevertheless felt acutely how heavy the task of re-educating the masses was, the task of organisation and instruction, spreading knowledge, combating that heritage of ignorance, primitiveness, barbarism and savagery that we took over. In this field the struggle had to be waged by entirely different methods; we could count only on the prolonged success and the persistent and systematic influence of the leading sections of the population, an influence which the masses willingly submit to, but often we are guilty of doing less than we could do. I think that in taking these first steps to spread adult education, education, free from the old limits and conventionalities, which the adult population welcomes so much, we had at first to contend with two obstacles. Both these obstacles we inherited from the old capitalist society, which is clinging to us to this day, is dragging us down by thousands and millions of threads, ropes and chains.

The first was the plethora of bourgeois intellectuals, who very often regarded the new type of workers' and peasants' educational institution as the most convenient field for testing their individual theories in philosophy and culture, and in which, very often, the most absurd ideas were hailed as something new, and the supernatural and incongruous were offered as purely proletarian art and proletarian culture.¹ (*Applause.*) This was natural and, perhaps, pardonable in the early days, and the broad movement cannot be blamed for it. I hope that, in the long run, we shall try to get rid of all this and shall succeed.

The second was also inherited from capitalism. The broad masses of the petty-bourgeois working people who were thirsting for knowledge, broke down the old system, but could not propose anything of an organising or organised nature. I had opportunities to observe this in the Council of People's Commissars when the mobilisation of literate persons and the Library Department were discussed, and from these brief observations I realised the seriousness of the situation in this field. True, it is not quite customary to refer to something bad in a speech of greeting. I hope that you are free from these conventionalities, and will not be offended with me for telling you of my somewhat sad observations. When we raised the question of mobilising literate persons, the most striking thing was the brilliant victory achieved by our revolution without immediately emerging from the

limits of the bourgeois revolution. It gave freedom for development to the available forces, but these available forces were petty bourgeois and their watch-word was the old one—each for himself and God for all—the very same accursed capitalist slogan which can never lead to anything but Kolchak and bourgeois restoration. If we review what we are doing to educate the illiterate, I think we shall have to draw the conclusion that we have done very little, and that our duty in this field is to realise that the organisation of proletarian elements is essential. It is not the ridiculous phrases which remain on paper that matter, but the introduction of measures which the people need urgently and which would compel every literate person to regard it his duty to instruct several illiterate persons. This is what our decree says;² but in this field hardly anything has been done.

When another question was dealt with in the Council of People's Commissars, that of the libraries, I said that the complaints we are constantly hearing about our industrial backwardness being to blame, about our having few books and being unable to produce enough—these complaints, I told myself, are justified. We have no fuel, of course, our factories are idle, we have little paper and we cannot produce books. All this is true, but it is also true that we cannot get at the books that are available. Here we continue to suffer from peasant simplicity and peasant helplessness; when the peasant ransacks the squire's library he runs home in the fear that somebody will take the books away from him, because he cannot conceive of just distribution, of state property that is not something hateful, but is the common property of the workers and of the working people generally. The ignorant masses of peasants are not to blame for this, and as far as the development of the revolution is concerned it is quite legitimate, it is an inevitable stage, and when the peasant took the library and kept it hidden, he could not do otherwise, for he did not know that all the libraries in Russia could be amalgamated and that there would be enough books to satisfy those who can read and to teach those who cannot. At present we must combat the survivals of disorganisation, chaos, and ridiculous departmental wrangling. This must be our main task. We must take up the simple and urgent matter of mobilising the literate to combat illiteracy. We must utilise the books that are available and set to work to organise a network of libraries which will help the people to gain access to every available book; there must be no parallel organisations, but a single, uniform planned organisation. This small matter reflects one of the fundamental tasks of our revolution. If it fails to carry out this task, if it fails to set about creating a really systematic and uniform organisation in place of our Russian chaos and inefficiency, then this revolution will remain a bourgeois revolution because the major specific feature of the proletarian revolution which is

marching towards communism is this organisation—for all the bourgeoisie wanted was to break up the old system and allow freedom for the development of peasant farming, which revived the same capitalism as in all earlier revolutions.

Since we call ourselves the Communist Party, we must understand that only now that we have removed the external obstacles and have broken down the old institutions have we come face to face with the primary task of a genuine proletarian revolution in all its magnitude, namely, that of organising tens and hundreds of millions of people. After the eighteen months' experience that we all have acquired in this field, we must at last take the right road that will lead to victory over the lack of culture, and over the ignorance and barbarism from which we have suffered all this time. (*Stormy applause.*)

2

Deception of the People With Slogans of Freedom and Equality

May 19

Comrades, instead of an appraisal of the current situation, which I think some of you expect today, permit me to answer the most important political questions—not only theoretical, of course, but also practical—which now loom before us, characterise the entire stage of the Soviet revolution and give rise to most controversy; they give rise to most of attacks by people who think they are socialists, and they cause most confusion in the minds of people who think they are democrats and who are particularly fond of accusing us of violating democracy. It seems to me that these general political questions are too often, even constantly, to be found in all present-day propaganda and agitation, and in all anti-Bolshevik literature—when, of course, this literature rises slightly above the level of the downright lying, slander and vituperation of all organs of the bourgeois press. If we take the literature of a slightly higher level I think we shall find that the fundamental questions are the relations between democracy and dictatorship, the tasks of the revolutionary class in a revolutionary period, the tasks of the transition to socialism in general, and the relations between the working class and the peasantry; I think that these questions serve as the main basis for all present-day political controversies, and although it may sometimes seem to you that it is something of a digression from the immediate topics of the day, the explanation of these issues should be our chief duty. I can not, of course, undertake to cover all these questions in a short lecture. I have chosen some, which I should like to talk to you about.

I

The first point I have chosen is that of the difficulties of every revolution, of every transition to a new system. If you examine the attacks that are made against the Bolsheviks by people who think that they are socialists and democrats—and as examples of such I can quote the groups of writers in *Vsegda Vperyod!* and *Dyelo Naroda*, newspapers which in my opinion have quite rightly been suppressed in the interests of the revolution, and the representatives of which most often resort to theoretical criticism in attacks of the type natural for organs which our authorities regard as counter-revolutionary—if you examine the attacks on Bolshevism made by this camp, you will find that a constant accusation is the following: “The Bolsheviks promised you, the working people, bread, peace and freedom; but they have not given you bread, or peace, or freedom, they have deceived you, and they have deceived you by abandoning democracy.” I shall deal with the departure from democracy separately. At present I will take the other side of this accusation—“The Bolsheviks promised bread, peace and freedom, but the Bolsheviks gave you a continuation of the war, an exceptionally fierce and stubborn struggle, a war of all the imperialists, of the capitalists of all the Entente countries—which means of the most civilised and advanced countries—against tormented, tortured, backward and weary Russia.” And these accusations, I repeat, you will find in both the newspapers I have mentioned; you will hear them made in conversation with every bourgeois intellectual who, of course, thinks that he is not bourgeois; you will constantly hear them in conversation with every philistine. And so I ask you to give some thought to this sort of accusation.

Yes, the Bolsheviks did set out to make a revolution against the bourgeoisie, to overthrow the bourgeois government violently, to break away from all the traditional customs, promises and commandments of bourgeois democracy; they did set out to wage a most desperate and violent struggle and war to crush the propertied classes; they did this to extricate Russia, and then the whole of mankind, from the imperialist slaughter and to put an end to all war. Yes, the Bolsheviks did set out to make a revolution in order to achieve all this, and, of course, they have never thought of abandoning this fundamental and main object. Nor is there any doubt that the attempts to emerge from this imperialist slaughter, to smash the rule of the bourgeoisie, prompted all the civilised countries to attack Russia; for such is the political programme of France, Britain and America, no matter how much they insist that they have abandoned the idea of intervention. No matter how much the Lloyd Georges, Wilsons and Clemenceaus may assure us that they have abandoned the idea of intervention, we know that they are lying. We know

that the Allied warships which left, and were compelled to leave, Odessa and Sevastopol, are now blockading the Black Sea coast, and are even giving artillery cover to that part of the Crimean Peninsula, near Kerch, where the volunteers³ are concentrated. They say: "We cannot surrender this to you. Even if the volunteers fail to cope with you, we cannot surrender this part of the Crimean Peninsula, because, if we did, you would be masters of the Azov Sea, you will cut us off from Denikin and prevent us from sending supplies to our friends." Or take the offensive now developing against Petrograd. Yesterday one of our destroyers fought against four enemy destroyers. Is it not clear that this is intervention? Is not the British navy taking part in it? Is not the same thing happening in Archangel and Siberia? The fact is that the whole civilised world is now fighting against Russia.

The question is, did we contradict ourselves when we called upon the working people to make a revolution, promising them peace, and brought things to the pitch that the whole civilised world is now attacking weak, weary, backward and ruined Russia? Or are those who have the presumption to hurl such a reproach at us acting in contradiction to the elementary concepts of democracy and socialism? That is the question. To present this question in its theoretical, general form, I shall draw an analogy. We talk about the revolutionary class, the revolutionary policy of the people, but I suggest you take an individual revolutionary. Take, for example, Chernyshevsky, and appraise his activities. What would be the appraisal of an absolutely ignorant man? Probably he would say: "Well, the man wrecked his own life, found himself in Siberia, and achieved nothing." This is a sample. If we were to hear an argument like this from some unknown person we would say: "At best it comes from a man who is hopelessly ignorant and who is, perhaps, not to blame for being so ignorant that he cannot understand the importance of the activities of an individual revolutionary in the general chain of revolutionary events; or else it comes from a scoundrel, a supporter of reaction, who is deliberately trying to frighten the working people away from the revolution." I took the example of Chernyshevsky because, no matter which trend the people who call themselves socialists may belong to, there cannot be any serious disagreement in their appraisal of this individual revolutionary. Everybody will agree that if an individual revolutionary is appraised from the point of view of the outwardly useless and often fruitless sacrifices he has made and the nature of his activities and their connection with the activities of preceding and succeeding revolutionaries is ignored—if the importance of his activities is appraised from this point of view, it is due either to complete ignorance, or to a vicious and hypocritical defence of the interests of reaction, oppression, exploitation and class tyranny. On this point there can be no disagreement.

Now I ask you to carry your thoughts from the individual revolutionary to the revolution of a whole nation, of a whole country. Has any Bolshevik ever denied that the revolution can be finally victorious only when it embraces all, or at all events, some of the most important advanced countries? We have always said that. Did we ever say that it was possible to emerge from the imperialist war simply by the men sticking their bayonets into the ground? I deliberately use this expression which, in the Kerensky period, I personally, and all our comrades, constantly used in resolutions, speeches and newspaper articles. We said: The war cannot be brought to a close by the men sticking their bayonets into the ground. If there are Tolstoyans who think otherwise, they must be pitied as people who have taken leave of their senses, and you can expect nothing better from them.

We said that emergence from this war may involve us in a revolutionary war. We said this from 1915 onwards, and then later, in the Kerensky period. Of course, revolutionary war is also war, just as arduous, sanguinary and painful. And when the revolution develops on a world scale it inevitably arouses resistance on the same world scale. The situation now being such that all the civilised countries in the world are fighting against Russia, we must not be surprised that extremely ignorant peasants are accusing us of failing to keep our promises. Nothing else is to be expected from them. In view of their absolute ignorance, we cannot blame them. Indeed, how can you expect a very ignorant peasant to understand that there are different kinds of wars, that there are just and unjust wars, progressive and reactionary wars, wars waged by advanced classes and wars waged by backward classes, wars waged for the purpose of perpetuating class oppression and wars waged for the purpose of eliminating oppression? To understand this one must be familiar with the class struggle, with the principles of socialism, and at least a little bit familiar with the history of revolution. You cannot expect this from an ignorant peasant.

But when a man who calls himself a democrat, or a socialist, gets up on a platform to make a public statement—irrespective of what he calls himself, Menshevik, Social-Democrat, Socialist-Revolutionary, true socialist, adherent of the Berne International, there are lots of titles of this sort, titles are cheap—when such an individual gets up and charges us with having promised peace and called forth war, what answer should be made to him? Are we to assume that he is as ignorant as the ignorant peasant who cannot distinguish one kind of war from another? Are we to assume that he does not see the difference between the imperialist war, which was a predatory war, and which has now been utterly exposed as such—since the Treaty of Versailles only those who are totally incapable of reasoning and thinking, or who are totally blind, can fail to see that it was a predatory war on both

sides—are we to assume that there is even one literate person who fails to see the difference between that predatory war and the war we are waging and which is assuming world-wide dimensions, because the world bourgeoisie have realised that they must fight their last decisive battle? We cannot assume any of this. And that is why we say that anybody who claims to be a democrat, or a socialist, of whatever shade, is a supporter of the bourgeoisie if he in one way or another, directly or indirectly, spreads among the people the accusation that the Bolsheviks are dragging out the Civil War, which is an arduous and painful war, whereas they promised peace; and this is how we shall answer him, and we shall take our stand against him just as we do against Kolchak. Such is our answer. Such is the entire issue.

The gentlemen of *Dyelo Naroda* express astonishment and say: “But we are opposed to Kolchak; what terrible injustice to persecute us!”

It is a great pity, gentlemen, that you refuse to be logical and do not wish to understand the simple ABCs of politics from which certain definite deductions must be made. You say that you are opposed to Kolchak. I take up the newspapers *Vsegda Vperyod!* and *Dyelo Naroda* and read the philistine arguments of this type, these moods that are so numerous and that prevail among the intelligentsia. I say that every one of you who spreads such accusations among the people is supporting Kolchak, because he does not understand the elementary, fundamental difference, which every literate person sees, between the imperialist war which we smashed, and the Civil War in which we have become involved. We never concealed from the people the fact that we were taking this risk. We are straining every nerve to defeat the bourgeoisie in this Civil War and to prevent all possibility of class oppression. There has never been, nor can there ever be, a revolution that was guaranteed against a long and arduous struggle, and perhaps filled with the most desperate sacrifices. Those who are unable to distinguish between the sacrifices made in the course of a revolutionary struggle for the sake of its victory, when all the propertied, all the counter-revolutionary classes are fighting against the revolution, those who cannot distinguish between these sacrifices and the sacrifices involved in a predatory war waged by the exploiters, are either abysmally ignorant—and such people ought to be made to learn their ABC, before giving them adult education they ought to be given the most elementary education—or they are out-and-out Kolchak-supporting hypocrites, whatever they may call themselves, or under whichever title they may try to disguise themselves. And these accusations against the Bolsheviks are the most common and widespread. They are really linked up with the broad masses of the working people, because the ignorant peasants find it difficult to understand; they suffer from all war, no matter what the war is about. I am not surprised when I hear an ignorant

peasant say: "We had to fight for the tsar, we fought for the Mensheviks, and now we have to fight for the Bolsheviks." This does not surprise me. Indeed, war is war, and entails endless heavy sacrifices. "The tsar said that it was a war for freedom and liberation from a yoke; the Mensheviks said that it was a war for freedom and liberation from a yoke. And now the Bolsheviks say the same thing. They all say the same thing; how can we sort this all out?"

Indeed, how can an ignorant peasant sort it all out? Such a man still has to learn elementary politics. But what can we say about a man who uses such words as "revolution," "democracy," and "socialism," and claims that these words should be used with understanding. He cannot juggle with such words unless he wants to be a political faker, for the difference between a war between two groups of robbers and a war waged by an oppressed class which has risen in revolt against all robbery is an elementary, radical and fundamental difference. The issue is not one of a certain party, class or government justifying war—the real point at issue is the nature of the war, its class content, which class is waging it, and what policy is embodied in it.

II

I shall now leave the question of appraising the arduous and difficult period we are now passing through, and which is inevitably connected with the revolution, for another political issue, which also comes up in all debates, and also gives rise to confusion. This is the question of a bloc with the imperialists, of an alliance, an agreement with the imperialists.

Probably you have read in the newspapers the names of the Socialist-Revolutionaries Volsky and, I believe, Svyatitsky, who recently wrote in *Izvestia*, and issued their manifesto. They regard themselves as Socialist-Revolutionaries who cannot possibly be accused of having supported Kolchak. They left Kolchak, they suffered at the hands of Kolchak, and on coming over to us they rendered us a service against Kolchak. That is true. But examine the arguments these citizens advance. See how they appraise the question of a bloc with the imperialists, of an alliance, or agreement, with the imperialists. I had occasion to read their arguments when the authorities combating counter-revolution confiscated their writings, and when I had to examine their papers to be able to judge correctly the extent of their association with Kolchak. These are undoubtedly the best of the Socialist-Revolutionaries. In their writings I found the following argument, "What do you mean? You want us to repent; you are waiting for us to repent. Never! We have nothing to repent of! You accuse us of having entered into a bloc, an agreement with the Entente, with the imperialists. But did

you Bolsheviks not enter into an agreement with the German imperialists? What is the Brest peace? Is not the Brest peace an agreement with imperialism? You entered into an agreement with German imperialism at Brest; we entered into an agreement with French imperialism; we are quits, we have nothing to repent of!”

This argument, which I found in the writings of the persons I have mentioned and of their colleagues, is one that I also find when I call to mind the newspapers I mentioned and when I try to sum up my impressions of philistine conversations. We constantly hear arguments of this kind, it is one of the chief political arguments we have to deal with. I therefore ask you to examine and analyse this argument, and to study it theoretically. What does it amount to? Are those right who say: “We democrats and socialists were in a bloc with the Entente; you were in a bloc with Wilhelm, you concluded the Brest peace. We have no grounds for mutual reproach. We are quits”? Or are we right when we say that those who not merely in words but in deeds are in agreement with the Entente against the Bolshevik revolution are supporters of Kolchak? Although they may deny it a thousand times, although they have personally deserted Kolchak and have proclaimed to the whole people that they are opposed to him, their very roots, the whole nature and significance of their arguments and their deeds make them Kolchak supporters. Who is right? This is the fundamental question of the revolution; and some thought must be given to this.

To explain this point, permit me to draw another analogy, this time, however, not with an individual revolutionary, but with an individual man in the street. Let us suppose that you were riding in an automobile and suddenly your car is surrounded by bandits who point a revolver at your head. Let us suppose that after this you surrender your money and weapons to the bandits, and even let them take the car and ride off. Well? You have given the bandits weapons and money. That is a fact. Now let us suppose that another citizen gave these bandits weapons and money so as to take part in their attacks on peaceful citizens.

In both cases an agreement is reached, whether written or verbal makes no difference. We can picture to ourselves a man giving up his revolver, his weapons and his money, without uttering a word. The nature of the agreement is clear: “I give you my revolver, my weapons and money, and you give me the opportunity to rid myself of your pleasant company.” (*Laughter.*) The agreement is a fact. It is also possible for a tacit agreement to be concluded by the man who gives the bandits weapons and money to enable them to rob other people and afterwards give him part of the loot. This, too, is a tacit agreement.

Now I ask you, could any literate person fail to distinguish between these two agreements? You will say that if a man is unable to distinguish between these two agreements and says, "You gave the bandits money and weapons and so don't accuse other people of banditism; what right have you to accuse other people of banditism?"—such a man must be a cretin. If you were to meet such a literate person you would have to admit, or at least 999 out of 1,000 would admit, that he had taken leave of his senses, and that it is useless to discuss political, or even criminal, subjects with such a man.

I now ask you to carry your thoughts from this example to the comparison between the Brest peace and the agreement with the Entente. What was the Brest peace? Was it not an act of violence on the part of bandits who had attacked us when we were honestly proposing peace and were calling upon all nations to overthrow *their own* bourgeoisie? It would have been ridiculous had we started by trying to overthrow the German bourgeoisie! We denounced this treaty before the whole world as a most predatory, plundering treaty, we condemned it and at first even refused to sign it, as we counted on the assistance of the German workers. But when the robbers put a revolver to our heads we said, take the weapons and the money, we will settle accounts with you later on by other means. We know that German imperialism has another enemy, whom blind people have not noticed, namely, the German workers. Can this agreement with imperialism be put on a par with the agreement entered into by democrats, socialists and Socialist-Revolutionaries—don't laugh, the more radical the title the more resonant it sounds—with the agreement they entered into with the Entente to fight against the workers of their own country? But that is what they did, and are doing to this day. The most influential Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, those with European reputations, are living abroad even today, and they are in alliance with the Entente. I do not know whether this is a written agreement; probably not, clever people do such things on the quiet. But it is obvious that such an agreement exists, since they are being made such a fuss of, are given passports, and wireless messages are being sent all over the world stating that Axelrod delivered a speech today, that Savinkov, or Avksentyev, will deliver a speech tomorrow, and that Breshkovskaya will speak the day after tomorrow. Is this not an agreement, even if a tacit one? But is it the same kind of agreement with the imperialists as we concluded? Outwardly it resembles ours as much as the act of a man who gives weapons and money to bandits resembles any act of this nature, irrespective of its object and character, at all events, irrespective of the object for which I give the bandits money and weapons: whether it is to get rid of them when they attack me and I find myself in a position where if I do not give them my revolver they will kill me; or I give the bandits money and weapons for

the purpose of robbery, of which I am aware, and in the proceeds of which I am to share.

“I, of course, call this liberating Russia from the dictatorship of tyrants. I, of course, am a democrat, because I support the famous Siberian or Archangel democracy, and am fighting, of course, for a Constituent Assembly. Don’t dare to suspect that I am pursuing some evil object. And even if I am rendering assistance to those bandits, the British, French and American imperialists, I am doing so only in the interests of democracy, of the Constituent Assembly, of government by the people, of the unity of the working classes of the population, and in order to overthrow those tyrants and usurpers, the Bolsheviks!”

Noble aims, no doubt. But has not everybody who engages in politics heard that politics are not judged by bare statements but by real class content? Which class do you serve? If you are in agreement with the imperialists, are you participating in imperialist banditism or not?

In my “Letter to American Workers,” I spoke, among other things, about the American revolutionary people fighting to liberate themselves from England in the eighteenth century, when they were waging one of the first and greatest wars for real liberation in human history, one of the few really revolutionary wars in human history—and this great revolutionary American people, in fighting for their liberation, entered into agreements with the bandits of Spanish and French imperialism, who at that time had colonies in neighbouring parts of America. In alliance with these bandits, the American people fought the English and liberated themselves from them. Have you ever met any literate person anywhere in the world, have you seen any socialists, Socialist-Revolutionaries, representatives of democracy, or whatever it is they call themselves—even the Mensheviks—have you ever heard that any of these have the temerity publicly to blame the American people for this, to say that they violated the principle of democracy, freedom, and so forth? Such a crank has not yet been born. But today, we get people here who call themselves by these titles, and even claim a right to belong to the same International that we belong to, and say that it is merely a piece of Bolshevik mischievousness—and everybody knows that the Bolsheviks are mischievous—to organise their own International and refuse to join the good, old, common to all, Berne International!

And there are people who say: “We have nothing to repent of. You entered into an agreement with Wilhelm, we entered into an agreement with the Entente, we are quits!”

I say that if these people have even an elementary knowledge of politics they are Kolchak supporters, no matter how much they personally may

have denied this, no matter how much they personally are sick and tired of Kolchak, no matter how much they have suffered at his hands and in spite of their having come over to our side. They are Kolchak supporters because it is impossible to imagine that they do not see the difference between an agreement one is compelled to make in the course of the struggle against the exploiters—and which the exploited classes have been compelled to make over and over again throughout the history of the revolution—and the conduct of our most influential alleged democrats, representatives of our “socialist” intelligentsia, some of whom yesterday and some today entered into agreements with the bandits and robbers of international imperialism against a *section*—as they say—a section of the working classes of their own country. These are Kolchak people, and the only relations possible with them are those between conscious revolutionaries and Kolchak supporters.

III

I now come to the next question, that of our attitude towards democracy in general.

I have already said that the democrats and socialists plead democracy as the most common justification, the most common defence of the political stand taken against us. The most emphatic supporter of this point of view in European literature is, as you, of course, know, Kautsky, the ideological leader of the Second International, and to this day a member of the Berne International. “The Bolsheviks have chosen a method which violates democracy; the Bolsheviks have chosen the method of dictatorship. Hence, their cause is unjust,” he says. This argument has been repeated a thousand and a million times, it occurs constantly in all periodicals, including the newspapers I have mentioned. It is being constantly repeated by all intellectuals, and sometimes the ordinary man in the street sub-consciously repeats it in his arguments. “Democracy means freedom, it means equality, it means settling questions by a majority. What can be higher than freedom, equality, and majority decisions? Since you Bolsheviks have departed from this, and even have the presumption to say publicly that you stand above freedom, equality and majority decisions, you must not be surprised, nor must you complain, when we call you usurpers and tyrants!”

We are not in the least surprised at this, for what we desire most of all is clarity; and the only thing we rely on is that the advanced section of the working people should really be conscious of its position. Yes, we said, and say it all the time in our programme, in the programme of our Party, that

we shall not allow ourselves to be deceived by such high-sounding slogans as freedom, equality and the will of the majority, and that we shall treat as aiders and abettors of Kolchak those who call themselves democrats, adherents of pure democracy, adherents of consistent democracy and who, directly or indirectly, oppose it to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Get this clear—you must get it clear. Are the pure democrats guilty of merely preaching pure democracy, defending it from the usurpers, or are they guilty of being on the side of the propertied classes, on the side of Kolchak?

We shall begin our examination with the question of freedom. Needless to say, for every revolution, socialist or democratic, freedom is a very, very important slogan. But our programme says that if freedom runs counter to the emancipation of labour from the yoke of capital, it is a deception. And every one of you who has read Marx—and, I think, even every one who has read at least one popular exposition of Marx's theories—knows that Marx devoted the greater part of his life, the greater part of his literary work, and the greater part of his scientific studies to ridiculing freedom, equality, the will of the majority, and all the Benthamites who wrote so beautifully about these things, and to proving that these phrases were merely a screen to cover up the freedom of the commodity owners, the freedom of capital, which these owners use to oppress the masses of the working people.

At the present time, when things have reached the stage of overthrowing the rule of capital all over the world, or at all events in one country; in this historical epoch, when the struggle of the oppressed working people for the complete overthrow of capital and the abolition of commodity production stands in the forefront, we say that all those who in such a political situation talk about “freedom in general,” who in the name of this freedom oppose the dictatorship of the proletariat are doing nothing more nor less than aiding and abetting the exploiters, for unless freedom promotes the emancipation of labour from the yoke of capital, it is a deception, as we openly say in our Party programme. Perhaps this is superfluous from the point of view of the outward structure of the programme, but it is most fundamental from the point of view of our propaganda and agitation, from the point of view of the principle of the proletarian struggle and proletarian power. We know perfectly well that we have to contend against world capital; we know perfectly well that at one time it was the task of world capital to create freedom, that it overthrew feudal slavery, that it created bourgeois freedom. We know perfectly well that this was epoch-making progress. And yet we say that we are opposing capitalism in general, republican capitalism, democratic capitalism, free capitalism; and, of course, we know that it will raise the standard of liberty against us. But to this we have our answer, and we deemed it

necessary to give this answer in our programme—all freedom is deception if it runs counter to the emancipation of labour from the yoke of capital.

But, perhaps, this is not the case? Perhaps there is no contradiction between freedom and the emancipation of labour from the yoke of capital? Take the West-European countries that you have visited, or at least have read about. Every book you read describes their system as the freest system. And now, these civilised countries of Western Europe—France and Britain—and America have raised this standard, are marching against the Bolsheviks “in the name of freedom.” Only the other day—we now get French newspapers but rarely because we are completely surrounded, but we do get wireless information, because, after all, they cannot blockade the air, and we intercept foreign wireless messages—the other day I had the opportunity of reading a wireless message that was sent out by the predatory government of France to the effect that in fighting the Bolsheviks and supporting their opponents, France was remaining true to her “lofty ideals of freedom.” We hear this sort of thing at every step, it is the general tone of their polemics against us.

But what do they mean by freedom? By freedom these civilised Frenchmen, Englishmen and Americans mean, say, freedom of assembly. The constitution should contain the clause: “Freedom of assembly for all citizens.” “This,” they say, “is the substance, this is the principal manifestation of freedom. But you Bolsheviks have violated freedom of assembly.”

To this we answer indeed, the freedom that you British, French and American gentlemen preach is a deception if it runs counter to the emancipation of labour from the yoke of capital. You have forgotten a detail, you civilised gentlemen. You have forgotten that your freedom is inscribed in a constitution which *sanctions private property*. That is the whole point.

In your constitution you have freedom side by side with private property. The fact that you recognise freedom of assembly, of course, marks vast progress compared with the feudal system, with medievalism, with serfdom. All socialists admitted this when they took advantage of the freedom of bourgeois society to teach the proletariat how to throw off the yoke of capitalism.

But your freedom is only freedom on paper, but not in fact. By that I mean that the large halls that are to be found in big cities—like this hall, for example—belong to the capitalists and landowners, and are sometimes called “Assembly Rooms for the Gentry.” You may freely assemble in these halls, citizens of the Russian Democratic Republic, but remember that they are private property and, pardon me for saying so, you must respect private property, otherwise you will be Bolsheviks, criminals, murderers robbers

and mischief-makers. But we say: "We shall change all this. We shall first convert these Assembly Rooms into premises for workers' organisations and then begin to talk about freedom of assembly." You accuse us of violating freedom. But we say that all freedom is deception if it is not subordinated to the task of emancipating labour from the yoke of capital. The freedom of assembly inscribed in the constitutions of all bourgeois republics is a deception because in order to assemble in a civilised country, which after all has not abolished winter, has not changed its climate, it is necessary to have premises in which to assemble, and the best of these premises are private property. First, we shall confiscate the best premises and then begin to talk about freedom.

We say that to grant freedom of assembly to the capitalists would be a heinous crime against the working people; it would mean freedom of assembly for counter-revolutionaries. We say to the bourgeois intellectual gentlemen, to the gentlemen who advocate democracy—you lie when you throw in our face the accusation of violating freedom. When your great bourgeois revolutionaries made a revolution in England in 1649, and in France in 1792–93, they did not grant freedom of assembly to the royalists. The French revolution is called great because it did not suffer from the flabbiness, half-heartedness and phrase mongering which distinguished many of the revolutions of 1848, but was an effective revolution which, after overthrowing the royalists, completely crushed them. And we shall do the same thing with the capitalist gentlemen; for we know that in order to emancipate the working people from the yoke of capital we must deprive the capitalists of freedom of assembly; their "freedom" must be abolished, or curtailed. This will help to emancipate labour from the yoke of capital; it will help the cause of that true freedom under which there will be no buildings inhabited by single families, and which belong to private individuals, such as landowners, capitalists, or to joint-stock companies. When that time comes, when people have forgotten that it was possible for public buildings to be somebody's property, we shall be in favour of complete "freedom." When the world is inhabited only by those who work, and when people have forgotten that it was possible for idlers to have been members of society—this will not be very soon, and the bourgeois and bourgeois intellectual gentlemen are to blame for the delay—we shall then be in favour of freedom of assembly for all. At the present time, however, freedom of assembly would mean freedom of assembly for the capitalists, for counter-revolutionaries. We are fighting against them, we are resisting them, and we say that we deprive them of this freedom.

We are marching into battle—this is the meaning of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Gone is the time of naïve, utopian, fantastic, mechanical

and intellectual socialism, when people imagined that it was sufficient to convince the majority, that it was sufficient to paint a beautiful picture of socialist society to persuade the majority to adopt socialism. Gone, too, is the time when it was possible to entertain oneself and others with these children's fairy-tales. Marxism, which recognises the necessity for the class struggle, asserts that mankind can reach the goal of socialism only through the dictatorship of the proletariat. The word dictatorship is a cruel, stern, bloody and painful one; it is not a word to play with. Socialists advance this slogan because they know that the exploiters will surrender only after a desperate and relentless struggle, and that they will try to cover up their own rule by means of all sorts of high-sounding words.

Freedom of assembly—what can be loftier, what can be finer than this term? Is the development of the working people and of their mentality conceivable without freedom of assembly? Are the principles of humanity conceivable without freedom of assembly? But we say that the freedom of assembly inscribed in the constitution of Great Britain and the United States of America is a deception because it ties the hands of the masses of the working people during the whole period of their transition to socialism; it is a deception because we know perfectly well that the bourgeoisie will do all in their power to overthrow this new government, which is so unusual, and which seems so “monstrous” at first. Those who have thought about the class struggle and have anything like a clear and definite idea of the relations between the workers in revolt and the bourgeoisie, who have been overthrown in one country, but have not yet been overthrown in all countries, and who, because they have not been overthrown everywhere, are rushing into the struggle with greater ferocity than ever, will agree that it cannot be otherwise.

It is precisely after the bourgeoisie is overthrown that the class struggle assumes its acutest forms. And we have no use for those democrats and socialists who deceive themselves and deceive others by saying: “The bourgeoisie have been overthrown, the struggle is all over.” The struggle is not over, it has only just started, because, to this day, the bourgeoisie have not reconciled themselves to the idea that they have been overthrown. On the eve of the October Revolution they were very nice and polite, and Milyukov, Chernov and the *Novaya Zhizn* people said jestingly: “Now, please, Bolshevik gentlemen, form a Cabinet, take power yourselves for a few weeks, that would be a great help to us!” This is exactly what Chernov wrote on behalf of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, what Milyukov wrote in *Rech*, and what the semi-Menshevik *Novaya Zhizn* wrote. They spoke in jest because they did not take matters seriously. But now they see that matters are serious, and the British, French and Swiss bourgeoisie, who thought that their “democratic

republics” were armour which protected them, see and realise that matters have become serious, and now they are all arming. If only you could see what is going on in free Switzerland, how, literally, every bourgeois is arming, how they are forming a White Guard, because they know that it is now a matter of preserving the privileges which enable them to keep millions of people in a state of wage-slavery. The struggle has now assumed world-wide dimensions, and therefore, anybody who opposes us with such catchwords as “democracy,” and “freedom,” takes the side of the propertied classes, deceives the people, for he fails to understand that up to now freedom and democracy have meant freedom and democracy *for the propertied classes* and only crumbs from their table for the propertyless.

What is freedom of assembly when the working people are crushed by slavery to capital and by toil for the benefit of capital? It is a deception; and in order to achieve freedom for the working people it is first of all necessary to overcome the resistance of the exploiters, and since I am faced with the resistance of a whole class, it is obvious that I cannot promise this class either freedom, equality, or majority decisions.

IV

I shall now pass from freedom to equality. This is a much more profound subject. This brings us to a still more serious, a more painful question, one that gives rise to considerable disagreement.

The revolution in its course sweeps away one exploiting class after another. First, it swept away the monarchy, and by equality implied an elected government, a republic. Proceeding further it swept away the landowners; and you know that the keynote of the entire struggle against the medieval system, against feudalism, was the slogan “equality.” All are equal irrespective of social-estate; all are equal, millionaires and paupers alike. This is what the great revolutionaries of the period that has gone into history as the period of the great French Revolution said, thought and sincerely believed. The slogan of the revolution against the landowners was equality, and by equality was meant that the millionaires and the workers should have equal rights. The revolution developed. It said that “equality”—we did not specify this in our programme, for one cannot go on repeating the same thing endlessly; it is as clear as what we said about freedom—that equality is a deception if it runs counter to the emancipation of labour from the yoke of capital. That is what we say, and it is absolutely true. We say that a democratic republic with present-day equality is a fraud, a deception; here there is no equality, nor can there be. It is prevented by the private

ownership of the means of production and money, capital. It is possible, at one stroke, to confiscate privately owned mansions and fine buildings, it is possible in a relatively short period to confiscate capital and the means of production. But try to abolish the private ownership of money.

Money is congealed social wealth, congealed social labour. Money is a token which enables its owner to take tribute from all the working people. Money is a survival of yesterday's exploitation. That is what money is. Can it be abolished at one stroke? No. Even before the socialist revolution the socialists wrote that it is impossible to abolish money at one stroke, and our experience corroborates this. There must be very considerable technical and, what is much more difficult and much more important, organisational achievement before we can abolish money; and until then we must put up with equality in words, in the constitution; we must put up with a situation in which everybody who possesses money practically has the right to exploit. We could not abolish money at one stroke. We say that for the time being money will remain and remain for a fairly long time in the transition period from the old capitalist system to the new socialist system. Equality is a deception if it runs counter to the emancipation of labour from the yoke of capital.

Engels was a thousand times right when he said that the concept of equality is a most absurd and stupid prejudice *if it does not imply* the abolition of classes.⁴ Bourgeois professors attempted to use the concept equality as grounds for accusing us of wanting all men to be alike. They themselves invented this absurdity and wanted to ascribe it to the socialists. But in their ignorance they did not know that the socialists—and precisely the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels—had said: equality is an empty phrase if it does not imply the abolition of classes. We want to abolish classes, and in this sense we are for equality. But the claim that we want all men to be alike is just nonsense, the silly invention of an intellectual who sometimes conscientiously strikes a pose, juggles with words, but says nothing—I don't care whether he calls himself a writer, a scholar, or anything else.

But we say that our goal is equality, and by that we mean the abolition of classes. Then the class distinction between workers and peasants should be abolished. That is exactly our object. A society in which the class distinction between workers and peasants still exists is neither a communist society nor a socialist society. True, if the word socialism is interpreted in a certain sense, it might be called a socialist society, but that would be mere sophistry, an argument about words. Socialism is the first stage of communism; but it is not worth while arguing about words. One thing is clear, and that is, that as long as the class distinction between workers and peasants exists, it is no

use talking about equality, unless we want to bring grist to the mill of the bourgeoisie. The peasantry constitute a class of the patriarchal era, a class which has been reared by decades and centuries of slavery; and throughout all these decades the peasants existed as *small proprietors*, first, under the heel of other classes, and later, formally free and equal, but as *property-owners and the owners of food products*.

This brings us to the question which most of all rouses the ire of our enemies, which most of all creates doubt in the minds of inexperienced and thoughtless people, and which separates us most of all from those would-be democrats and socialists who are offended because we do not recognise them as such, but call them supporters of the capitalists, perhaps due to their ignorance, but supporters of the capitalists all the same.

Their social conditions, production, living and economic conditions make the peasant half worker and half huckster.

This is a fact. And you cannot get away from this fact until you have abolished money, until you have abolished exchange. And for this years and years of the stable rule by the proletariat is needed; for only the proletariat is capable of vanquishing the bourgeoisie. We are told: “You are violators of equality, you have violated equality not only with the exploiters—’with this I am inclined to agree’, some Socialist-Revolutionary or Menshevik who does not know what he is talking about may say—but you have violated equality between the workers and the peasants, you have violated the equality of ‘labour democracy’, you are criminals!” In answer to this we say: “Yes, we have violated equality between the workers and peasants, and we assert that you who stand for this equality are supporters of Kolchak.” Recently I read a splendid article by Comrade Germanov, in *Pravda*, in which he deals with the theses drawn up by Citizen Sher, one of the most “socialistic” of the Menshevik Social-Democrats. These theses were submitted to one of our co-operative organisations, and they are of such a nature that they deserve to be engraved on a tablet and hung up in every volost executive committee with an inscription underneath stating: “This is Kolchak’s man.”

I know perfectly well that Citizen Sher and his friends will call me a slanderer for this, and perhaps something worse. Nevertheless, I invite those people who have learned the ABCs of political economy and of politics to make a very careful study to see who is right and who is wrong. Citizen Sher says that the Soviet government’s food policy, and its economic policy in general, is all wrong; that it is necessary, gradually at first, and then to an increasing degree, to grant freedom to trade in food products, and to safeguard private property.

I say that this is Kolchak's economic programme, his economic basis. I assert that anybody who has read Marx, especially the first chapter of *Capital*, anybody who has read at least Kautsky's popular outline of Marx's theories entitled *The Economic Theories of Karl Marx*, must come to the conclusion that in the midst of a proletarian revolution against the bourgeoisie, at a time when landowner and capitalist property is being abolished, when the country that has been ruined by four years of imperialist war is starving, freedom to trade in grain would mean freedom for the capitalists, freedom to restore the rule of capital. This is Kolchak's economic programme, for Kolchak does not rest on air.

It is rather silly to denounce Kolchak only because of the atrocities he committed against the workers, or even because he flogged schoolmistresses for sympathising with the Bolsheviks. This is a vulgar defence of democracy, a silly accusation against Kolchak. Kolchak operates with the means he has at hand. But what is his economic basis? His basis is freedom of trade. This is what he stands for; and *this is why* all the capitalists support him. But you say: "I have left Kolchak, I do not support him." This stands to your credit, of course; but it does not prove that you have a head on your shoulders and are able to think. This is the answer we give to these people, without casting any slur on the honour of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks who deserted Kolchak when they realised that he is a tyrant. But if such people, in a country which is fighting a desperate struggle against Kolchak, continue to fight for the "equality of labour democracy," for freedom to trade in grain, they are still supporting Kolchak, the only trouble being that they do not understand this and cannot reason logically.

Kolchak—it does not matter whether his name is Kolchak or Denikin, their uniforms may be different, but their natures are the same—is able to hold out because, having captured a region rich in grain, he grants freedom to trade in grain and permits the *free restoration of capitalism*. This was the case in all revolutions, and this will be the case in this country if we abandon the dictatorship of the proletariat for the sake of the "freedom" and "equality" of the democratic, Socialist-Revolutionary, Left Menshevik and other gentlemen, sometimes including the anarchists—the number of titles is infinite. In the Ukraine at the present time, every gang chooses a political title, each more free and democratic than the other, and there is a gang to every uyezd.

The "advocates of the interests of the working peasantry," mainly the Socialist-Revolutionaries, propose equality between the workers and the peasants. Others, like Citizen Sher, have studied Marxism, but they still do not understand that there can be no equality between the workers and the peasants in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism, and that

those who promise this should be regarded as advocating Kolchak's programme, even if they do so unwittingly. I assert that anybody who gives some thought to the actual conditions prevailing in this completely ruined country will understand this.

The "socialists" who assert that in this country we are in the period of the bourgeois revolution, constantly accuse us of having introduced "consumers'" communism. Some of them say it is communism for soldiers, and imagine that they are superior to this, imagine that they have risen above this "base" form of communism. But these are simply people who juggle with words. They have seen books, studied hooks, repeat what is in books, but they understand nothing about what the books say. There are scholars, and even very learned scholars, like that. They have read in books that socialism represents the highest development of production. Kautsky does nothing else but repeat this sort of thing even now. The other day I read in a German newspaper, which got here by accident, a report of the last Congress of Workers' Councils in Germany. Kautsky was one of the *rapporteurs* at this Congress, and in his report he emphasised—not he personally, but his wife; he was sick, and so his wife read the report—in this report he emphasised that socialism represents the highest development of production, that without production neither capitalism nor socialism was possible, and that this the German workers did not understand.

Poor German workers. They are fighting Scheidemann and Noske, fighting against the butchers, striving to overthrow the power of Scheidemann and Noske, the butchers who continue to call themselves Social-Democrats, and they think civil war is going on! Liebknecht was murdered, and so was Rosa Luxemburg. All the Russian bourgeois say—and this was stated in an Ekaterinodar newspaper: "This is what ought to be done to our Bolsheviks!" This is exactly what this paper stated. Those who understand what is going on know perfectly well that this is the opinion of the entire world bourgeoisie. We must defend ourselves. Scheidemann and Noske are waging civil war against the proletariat. War is war. The German workers think that they are in a state of civil war and all other questions are of minor importance. The first task is to feed the workers. Kautsky thinks that this is "soldiers'" or "consumers'" communism, and that it is necessary to develop production! . . .

Oh, how clever you are, gentlemen! But how can production be developed in a country that is being plundered and ruined by the imperialists, and which lacks coal, raw materials and machinery? "Develop production!" There is not a meeting of the Council of People's Commissars, or of the Council of Defence that does not share out the last millions of *poods* of coal or oil, and find ourselves in a terrible fix when the commissars take the last

scraps and even then no one has enough, and we have to decide which factory to close down, in which place to leave the workers without work—a painful question, but one we are compelled to decide because we have no coal. The coal is in the Donets Basin; the coal has been destroyed by the German invaders. This is a typical state of affairs. Take Belgium or Poland. The same thing is happening everywhere as a consequence of the imperialist war. Hence, unemployment and starvation are likely to last many years, for some flooded mines take many years to restore. And yet we are told that socialism means increasing output. You have read books, good, kind gentlemen, you have written books, but you don't understand a scrap of what is in the books. (*Applause.*)

Of course, if it were a case of capitalist society in peace time, peacefully developing into socialism, there would be no more urgent task before us than that of increasing output. But the little word “if” makes all the difference. *If* only socialism had come into being peacefully, in the way the capitalist gentlemen did not want to see it born. But there was a slight hitch. Even if there had been no war, the capitalist gentlemen would have done all in their power to prevent such a peaceful evolution. Great revolutions, even when they commence peacefully, as was the case with the great French Revolution, end in furious wars which are instigated by the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. Nor can it be otherwise, if we look at it from the point of view of the class struggle and not from the point of view of philistine phrase-mongering about liberty, equality, labour democracy and the will of the majority, of all the dull-witted, philistine phrase-mongering to which the Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries and all these “democrats” treat us. There can be no peaceful evolution towards socialism. In the present period, after the imperialist war, it is ridiculous to expect peaceful evolution, especially in a ruined country. Take France. France is one of the victors, and yet the production of grain there has dropped to half. In Britain they are saying that they are now paupers—I read this in an English bourgeois newspaper. And yet the Communists in a ruined country are blamed because industry is at a standstill! Whoever says this is either an utter idiot—even if he thrice calls himself a leader of the Berne International—or else a traitor to the workers.

The primary task in a ruined country is to save the working people. The primary productive force of human society as a whole, is the workers, the working people. If they survive, we shall save and restore everything.

We shall have to put up with many years of poverty, retrogression to barbarism. The imperialist war has thrown us back to barbarism; but if we save the working people, if we save the primary productive force of human society—the workers—we shall recover everything, but if we fail to save them,

we shall perish, so that those who are now shouting about “consumers’,” or “soldiers’,” communism, who look down upon others with contempt and imagine that they are superior to these Bolshevik Communists, are, I repeat, absolutely ignorant of political economy, and pick out passages from books like a scholar whose head is a card index box filled with quotations from books, which he picks out as he needs them; but if a new situation arises which is not described in any book, he becomes confused and grabs the wrong quotation from the box.

At the present time, when the country is ruined, our main and fundamental task is to save the lives of the workers, to save the workers, for the workers are dying because the factories are at a standstill, and the factories are at a standstill because there is no fuel, and because our production is all artificial, industry is isolated from raw material sources. It is the same thing all over the world. Raw materials for the Russian cotton mills must be transported from Egypt, America, or the nearer Turkestan. Try to obtain these when the counter-revolutionary gangs and the British forces have captured Ashkhabad and Krasnovodsk. Try to obtain them from Egypt or America when the railways lie in ruins, when they are at a standstill because there is no coal.

We must save the workers even if they are unable to work. If we keep them alive for the next few years we shall save the country, save society and socialism. If we don't, we shall slip back into wage-slavery. This is how things stand with the socialism that springs not from the imagination of a peaceful simpleton who calls himself a Social-Democrat, but from actual reality, from the fierce, desperately fierce class struggle. This is a fact. We must sacrifice everything to save the lives of the workers. And in the light of this, when people come to us and say they are in favour of the equality of labour democracy, whereas the Communists do not even allow equality between the workers and peasants, our answer is: the workers and peasants are equal as working people, but the well-fed grain profiteer is not the equal of the hungry worker. This is the only reason why our Constitution says that the workers and peasants are not equal.

Do you say that they ought to be equal? Let us weigh and count it up. Take sixty peasants and ten workers. The sixty peasants possess surplus stocks of grain. They are clothed in rags, but they have bread. Take the ten workers. After the imperialist war they, too, are in rags, but they are also exhausted, they have no bread, fuel or raw materials. The factories are idle. Well, are they equal? Should the sixty peasants have the right to decide and the ten workers be obliged to obey? The great principle of equality, unity of labour democracy and deciding by a majority vote!

That is what they tell us. And we tell them that they are mere clowns who confuse the hunger problem and obscure it with their high-sounding phrases.

We ask you whether the workers in a ruined country where the factories are idle ought to submit to the decision of the majority of peasants when the latter refuse to deliver their surplus stocks of grain. Have they the right to take these surplus stocks, by force, if necessary, if there is no other way? Give us a straightforward answer! But when we get right down to brass tacks they begin to twist and wriggle.

Industry is ruined in all countries, and it will remain in that state for several years, because it is easy to set fire to factories or to flood mines, it is easy to blow up railway wagons and to wreck locomotives—any fool can do that, even if he calls himself a German or French officer, and is very efficient, especially when he has good instruments for causing explosions, good fire-arms, and so forth. But it is a very difficult matter to restore it all. That will take years.

The peasantry constitute a special class. As working people they are hostile to capitalist exploitation; but at the same time they are property-owners. For centuries the peasant has been brought up to believe that the grain is his and he is at liberty to sell it. "This is my right," each one thinks, "because it is the fruit of my labour, my sweat and blood." This mentality cannot be changed overnight. It can be changed only as a result of a long and stern struggle. Whoever imagines that socialism can be achieved by one person convincing another, and that one a third, is at best an infant, or else a political hypocrite; and, of course, the majority of those who speak on political platforms belong to the latter category.

The whole point is that the peasants are accustomed to having the right to trade in grain. After we had abolished the capitalist institutions we found that there was still another force which kept capitalism going—the force of habit. And the more resolutely we abolished the institutions on which capitalism was based, the more strongly we felt the effects of this other force on which capitalism was based—the force of habit. Under favourable circumstances, institutions can be smashed at one stroke; but habit, never, no matter how favourable circumstances may be. Although we have given all the land to the peasants, have liberated them from landed proprietorship, and have swept away everything that held them in bondage, they nevertheless continue to think that "freedom" means freedom to trade in grain; and they regard as tyranny the compulsory surrendering of surplus stocks of grain at fixed prices. Why, what do you mean by "surrender"? they ask indignantly, especially since our grain supply apparatus is still defective because the

entire bourgeois intelligentsia is on the side of Sukharevka.⁵ Naturally, this machinery has to rely on people who are only just learning, at best—if they are conscientious and devoted to their task—will learn their business in a few years, and until that time the machinery will be defective, and sometimes all sorts of rascals who call themselves Communists will find their way into it. This danger threatens every ruling party, the victorious proletariat of every country, for it is impossible either to break the resistance of the bourgeoisie or to build up efficient machinery overnight. We know perfectly well that the machinery of the Commissariat of Food is still bad. Recently a scientific statistical investigation was made into the food conditions of the workers in the non-agricultural *gubernias*. The investigation showed that the workers obtain half their food from the Commissariat of Food and the other half from the profiteers; for the first half they pay one-tenth of their total expenditure on food, and for the other half they pay nine-tenths.

The first half of the food supplies, collected and delivered by the Commissariat of Food, is badly collected, of course, but it is collected on socialist and not on capitalist lines. It is collected by defeating the profiteers, and not by compromising with them; it is collected by sacrificing all other interests in the world, including the interests of the formal “equality” which the Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries and Co. make so much fuss about, to the interests of the starving workers. You keep your “equality,” gentlemen, and we shall keep our hungry workers we have saved from starvation. No matter how much the Mensheviks may accuse us of violating “equality,” the fact is that we have solved half our food problem in spite of unprecedented and incredible difficulties. And we say that if sixty peasants have surplus stocks of grain and ten workers are starving, we must not talk about “equality” in general, or about “the equality of working people,” but say that it is the bounden duty of the sixty peasants to submit to the decisions of the ten workers and to give them, or at least to loan them, their surplus stocks of grain.

The science of political economy, if anybody has learned anything from it, the history of revolution, the history of political evolution throughout the whole of the nineteenth century show that the peasants follow the lead of either the workers or the bourgeoisie. Nor can they do otherwise. Some democrats may, of course, take exception to this, others may think that, being a malicious Marxist, I am slandering the peasants. They say the peasants constitute the majority, they are working people, and yet cannot follow their own road. Why?

If you don’t know why, I would say to such citizens, read the elements of Marx’s political economy in Kautsky’s popular exposition, think about the evolution of any of the great revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, about the political history of any country in the nineteenth

century, and you will learn why. The economics of capitalist society are such that the ruling power can be only capital or the proletariat which has overthrown capital.

There are no other forces in the economics of this society.

A peasant is half worker and half huckster. He is a worker because he earns his bread by the sweat of his brow and is exploited by the landowners, capitalists and merchants. He is a huckster because he sells grain, an article of necessity, an article for which a man will give up all his possessions if there is a shortage of it. Hunger is no man's friend. People will pay a thousand rubles, any sum of money, will give up all their property, for bread.

The peasant cannot be blamed for this; he is living under a commodity economy and has been for scores and hundreds of years, and is accustomed to exchange grain for money. You cannot change a habit or abolish money overnight. To abolish money you must organise the distribution of products for hundreds of millions of people, and this is something that must take many years. And so, as long as the commodity system exists, as long as there are starving workers side by side with well-fed peasants who are concealing their surplus stocks of grain, the antagonism of workers' and peasants' interests will persist. And whoever attempts to use phrases like "freedom," "equality" and "labour democracy" to brush aside this real antagonism created by the actual state of affairs, is at best a mere phrase-monger, and at worst a hypocritical champion of capitalism. If capitalism defeats the revolution it will do so by taking advantage of the ignorance of the peasants, by bribing them and luring them with the prospect of a return to freedom of trade. Actually, the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries side with capitalism against socialism.

The economic programme of Kolchak, Denikin and all the Russian whiteguards is freedom to trade. They understand this, and it is not their fault that Citizen Sher does not. The economic facts of life do not change because a certain party does not understand them. The slogan of the bourgeoisie is freedom to trade. Efforts are made to beguile the peasants by asking them whether it would not be better to live in the good old way? Whether it would not be better to live freely by the free sale of the fruits of farm labour? What could be fairer? This is what those who consciously support Kolchak say, and they are right from the point of view of the interests of capital. To restore the power of capital in Russia it is necessary to rely on tradition—on the prejudices of the peasants as against their common sense, on their old habits of trading on the open market, and it is necessary forcibly to crush the resistance of the workers. There is no other way. The Kolchaks are right from the point of view of capital; their economic and political programme ties up

neatly, there are no loose ends; they know there is a connection between freedom for peasants to trade and shooting down the workers. They are connected even though Citizen Sher is unaware of it. Freedom to trade in grain is the economic programme of Kolchak; the shooting of tens of thousands of workers—as occurred in Finland—is a necessary means of realising this programme, because the workers will not voluntarily surrender their gains. The connection cannot be broken, yet the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries, who are totally ignorant of economic science and politics, who, being terrified philistines, have forgotten the ABCs of socialism, are trying to make us forget this connection by talking about “equality” and “freedom,” by shouting about our violating the principle of equality of “labour democracy” and saying that our Constitution is “unfair.”

The vote of one worker is equal to several peasant votes. Is that unfair?

No, in the period when it is necessary to overthrow capital it is quite fair. I know where you have borrowed your conception of fairness from; you have borrowed it from yesterday’s capitalist era. The equality, the freedom of commodity owners—that is your conception of fairness. A petty-bourgeois survival of petty-bourgeois prejudices—that is what your fairness, your equality, your labour democracy amount to. We, however, subordinate fairness to the interests of defeating capital. And capital can be defeated only by the united efforts of the proletariat.

Can tens of millions of peasants be firmly united against capital, against freedom of trade, overnight? No, economic conditions would prevent it even if the peasants were quite free and much more cultured. It cannot be done because different economic conditions and long years of preparation are needed for this. And who will make these preparations? Either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie.

Owing to their economic status in bourgeois society the peasants must follow either the workers or the bourgeoisie. *There is no middle way.* They may waver, become confused, conjure up all sorts of things; they may blame, swear, curse the “bigoted” representatives of the proletariat and the “bigoted” representatives of the bourgeoisie and say that they are the minority. You may curse them, talk loud about the majority, about the broad universal character of your labour democracy, about pure democracy. There is no end to the number of words you can string together, but they will only serve to obscure the fact that if the peasants do not follow the lead of the workers they will follow the lead of the bourgeoisie. There is not, nor can there be, a middle course. And those people who in this most difficult period of transition in history, when the workers are hungry and their industry is at a standstill, *do not help the workers* to take grain at a fairer *but not a “free”*

price, not at a capitalist, hucksters' price, are carrying out the Kolchak programme no matter how much they may deny this to themselves, and no matter how sincerely they may be convinced that they are carrying out their own programme conscientiously.

V

I will now deal with the last question on my list, that of the defeat and victory of the revolution. Kautsky, whom I mentioned to you as the chief representative of the old, decayed socialism, does not understand the tasks of the dictatorship of the proletariat. He reproached us, saying that a decision taken by a majority might have ensured a peaceful issue. A decision by a dictatorship is a decision taken by military means. Hence, if you do not win by force of arms you will be vanquished and annihilated, because in civil war no prisoners are taken, it is a war of extermination. This is how terrified Kautsky tried to "terrify" us.

Quite right. What you say is true. We confirm the correctness of your observation and there is nothing more to be said. Civil war is more stern and cruel than any other war. This has been the case throughout history since the time of the civil wars in ancient Rome; wars between nations always ended in a deal between the propertied classes, and only during civil war does the oppressed class exert efforts to exterminate the oppressing class, to eliminate the economic conditions of this class's existence.

I ask you, what is the "revolutionary" worth who tries to scare those who have started the revolution with the prospect that it might suffer defeat? There has never been, there is none, there will not be, nor can there be a revolution which did not stand some risk of defeat. A revolution is a desperate struggle of classes that has reached the peak of ferocity. The class struggle is inevitable. One must either reject revolution altogether or accept the fact that the struggle against the propertied classes will be sterner than all other revolutions. Among socialists who are at all intelligent there was never any difference of opinion on this point. A year ago, when I analysed the apostasy that lay behind Kautsky's statements I wrote the following. Even if—this was in September last year—even if the imperialists were to overthrow the Bolshevik government tomorrow we would not for a moment repent that we had taken power. And not a single class-conscious worker who represents the interests of the masses of the working people would repent, or have any doubt that, in spite of it all, our revolution had triumphed; the revolution triumphs if it brings to the forefront the advanced class which strikes effectively at exploitation. Under such circumstances, the revolution

triumphs even if it suffered defeat. This may sound like juggling with words; but to prove the truth of it, let us take a concrete example from history.

Take the great French Revolution. It is with good reason that it is called a great revolution. It did so much for the class that it served, for the bourgeoisie, that it left its imprint on the entire nineteenth century, the century which gave civilisation and culture to the whole of mankind. The great French revolutionaries served the interests of the bourgeoisie although they did not realise it for their vision was obscured by the words “liberty, equality and fraternity”; in the nineteenth century, however, what they had begun was continued, carried out piecemeal and finished in all parts of the world.

In a matter of eighteen months our revolution has done ever so much more for our class, the class we serve, the proletariat, than the great French revolutionaries did.

They held out in their own country for two years, and then perished under the blows of united European reaction, under the blows of the united hordes of the whole world, who crushed the French revolutionaries, reinstated the legitimate monarch in France, the Romanov of the period, reinstated the landowners, and for many decades later crushed every revolutionary movement in France. Nevertheless, the great French Revolution triumphed.

Everybody who studies history seriously will admit that although it was crushed, the French Revolution was nevertheless triumphant, because it laid down for the whole world such firm foundations of bourgeois democracy, of bourgeois freedom, that they could never be uprooted.

In a matter of eighteen months our revolution has done ever so much more for the proletariat, for the class which we serve, for the goal towards which we are striving—the overthrow of the rule of capital—than the French Revolution did for its class. And that is why we say that even if we take the hypothetically possible worst contingency, even if tomorrow some lucky Kolchak were to exterminate the Bolsheviks to the last man, the revolution would still be invincible. And what we say is proved by the fact that the new type of state organisation produced by this revolution has achieved a moral victory among the working class all over the world and is already receiving its support. When the prominent French bourgeois revolutionaries perished in the struggle they were isolated, they were not supported in other countries. All the European states turned against them, chief among them England, although it was an advanced country. After only eighteen months of Bolshevik rule, our revolution succeeded in making the new state organisation which it created, the Soviet organisation,

comprehensible, familiar and popular to the workers all over the world, in making them regard it as their own.

I have shown you that the dictatorship of the proletariat is an inevitable, essential and absolutely indispensable means of emerging from the capitalist system. Dictatorship does not mean only force, although it is impossible without force, but also a form of the organisation of labour superior to the preceding form. That is why in my brief speech of greeting at the opening of the Congress I emphasised this fundamental, elementary and extremely simple task *of organisation*; and that is why I am so strongly opposed to all these intellectual fads and “proletarian cultures.” As opposed to these fads I advocate the ABCs of organisation. Distribute grain and coal in such a way as to take care of every *pood*—this is the object of proletarian discipline. Proletarian discipline is not discipline maintained by the lash, as it was under the rule of the serf-owners, or discipline maintained by starvation, as it is under the rule of the capitalists, but comradely discipline, the discipline of the labour unions. If you solve this elementary and extremely simple problem of organisation, we shall win, for then the peasants—who vacillate between the workers and the capitalists, who cannot make up their minds whether to side with the people of whom they are still suspicious, but can not deny that these people are creating a more just organisation of production under which there will be no exploitation, and under which “freedom” of trade in grain will be a crime against the state, who cannot make up their minds whether to side with these people or with those who, as in the good old days, promise freedom to trade which is alleged to mean also freedom to work in any way one pleased—the peasants, I say, will wholeheartedly side with us. When the peasants see that the proletariat is organising its state power in such a way as to maintain order—and the peasants want this and demand it, and they are right in doing so, although this desire for order is connected with much that is confused and reactionary, and with many prejudices—they, in the long run, after considerable vacillation, will follow the lead of the workers. The peasants cannot simply and easily pass from the old society to the new overnight. They are aware that the old society ensured “order” by ruining the working people and making slaves of them. But they are not sure that the proletariat can guarantee order. More cannot be expected of these downtrodden, ignorant and disunited peasants. They will not believe words and programmes. And they are quite right not to believe words, for otherwise there would be no end to frauds of every kind. They will believe only deeds, practical experience. Prove to them that you, the united proletariat, the proletarian state, the proletarian dictatorship, are able to distribute grain and coal in such a way as to husband every *pood*, that you are able to arrange matters so that every *pood* of

surplus grain and coal is distributed not by the profiteers, shall not profit the heroes of Sukharevka, but shall be fairly distributed, supplied to starving workers, even to sustain them during periods of unemployment when the factories and workshops are idle. Prove that you can do this. This is the fundamental task of proletarian culture, of proletarian organisation. Force can be used even if those who resort to it have no economic roots, but in that case, history will doom it to failure. But force can be applied with the backing of the advanced class, relying on the loftier principles of the socialist system, order and organisation. *In that case, it may suffer temporary failure, but in the long run it is invincible.*

If the proletarian organisation proves to the peasants that it can maintain proper order, that labour and bread are fairly distributed and that care is being taken to husband every *pood* of grain and coal, that we workers are able to do this with the aid of our comrades, trade union discipline, that we resort to force in our struggle only to protect the interests of labour, that we take grain from profiteers and not from working people, that we want to reach an understanding with the middle peasants, the working peasants, and that we are ready to provide them with all we can at present—when the peasants see all this, their alliance with the working class, their alliance with the proletariat, will be indestructible. And this is what we aim at.

But I have digressed somewhat from my subject and must return to it. Today, in all countries, the word “Bolshevik” and the word “Soviet” have ceased to be regarded as queer terms, as they were only recently, like the word “Boxer,” which we repeated without understanding what it meant. The word “Bolshevik” and the word “Soviet” are now being repeated in all the languages of the world. Every day the class-conscious workers see that the bourgeoisie of all countries release a flood of lies about Soviet power in the millions of copies of their newspapers, but they learn from this vituperation. Recently I read some American newspapers. I read the speech of a certain American parson who said that the Bolsheviks were immoral, that they had nationalised women, that they are robbers and plunderers. And I also read the reply of the American Socialists. They are distributing at five cents a copy the Constitution of the Soviet Republic of Russia, of this “dictatorship,” which does not provide “equality of labour democracy”. They reply by quoting a clause of the Constitution of these “usurpers,” “robbers” and “tyrants” who disrupt the unity of labour democracy. Incidentally, in welcoming Breshkovskaya on the day she arrived in America, the leading capitalist newspaper in New York carried a headline in letters a yard long stating: “Welcome, Granny!” The American Socialists reprinted this and wrote: “She is in favour of political democracy—is there anything surprising, American workers, in the fact that the capitalists praise her?” She

stands for political democracy. Why should they praise her? Because she is opposed to the Soviet Constitution. “Well,” said the American Socialists, “here is a clause from the Constitution of these robbers.” And they always quote the same clause which says that those who exploit the labour of others shall not have the right to elect or be elected. This clause from our Constitution is known all over the world. And it is because Soviet power frankly states that all must be subordinated to the dictatorship of the proletariat, that it is a new type of state organisation—it is precisely for this reason that it has won the sympathies of the workers all over the world. This new state organisation is being born in travail because it is far more difficult, a million times more difficult, to overcome our disruptive, petty-bourgeois laxity than to suppress the tyrannical landowners or the tyrannical capitalists, but the effort bears a million times more fruit in creating the new organisation which knows no exploitation. When proletarian organisation solves this problem, socialism will triumph completely. And it is to this that you must devote all your activities both in the schools and in the field of adult education. Notwithstanding the extremely difficult conditions that prevail, and the fact that the first socialist revolution in history is taking place in a country with a very low level of culture, notwithstanding this, Soviet power has already won the recognition of the workers of other countries. The phrase “dictatorship of the proletariat” is a Latin phrase, and the working people who heard it for the first time did not know what it meant, and did not know how it could be instituted. Now this Latin phrase has been translated into the modern languages and we have shown that the dictatorship or the proletariat is Soviet power, the government under which the workers organise themselves and say that their organisation is superior to every other. No idler, no exploiter can belong to this organisation. This organisation has but one object, and that is, to overthrow capitalism. No false slogans, no fetishes like “freedom,” and “equality,” will deceive us. We recognise no freedom, no equality, no labour democracy if it conflicts with the cause of emancipating labour from the yoke of capital. This is what we incorporated in the Soviet Constitution, and we have already won for it the sympathies of the workers of all countries. They know that in spite of the difficulty with which the new order is being born, and in spite of the severe trials and even defeats which may fall to the lot of some of the Soviet republics, no power on earth can compel mankind to turn back. (*Stormy applause.*)

Notes

1. This refers to the views of A. Bogdanov and others that had been implanted in the *Proletcult* (Proletarian Culture) literary and art organisations. Bogdanov

and his supporters propagandised the philosophical views (Machism) in the guise of “proletarian culture,” denied the leading role of the Party and the Soviet state in cultural development, separated the development of Soviet culture from the general tasks of socialist construction and denied the need to make use of cultural achievements of the past. They tried to give the *Proletcult* organisations a position that made them independent of the Party and of Soviet power. Lenin spoke resolutely against attempts to implant these theories in the *Proletcult* organisations. The Central Committee of the R.C.P.(B.) and the Communist group at the First All-Russia Congress of *Proletcult* Organisations in October 1920 took a decision to subordinate *Proletcult* organisations to the People’s Commissariat of Education, making them departments of that Commissariat. The Central Committee of the R.C.P.(B.) condemned the anti-Marxist, bourgeois tendencies in the *Proletcult* organisations in a letter headed “On the *Proletcult* Organisations.” The organisations began to decline in 1922.

2. This was a decree on “*The Mobilisation of the Literate and the Organisation of Propaganda of the Soviet System*” issued by the Council of People’s Commissars on December 10, 1918.
3. This refers to whiteguard units of officer volunteers.
4. Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Moscow, 1959, pp. 147–148.
5. *Sukharevka*—the name of a market that once existed in Moscow. During the Civil War it was here that profiteers sold their goods. The word “*Sukharevka*” is used in the broader sense of “freedom to trade in food.”

4

Speech at the First All-Russia Congress of Workers in Education and Socialist Culture

Study and Discussion Guide

1. What difficulties does the educational struggle face?
2. What grouping holds power in the teachers' unions?
3. How do the bourgeois intelligentsia defend capitalism in theory and practice?
4. What is the meaning of "Freedom, Equality, and Bentham"?
5. Why are the Bolsheviks opposed to this slogan?
6. What are contemporary examples of such slogans?
7. What is freedom of the press under capitalism?
8. What is the real meaning behind the demand for a "united front" government?
9. Is it possible to occupy a position between capitalism and socialism, or between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat? Why or why not?
10. What is Lenin's response to those who demand the Bolshevik's renounce terror?

11. What does this text have to do with educational practices?
12. If you had to relay the importance of this text to a teachers' union today, what would you say?

Speech at the First All-Russia Congress of Workers in Education and Socialist Culture

Delivered: 30 July, 1919¹

Source: Lenin's *Collected Works*, 4th English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972 Volume 29, pages 532–539

Comrades, it gives me great pleasure to greet your Congress in the name of the Council of People's Commissars.

In the sphere of education we have long had to struggle against the same difficulties that Soviet power encounters in all spheres of work and in all spheres of organisation. We saw that organisations regarded as the only mass organisations were from the very outset headed by people who, for a lengthy period, were under the influence of bourgeois prejudices. In the first days of Soviet power, in October 1917, we even saw how the army swamped us in Petrograd with declarations to the effect that it did not recognise Soviet power, threatened to go against Petrograd and expressed solidarity with bourgeois governments. As long ago as that we were sure that these declarations came from the top people in these organisations, from the army committees of that time, who represented the past in the development of the moods, convictions and views of our army. The situation has

Learning with Lenin, pages 59–65

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since then repeated itself in all mass organisations—in respect of the railway proletariat, and again in respect of the post and telegraph employees. We have always noted that at first the past maintains its power and influence over mass organisations. We were, therefore, riot.at all surprised at the lengthy and stubborn struggle that went on among the school-teachers, the majority of whom, if not all, from the very beginning took a stand hostile to Soviet power. We saw how we gradually had to overcome bourgeois prejudices and how the school-teachers, who were closely connected with the workers and labouring peasantry, had to struggle against the former bourgeois system to win for themselves rights and to break a road to a genuine rapprochement with the working masses, to a genuine understanding of the nature of the socialist revolution that was under way. Until now you have had more than anybody else to deal with the old prejudices of the bourgeois intelligentsia, with their usual methods and arguments, with their defence of bourgeois or capitalist society, with their struggle, not usually direct but carried on under cover of some outwardly pleasant slogans which are advanced to defend capitalism in one way or another.

Comrades, you may remember how Marx describes the way the worker got to the modern capitalist factory, how he analysed the enslavement of the worker in a disciplined, cultured and “free” capitalist society, studied the causes of the oppression of labour by capital, how he approached the fundamentals of the production process, how he described the worker’s entry into a capitalist factory where the robbery of surplus-value takes place and the foundation of capitalist exploitation is laid down, where capitalist society is built, the society that gives riches to the few and holds the many in a state of oppression. When Marx reached this most significant, most fundamental place in his book—the analysis of capitalist exploitation—he accompanied his introduction to this analysis with the ironical remark that the place he was taking the reader to, the place where profit was extracted by the capitalists, was the place where liberty, equality and Bentham ruled.² By this Marx stressed the ideology up-held by the bourgeoisie in capitalist society and which they justify because from their point of view, from the point of view of the bourgeoisie who had won the fight against the feudals, “Liberty, Equality and Bentham” ruled in capitalist society which was based on the rule of money, the rule of capital and the exploitation of the working people. What they call liberty is liberty to make profit, liberty for the few to become rich, the liberty of the trade turnover; what they call equality is equality between capitalist, and worker; and the rule of Bentham is the rule of the petty-bourgeois prejudice about liberty and equality.

If we look around us, if we take a look at those arguments that were used in the struggle against us yesterday and which are being used today

by members of the old teachers' union and which we still meet with among our ideological opponents who call themselves socialists (the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks), those arguments that we meet with in a not very conscious form in our day-to-day talks with the peasant masses who have not yet understood the significance of socialism—if you take a look at and give some thought to the ideological meaning of these arguments you will find the very same bourgeois motif that Marx stressed in *Capital*. All these people reiterate the catch-phrase that Liberty, Equality and Bentham rule in capitalist society. And when objections to us are raised from this point of view and it is said that we, the Bolsheviks and Soviet power, are contravening freedom and equality, we refer those who say so to the elements of political economy, to the basic doctrines of Marx. We maintain that the freedom you accuse the Bolsheviks of contravening is the freedom of capital, the freedom of an owner to sell grain on the open market, i.e., the freedom for the few to make profit, for those who have grain surpluses. That freedom of the press that the Bolsheviks have constantly been accused of having violated—what is this freedom of the press in a capitalist society? Everybody could see what the press was in our “free” Russia. This was seen to a still greater extent by people who were familiar with, have been able to observe closely or had had dealings with press affairs in the advanced capitalist countries. Freedom of the press in capitalist society means freedom to trade in publications and in their influence on the masses. Freedom of the press means that the press, a powerful medium for influencing the masses, is maintained at the expense of the capitalists. Such is the freedom of the press that the Bolsheviks violated and they are proud of having produced—the first press free of the capitalists, that in a gigantic country they have for the first time set up a press that does not depend on a handful of rich men and millionaires—a press that is devoted entirely to the struggle against capital, the struggle to which we must subordinate everything. Only the factory proletariat that is capable of leading the peasant masses that are not class-conscious can be the leader, the vanguard, of the working people in this struggle.

When we are reproached with having established a dictatorship of one party and, as you have heard, a united socialist front is proposed, we say, “Yes, it is a dictatorship of one party! This is what we stand for and we shall not shift from that position because it is the party that has won, in the course of decades, the position of vanguard of the entire factory and industrial proletariat. This party had won that position even before the revolution of 1905. It is the party that was at the head of the workers in 1905 and which since then—even at the time of the reaction after 1905 when the working-class movement was rehabilitated with such difficulty under the

Stolypin Duma—merged with the working class and it alone could lead that class to a profound, fundamental change in the old society.” When a united socialist front is proposed to us we say that it is the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik parties that propose it, and that they have wavered in favour of the bourgeoisie throughout the revolution. We have had a double experience—the Kerensky period when the Socialist-Revolutionaries formed a coalition government that was helped by the Entente, that is, by the world bourgeoisie, the imperialists of France, America and Britain. What did that result in? Was there that gradual transition to socialism they had promised? No, there was collapse, the absolute rule of the imperialists, the rule of the bourgeoisie and the complete bankruptcy of all sorts of illusions about class conciliation.

If that experience is not enough, take Siberia. There we saw the same thing happen again. In Siberia the government was against the Bolsheviki. At the beginning the entire bourgeoisie who had fled from Soviet power came to the help of the Czechoslovak uprising, supported fully by the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks. They were helped by the entire bourgeoisie and the capitalists of the most powerful countries of Europe and America; their aid was not merely ideological but financial and military aid as well. And what was the result? What came of this rule that was allegedly the rule of the Constituent Assembly, that allegedly democratic government of Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks? It led to the Kolchak gamble. Why did it lead to the collapse that we have witnessed? Because here we saw the effect of the basic truth, which the so-called socialists from the camp of our opponents do not want to understand, that there can be only one of two possible powers in capitalist society, either the power of the capitalists or the power of the proletariat, no matter whether that society is developing, is firmly on its feet, or is declining. Every middle-of-the-road power is a dream, and every attempt to set up something in between leads only to people, even if they are absolutely sincere, shifting to one side or the other. Only the power of the proletariat, only the rule of the workers can ally to itself the majority of those who work, because the peasant masses, although they constitute a mass of working people, are nevertheless to a certain extent the owners of their small properties, of their own grain. And that is the struggle that has unfolded before our eyes, the struggle which shows how the proletariat, in the course of lengthy political trials, during the changes in governments that we see in various places on the outskirts of Russia, is sweeping away everything that serves exploitation; it shows how the proletariat is breaking its own road and is becoming more and more the genuine, absolute leader of the masses of working people in suppressing and eliminating the resistance of capital.

Those who say that the Bolsheviks violate freedom and who propose the formation of a united socialist front, that is, an alliance with those who vacillated, and twice in the history of the Russian revolution went over to the side of the bourgeoisie—these people are very fond of accusing us of resorting to terror. They say that the Bolsheviks have introduced a system of terror in administration, and if Russia is to be saved, the Bolsheviks must renounce it. This reminds me of a witty French bourgeois who, in his bourgeois manner, said with reference to the abolition of the death penalty, “Let the murderers be the first to abolish the death penalty.” I recall this when people say, “Let the Bolsheviks renounce the terror.” Let the Russian capitalists and their allies, America, France and Britain, that is, those who first imposed terror on Soviet Russia, let them renounce it! They are the imperialists who attacked us and are still attacking us with all their military might, which is a thousand times greater than ours. Is it not terror for all the Entente countries, all the imperialists of Britain, France and America, to keep in their capitals servitors of international capital—whether their names are Sazonov or Maklakov—who have organised tens and hundreds of thousands of the dissatisfied, ruined, humiliated and indignant representatives of capital and the bourgeoisie? You must have heard about the plots among the military, you must have read about the latest plot in Krasnaya Gorka, which nearly led to the loss of Petrograd; what was this but a manifestation of terror on the part of the bourgeoisie of the whole world, which will commit any violence, crime and atrocity in order to reinstate the exploiters in Russia and stamp out the flames of the socialist revolution, which is now threatening even their own countries? There is the source of terror, that is where the responsibility lies! That is why we are sure that those who preach renunciation of terror in Russia are nothing but conscious, or unwitting, tools and agents of the imperialist terrorists, who are trying to crush Russia with their blockades and aid to Denikin and Kolchak. But their cause is a hopeless one.

Russia is the country assigned by history the role of trail-blazer of the socialist revolution, and that is just why so much struggle and suffering has fallen to our lot. The capitalists and imperialists of other countries realise that Russia is up in arms, and that the future not only of Russian but of international capital is being decided in Russia. That is why in all their press—in all the bourgeois world press which they have bribed with their many millions—they spread the most incredible slanders about the Bolsheviks.

They are attacking Russia in the name of the selfsame principles of “Liberty, Equality and Bentham.” If you come across someone in this country who thinks that when he speaks of freedom and equality and of their violation by the Bolsheviks, he is championing something that is quite independent, the

principles of democracy in general, ask him to have a look at the capitalist press of Europe. What is the screen being used by Denikin and Kolchak, what is the screen being used by European capitalists and the bourgeoisie in their efforts to crush Russia? Liberty and equality—that is all they talk about! When the Americans, British and French seized Archangel, when they sent their troops to the South, they did so in defence of liberty and equality. That is the kind of slogan they use as camouflage, and that is why the proletariat of Russia has risen against world capital in this fierce struggle. Such is the purpose of these slogans of freedom and equality which all agents of the bourgeoisie use to deceive the people, and which intellectuals who really side with the workers and peasants have to expose.

We see that as the attempts of the Entente imperialists become more desperate and vicious they meet with ever greater resistance on the part of the proletariat of their own countries. The first attempt at an international strike by workers in Britain, France and Italy against their governments that was made on July 21 had as its slogan, “Hands off Russia, and an honest peace with the Republic.” This strike failed. Separate strikes broke out in Britain, France and Italy. In America and Canada, everything that looks like Bolshevism is fiercely persecuted. In the last few years, we have gone through two great revolutions. We know how hard it was for the vanguard of the Russian working people in 1905 to rise in the struggle against tsarism. We know that after the first bloody lesson of January 9, 1905, the strike, movement developed slowly and laboriously until October 1905, when the mass strike scored its first success in Russia. We know how hard the going was. This was proved by the experience of two revolutions, although the situation in Russia was more revolutionary than in other countries. We know with what difficulty the forces for the struggle against capitalism are mobilised in a series of strikes. That is why we are not surprised by the failure of this first international strike of July 21. We know that there is much greater resistance and opposition to the revolution in the European countries than over here. We know that in fixing July 21 as the date for an international strike, the workers of Britain, France and Italy had to overcome incredible difficulties. It was an experiment unparalleled in history. It is not surprising that it failed. But we also know that the working people of the leading and most civilised countries are on our side despite the European bourgeoisie’s rabid hatred of us, that they understand our cause, and whatever the hardships of the revolution and the trials ahead, whatever the atmosphere of lies and deception in the name of the “freedom and equality” of capital, equality of the starved and the overfed, whatever the atmosphere, we know that our cause is the cause of the workers of all countries, and that is why this cause will inevitably defeat international capital.

Notes

1. This Congress, held in Moscow from July 28 to August 1, 1919, was attended by 230 delegates from 32 gubernias. The Congress heard reports on the education programme, the current tasks in the field of cultural development, trade union movement, the youth movement in Russia and the West, and other questions. The Congress founded the All-Russia Trade Union of Workers in Education and Socialist Culture; it elected the Central Committee of the Union.
2. See Karl Marx, *Capital*, Moscow, 1959, Vol. I, p. 176.

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Speech Delivered at an All-Russia Conference of Political Education Workers of Gubernia and Uyezd

Study and Discussion Guide

1. How do you understand Lenin's aversion to "titles" as "childish jokes"?
2. Why does Lenin insist that "we cannot conduct educational work in isolation from politics"?
3. Discuss the significance of Lenin pointing out that bourgeois ideology insists on a neutral or non-political education while the education they advance actually is extremely political.
4. Discuss how this form of ideological manipulation operates in the United States today. In other words, how does the illusion of a non-political education function in the United States?
5. Lenin discusses the way the bourgeoisie uses the propaganda of its "truth" as a weapon to leverage force against the proletariat's rule in the Soviet Union. How does the bourgeoisie similarly use ideas as a material force against the power of the people in the United

- States? What are some significant differences between the function and practice of the bourgeoisie in the United States and the former Soviet Union?
6. In making the case for the need of political education why does Lenin mention that communists are not utopian?
 7. How does Lenin describe the task of political education?
 8. Lenin stresses the seriousness for which political education should be taken, noting that, “We are living in an historic period of struggle against the world bourgeoisie, which is far stronger than we are.” This statement is perhaps even more true today than when the global proletarian class camp held a greater share of the world’s state power. How might Lenin’s observations here inform our own educational struggles today?
 9. Why is the notion of “taking sides” at the heart of what Lenin is advancing as a communist? What are the pedagogical implications of taking a side? (For example, in order to take a side one must understand the various sides and orientations. Aware that the world is in a constant state of development and change, the context in which the sides exist is always shifting. Political education is therefore continuous since the balance of forces are always in process of becoming or becoming something other than. Constant study and engagement are necessary to know the various sides that are not fixed.)
 10. From the article what can you discern about the orientation of what Lenin calls the “Kerensky gang”? What similar political groups currently exist in the United States?
 11. Continuing the discussion from question 10, the following excerpt is particularly powerful in the prominence it gives the primacy of the party in guiding the direction of all aspects associated with the struggle including education: “The entire course of the struggle waged by Soviet Russia, which for three years has withstood the onslaught of world imperialism, is bound up with the fact that the Party has consciously set out to help the proletariat perform its function of educator, organiser and leader, without which the collapse of capitalism is impossible. The working masses, the masses of peasants and workers, must oust the old intellectualist habits and re-educate themselves for the work of building communism. Otherwise the work of construction cannot be undertaken. Our entire experience shows that this is a very serious matter, and we must therefore give prominence to Party primacy and never lose sight of it when discussing our activities and our organizational development.”
 12. What are the implications of the above quote for the progressive education movement today?

13. In making his case for the central importance of the communist party Lenin discusses the need to re-train teachers trained in bourgeois society. This task is particularly relevant today in the United States since teachers are now the largest group of unionized workers. Teachers have recently taken the lead in the labor movement with a series of major demonstrations, walk outs and strikes, beginning with a wildcat strike in West Virginia. This spontaneous uprising of teachers across the United States suggests that through the force of their own worsening material conditions, there are signs of the transcendence of trade union consciousness. How might Lenin's analysis inform communists organizing in this context.
14. Lenin asks an important question: "how can we establish a link between the teachers, most of whom are of the old school, with Party members, with the Communists?" How might we do this today in the United States? (Lenin points to the communist party form itself as fundamental here as a mediator.)
15. For Lenin, the question of how to re-train teachers is fundamental because without it the technological achievements of communist will be impossible. Again, Lenin asks, "how are we to organise these people, who are not used to bringing politics into their work, especially the politics that is to our advantage, i.e., politics essential to communism?"
16. Lenin answers this question by stating the need to assign communists to be in charge of schools and districts capable of "directing the mass of teachers." While Lenin is reflecting on a context where workers have state power, how do we proceed where workers do not have state power like in the United States?
17. What is the indispensable knowledge of teachers, even teachers still imbued with the prejudices of capitalist culture, that Lenin refers to? Is this an example of sublation? This is another aspect of Lenin's outline that is directly relevant to our current situation.
18. Why does Lenin argue ideological resistance is the most deep seated and strongest?
19. Why is the reunification of politics and economics, in the minds of workers, and teachers in particular, so important to the communist project Lenin outlines?
20. Why is content selection so important for the communist leader working with teachers?

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Speech to Congress on Political Education Workers of Gubernia and Uyezd

Delivered: November 3, 1920¹

Source: Lenin's *Collected Works*, 4th English edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, Volume 31, pages 340–361

Comrades, allow me to speak on several ideas, some of which were dealt with by the Central Committee of the Communist Party and by the Council of People's Commissars in connection with the formation of the Chief Committee for Political Education, while others came to me in connection with the draft submitted to the Council of People's Commissars. This draft was adopted yesterday as a basis; its details have still to be discussed.

I shall permit myself only to say, for my part, that at first I was highly averse to any change in the name of your institution. In my opinion, the function of the People's Commissariat of Education is to help people learn and teach others. My Soviet experience has taught me to regard titles as childish jokes; after all, any title is a joke in its way. Another name has now been endorsed: the Chief Committee for Political Education.

As this matter has already been decided, you must take this as nothing more than a personal remark. If the matter is not limited merely to a change of label, it is only to be welcomed.

Learning with Lenin, pages 71–79

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If we succeed in drawing new people into cultural and educational work, it will not be just a change of title, and then we can reconcile ourselves to the “Soviet” weakness of sticking a label on every new undertaking and every new institution. If we succeed, we shall have achieved something more than ever before.

The link between education and our policy should be the chief inducement in making people join us in our cultural and educational work. A title may express something if there is a need for it, for along the whole line of our educational work we have to abandon the old standpoint that education should be non-political; we cannot conduct educational work in isolation from politics.

That idea has always predominated in bourgeois society. The very term “apolitical” or “non-political” education is a piece of bourgeois hypocrisy, nothing but humbuggy practised on the masses, 99 per cent of whom are humiliated and degraded by the rule of the church, private property and the like. That, in fact, is the way the bourgeoisie, still in the saddle in all bourgeois countries, is deceiving the masses.

The greater the importance of a political apparatus in such countries, the less its independence of capital and its policy.

In all bourgeois states the connection between the political apparatus and education is very strong, although bourgeois society cannot frankly acknowledge it. Nevertheless, this society indoctrinates the masses through the church and the institution of private property.

It is one of our basic tasks to contrapose our own truth to bourgeois “truth,” and win its recognition.

The transition from bourgeois society to the policy of the proletariat is a very difficult one, all the more so for the bourgeoisie incessantly slandering us through its entire apparatus of propaganda and agitation. It bends every effort to play down an even more important mission of the dictatorship of the proletariat, its educational mission, which is particularly important in Russia, where the proletariat constitutes a minority of the population. Yet in Russia this mission must be given priority, for we must prepare the masses to build up socialism. The dictatorship of the proletariat would have been out of the question if, in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, the proletariat had not developed a keen class-consciousness, strict discipline and profound devotion, in other words, all the qualities required to assure the proletariat’s complete victory over its old enemy.

We do not hold the utopian view that the working masses are ready for a socialist society. From precise facts provided by the entire history of

working-class socialism we know that this is not the case, and that preparedness for socialism is created only by large-scale industry, by the, strike struggle and by political organisation. To win the victory and accomplish the socialist revolution, the proletariat must be capable of concerted action, of overthrowing the exploiters. We now see that it has acquired all the necessary qualities, and that it translated them into action when it won power.

Education workers, and the Communist Party as the vanguard in the struggle, should consider it their fundamental task to help enlighten and instruct the working masses, in order to cast off the old ways and habituated routine we have inherited from the old system, the private property habits the masses are thoroughly imbued with. This fundamental task of the entire socialist revolution should never be neglected during consideration of the particular problems that have demanded so much attention from the Party's Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars. What kind of structure should the Chief Committee for Political Education have? How should it be linked up with other institutions? How should it be linked up, not only with the centre but with local bodies? These questions will be answered by comrades who are more competent in the matter, have already gained considerable experience, and have made a special study of the matter. I would like merely to stress the main principles involved. We must put the matter frankly and openly affirm, despite all the old untruths, that education cannot but be linked up with politics.

We are living in an historic period of struggle against the world bourgeoisie, which is far stronger than we are. At this stage of the struggle, we have to safeguard the development of the revolution and combat the bourgeoisie in the military sense and still more by means of our ideology through education, so that the habits, usages and convictions acquired by the working class in the course of many decades of struggle for political liberty—the sum total of these habits, usages and ideas should serve as an instrument for the education of all working people. It is for the proletariat to decide how the latter are to be educated. We must inculcate in the working people the realisation that it is impossible and inexcusable to stand aside in the proletariat's struggle, which is now spreading more and more to all capitalist countries in the world, and to stand aside in international politics. An alliance of all the world's powerful capitalist countries against Soviet Russia—such is the real basis of international politics today. And it must, after all, be realised that on this will depend the fate of hundreds of millions of working people in the capitalist countries. We know that, at the present moment, there is not a corner of the earth which is not under the control of a small group of capitalist countries. Thus the situation is shaping in such a way that one is faced with the alternative of standing aloof from the present

struggle and thereby proving one's utter lack of political consciousness, just like those benighted people who have held aloof from the revolution and, the war and do not see the bourgeoisie's gross deception of the masses, the deliberate way in which the bourgeoisie is keeping the masses in ignorance; or else of joining the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

It is with absolute frankness that we speak of this struggle of the proletariat; each man must choose between joining our side or the other side. Any attempt to avoid taking sides in this issue must end in fiasco.

Observation of the many remnants of the Kerensky gang, the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Social-Democrats, as represented by the Yudeniches, Kolchaks, Petlyuras, Makhnos and others, has shown us such a variety of forms and shades of counter-revolution in various parts of Russia that we have every reason to consider ourselves far more steeled in the struggle than anybody else is. A glance at Western Europe shows the same thing happening there as in our country—a repetition of our own history. Almost everywhere elements similar to the Kerensky gang are to be met alongside the bourgeoisie. They predominate in a number of countries, especially Germany. One can see the same thing everywhere—the impossibility of taking an intermediate position, and a clear realisation that there must be either a White Guard dictatorship (for which the bourgeoisie of all the countries of Western Europe are preparing by arming against us), or the dictatorship of the proletariat. We have experienced this so acutely and profoundly that there is no need for me to talk at length about the Russian Communists. Hence there can be only a single conclusion, one that should be the corner-stone of all arguments and theories about the Chief Committee for Political Education: the primacy of the Communist Party's policy must be frankly recognised in the work of that body. We know of no other form of guidance; and no other has been evolved in any country. Parties may represent the interests of their class in one degree or another; they may undergo changes or modifications, but we do not yet know of any better form. The entire course of the struggle waged by Soviet Russia, which for three years has withstood the onslaught of world imperialism, is bound up with the fact that the Party has consciously set out to help the proletariat perform its function of educator, organiser and leader, without which the collapse of capitalism is impossible. The working masses, the masses of peasants and workers, must oust the old intellectualist habits and re-educate themselves for the work of building communism. Otherwise the work of construction cannot be undertaken. Our entire experience shows that this is a very serious matter, and we must therefore give prominence to Party primacy and never lose sight of it when discussing our activities and our organisational development. How this is to be done will still have

to be discussed at length; it will have to be discussed in the Party's Central Committee and in the Council of People's Commissars. The decree which was endorsed yesterday laid down the fundamentals in respect of the Chief Committee for Political Education, but it has not yet gone through all the stages in the Council of People's Commissars. The decree will be published within the next few days, and you will see that its final form makes no direct mention of relations with the Party.

We must, however, know and remember that, in law and in practice, the Constitution of the Soviet Republic is based on the tenet that the Party rectifies, prescribes and builds according to a single principle—to enable the communist elements linked with the proletariat to imbue the proletariat with their own spirit, win its adherence, and open its eyes to the bourgeois deceit which we have been trying so long to eliminate. The People's Commissariat of Education has gone through a long struggle; for a long time the teachers' organisation resisted the socialist revolution. Bourgeois prejudices have struck very deep root among the teachers. There has been a long struggle in the form of direct sabotage and of tenacious bourgeois prejudices, and we have to fight for the communist positions slowly, step by step and win them. The Chief Committee for Political Education, which is concerned with extra-mural education, the work of educating and enlightening the masses, is faced with the clear task of combining Party leadership with the effort to gain the adherence of, to imbue with its spirit and to animate with its initiative, this half-million strong army of teachers, this vast institution which is now in the service of the workers. Education workers—the teachers—were trained in the spirit of bourgeois prejudices and habits, in a spirit hostile to the proletariat, with which they have had no ties whatever. We must now train a new army of teachers and instructors who must be in close touch with the Party and its ideas, be imbued with its spirit, and attract the masses of workers, instilling the spirit of communism into them and arousing their interest in what is being done by the Communists.

Since the old customs, habits and ideas must be discarded, the Chief Committee for Political Education and its personnel are faced with a most important task, which they must keep uppermost in their minds. Here we indeed have a dilemma: how can we establish a link between the teachers, most of whom are of the old school, with Party members, with the Communists? That is an extremely difficult problem, one that will require a considerable amount of thought.

Let us consider the means of establishing organisational links between people who are so different. In principle, we cannot for a moment doubt the need of the Communist Party's primacy. Consequently, the purpose of political culture, of political instruction, is to train genuine Communists

capable of stamping out falsehood and prejudices and helping the working masses to vanquish the old system and build up a state without capitalists, without exploiters, and without landowners. How can that be done? Only by acquiring the sum total of knowledge that the teachers have inherited from the bourgeoisie. Without this the technical achievements of communism will be impossible, and all hopes for those achievements would be pipe dreams. So the question arises: how are we to organise these people, who are not used to bringing politics into their work, especially the politics that is to our advantage, i.e., politics essential to communism? That, as I have said, is a very difficult problem. We have discussed the matter in the Central Committee, and in discussing it have tried to take into account the lessons of experience. We think that a congress like the one I am addressing today, a conference like yours, will be of great value in this respect. Every Party Committee now has to look from a new angle upon every propagandist, who used to be regarded merely as a man belonging to a definite circle, a definite organisation. Each of them belongs to a ruling party which directs the whole state, and the Soviet Russia's world struggle against the bourgeois system. He is a representative of a fighting class and of a party which runs, and must run, an enormous machine of state. Many a Communist who has been through the splendid school of underground work and has been tested and steeled in the struggle is unwilling or unable to understand the full significance of this change, of this transition, which turns the agitator and propagandist into a leader of agitators, a leader in a huge political organisation. The kind of title he is given, even if it is an embarrassing one—such as superintendent of general schools—does not matter much; what is important is that he should be capable of directing the mass of teachers.

It should be said that the hundreds of thousands of teachers constitute a body that must get the work moving, stimulate thought, and combat the prejudices that to this day still persist among the masses. The heritage of capitalist culture, the fact that the mass of the teachers are imbued with its defects, which prevent them from being Communists, should not deter us from admitting these teachers into the ranks of the political education workers, for these teachers possess the knowledge without which we cannot achieve our aim.

We must put hundreds of thousands of useful people to work in the service of communist education. That is a task that was accomplished at the front, in our Red Army, into which tens of thousands of representatives of the old army were incorporated. In the lengthy process of re-education, they became welded with the Red Army, as they ultimately proved by their victories. This is an example that we must follow in our cultural and

educational work. True, this work is not so spectacular, but it is even more important. We need every agitator and propagandist; he will be doing his job if he works in a strictly Party spirit but at the same time does not limit himself to Party work, and remembers that it is his duty to direct hundreds of thousands of teachers, whet their interest, overcome their old bourgeois prejudices, enlist them in the work we are doing, and make them realise the immensity of our work. It is only by tackling that job that we can lead this mass of people, whom capitalism suppressed and drew away from us, along the right path.

Such are the aims that every agitator and propagandist working in the sphere of extra-mural education must pursue and constantly keep in sight. A host of practical difficulties will be encountered in the process, and you must help the cause of communism by becoming representatives and leaders, not only of Party study-circles, but of the entire state administration, which is now in the hands of the working class.

We must overcome resistance from the capitalists in all its forms, not only in the military and the political spheres, but also ideological resistance, which is the most deep-seated and the strongest. It is the duty of our educational workers to accomplish the re-education of the masses. The interest, the thirst for education and knowledge of communism which are to be seen among them are a guarantee of our victory in this field too, although, perhaps, not as rapid as at the front and only after great difficulties and at times even reverses. However, we shall ultimately win.

Last, I should like to dwell on one more point. Perhaps the title of Chief Committee for Political Education is not properly understood. Inasmuch as it makes mention of the political concept, politics is the main thing here.

But how is politics to be understood? If politics is understood in the old sense, one may fall into a grave and profound error. Politics means a struggle between classes; means the relations of the proletariat in its struggle for its emancipation, against the world bourgeoisie. However, in our struggle two aspects of the matter stand out: on the one hand, there is the task of destroying the heritage of the bourgeois system, of foiling the repeated attempts of the whole bourgeoisie to crush the Soviet state. This task has absorbed most of our attention hitherto and has prevented us from proceeding to the other task, that of construction. According to the bourgeois world outlook, politics was divorced, as it were, from economics. The bourgeoisie said: peasants, you must work for your livelihood; workers, you must work to secure your means of subsistence on the market; as for economic policy, that is the business of your masters. That, however, is not so; politics should be the business of the people, the business of the proletariat. Here we must

emphasise the fact that nine-tenths of our time and our work is devoted to the struggle against the bourgeoisie. The victories over Wrangel, of which we read yesterday, and of which you will read today and probably tomorrow, show that one stage of the struggle is coming to an end and that we have secured peace with a number of Western countries; every victory on the war front leaves our hands freer for the internal struggle, for the politics of state organisation. Every step that brings us closer to victory over the whiteguards gradually shifts the focus of the struggle to economic policy. Propaganda of the old type describes and illustrates what communism is. This kind of propaganda is now useless, for we have to show in practice how socialism is to be built. All our propaganda must be based on the political experience of economic development. That is our principal task; whoever interprets it in the old sense will show himself to be a retrograde, one who is incapable of conducting propaganda work among the masses of the peasants and workers. Our main policy must now be to develop the state economically, so as to gather in more poods of grain and mine more poods of coal, to decide how best to utilise these poods of grain and coal and preclude starvation—that is our policy. All our agitation and propaganda must be focussed on this aim. There must be less fine talk, for you cannot satisfy the working people with fine words. As soon as the war enables us to shift the focus from the struggle against the bourgeoisie, from the struggle against Wrangel and the White Guards, we shall turn to economic policy. And then agitation and propaganda will play a role of tremendous and ever growing importance.

Every agitator must be a state leader, a leader of all the peasants and workers in the work of economic development. He must tell them what one should know, what pamphlets and books one should read to become a Communist.

That is the way to improve our economic life and make it more secure, more social; that is the way to increase production, improve the food situation and distribution of the goods produced, increase coal output, and restore industry without capitalism and without the capitalist spirit.

What does communism consist in? All propaganda for communism must be conducted in a way that will amount to practical guidance of the state's development. Communism must be made comprehensible to the masses of the workers so that they will regard it as their own cause. That task is being poorly accomplished, and thousands of mistakes are being made. We make no secret of the fact. However, the workers and the peasants must themselves build up and improve our apparatus, with our assistance, feeble and inadequate as it is. To us, that is no longer a programme, a theory, or a task to be accomplished; it has become a matter of actual and practical development. Although we suffered some cruel reverses in our war, we have

at least learnt from these reverses and won complete victory. Now, too, we must learn a lesson from every defeat and must remember that the workers and peasants have to be instructed by taking the work already performed as an example. We must point out what is bad, so as to avoid it in future.

By taking constructive work as an example, by repeating it time and again, we shall succeed in turning inefficient communist managers into genuine builders, and, in the first place, into builders of our economic life. We shall achieve our targets and overcome all the obstacles which we have inherited from the old system and cannot be eliminated at a single stroke. We must re-educate the masses; they can be re-educated only by agitation and propaganda. The masses must be brought, in the first place, into the work of building the entire economic life. That must be the principal and basic object in the work of each agitator and propagandist, and when he realises this, the success of his work will be assured. (*Loud applause.*)

Note

1. The Conference met in Moscow from November 2 to 8, 1920, with 283 delegates attending. The main question discussed was the establishment of the Chief Committee for Political Education. A. V. Lunacharsky delivered the opening address, in which he dealt with the work done in the sphere of political education. The Conference also heard a report by N. K. Krupskaya on the current plan of work of the Chief Committee for Political Education, and Y. A. Litkens's report on the organisation of local political education departments. Other items on the agenda concerned the food campaign and political education, production propaganda in the light of the rehabilitation of economic activity, and the elimination of illiteracy. Lenin spoke after Krupskaya at the third session of the Conference, on the second day of the proceedings.

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6

Instructions of the Central Committee

*To Communists Working in the People's
Commissariat for Education*

Study and Discussion Guide

1. What is polytechnical education?
2. What is the larger context in which the CC of the CPSU is calling to extend the reach of polytechnical education?
3. How does the CC conceptualize the relationship between non communist specialists and communists in the training of teachers?
4. Why is it important that the curricula are controlled by the Collegium and the People's Commissar?
5. The Instructions specifically note that distributing literature is insignificant in reaching the masses of workers as the final statement stressing the fundamental necessity of completely revising the whole system of education and knowledge production. What is the overall message and intent of these instructions?

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Instructions of the Central Committee

To Communists Working in the People's Commissariat for Education

Written: February 5, 1921

Source: Lenin's *Collected Works*, 1st English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, Volume 32, pages 120–122

1. Unreservedly adhering to the position defined by the Programme of the R.C.P. in regard to polytechnical education (see, in particular, § 1 and 8 of the section dealing with education), the Party must regard the lowering of the age for general and polytechnical education from seventeen to fifteen as only a practical expedient necessitated by the country's poverty and ruin caused by the wars imposed upon us by the Entente.

Vocational training for persons. of fifteen years of age and upwards 'in conjunction with . . . general polytechnical education" (8 mentioned above) is absolutely compulsory all over the country, wherever there is the slightest opportunity to introduce it.

2. The main failing of the People's Commissariat for Education is its lack of practical efficiency, inadequate attention to the recording and verification of practical experience, lack of systematic application of its lessons, and prevalence of general arguments and

abstract slogans. The People's Commissar and the Collegium must concentrate on combating these defects.

3. The enlistment of specialists, i.e., of teachers with theoretical and long practical experience, and of persons having such experience in technical (including agronomic) vocational training for work at the centre, is improperly organised in the People's Commissariat for Education in genera], and in Glavprofobr, [The Chief Administration for Vocational Training under the People's Commissariat for Education—*Editor*] in particular.

The registration of such workers, the study of their experience, the verification of the results of their work, and their systematic enlistment for responsible posts in local, and specially central, work must be organised immediately. Not a single serious measure should be carried out without canvassing the opinion of these specialists and obtaining their continued co-operation.

It goes without saying that the enlistment of specialists must be carried out under these two indispensable conditions: first, specialists who are not Communists must work under the control of Communists; secondly, Communists alone must determine the content of the curricula, in so far as this concerns general educational subjects, and particularly philosophy, the social sciences and communist education.

4. Curricula for the main types of educational establishments and for courses, lectures, readings, colloquia and practice periods must be drawn up and endorsed by the Collegium and the People's Commissar.
5. The Standard Labour School Department, and, in particular, Glavprofobr, must devote greater attention to the wider and more systematic enlistment of all suitable technical and agronomic forces for the promotion of technical vocational and polytechnical education and to the utilisation for that purpose of every tolerably well-organised industrial and agricultural enterprise (state farm, agricultural experimental station, well-organised farm, etc., electric power stations, etc.).

To avoid disruption of normal operations, the forms and the order in which economic enterprises and establishments are to be used for polytechnical education are to be determined by agreement with the economic agencies concerned.

6. Clear, concise and practical forms of reporting must be devised to make it possible to estimate the scale and verify the results of the work. The organisation of this work in the People's Commissariat for Education is highly unsatisfactory.

7. The distribution of newspapers, pamphlets, magazines and books to libraries and reading-rooms in schools and elsewhere is also highly unsatisfactory. The result is that newspapers and books reach only a small section of Soviet office workers and extremely few factory workers and peasants. This whole system must be reorganised from top to bottom.

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The Work of the People's Commissariat for Education

1. Lenin wrote this article, published in the CPSU's newspaper, *Pravda*, as a correction to the way polytechnical education was dealt with at a 5 day education conference in 1920. Why was this such an important issue for Lenin?
2. Why does Lenin put so much emphasis on the need for communists and progressives to refrain from employing "abstract slogans"? In other words, what is the danger of using "abstract slogans"?
3. Lenin argues the conference wasted time playing games of abstraction rather than "recording" and verifying "practical experience." The conference, for Lenin, failed to identify people with practical pedagogical experience. How does Lenin suggest this flaw be overcome? What lessons does it offer contemporary communist organizers working within imperialist countries such as the United States?
4. Rather than focus on finding competent teachers to put in leadership positions, the conference engaged in abstract theorizing. What does this separation between educational theory and education itself look like in the United States? Who makes educational policy?

- What role do teachers play in policy formation? How do teacher unions mediate this disconnection?
5. Discuss Lenin's orientation on the work of the communist in mobilizing the practical experience of teachers: "The Communist who is a real leader will correct the curricula drawn up by the experienced teachers, compile a good textbook and achieve *practical*, even if slight, improvements in the content of the work of a *score, a hundred, or a thousand expert teachers*. *But there is not much use in the Communist who talks about "leadership," but is incapable of enlisting any specialists for practical work, getting them to achieve practical results in their work, and utilising the practical experience gained by hundreds upon hundreds of teachers.*"
 6. After outlining his biting critique of the People's Commissariat for Education Lenin offers a bit of revolutionary optimism noting that despite the flaws he outlines, education in the Soviet Union was nevertheless "making progress." Why is revolutionary optimism important?
 7. Lenin then turns to a discussion of the number of libraries and the thirst for knowledge workers in the Soviet Union were expressing, offering another example of revolutionary optimism providing inspiration for the work of advancing communists' education work beyond creating abstract slogans. Discuss the extreme importance of this orientation.
 8. In his discussion about the distribution of books and newspapers Lenin notes that the transition from capitalism to communism cannot happen all at once, but is developmental. Why is this such an important point? How does it equally apply to those of us in imperialist countries and thus not nearly as advanced in the movement toward communism as the Soviet Union was?

The Work of the People's Commissariat for Education

Delivered: February 7, 1921

Source: Lenin's *Collected Works*, 1st English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, Volume 32, pages 123–132

Pravda No. 25 of February 5 carried “*Instructions of the Central Committee of the R.C.P. to Communists Working in the People's Commissariat for Education (in connection with the reorganisation of the Commissariat)*”

Unfortunately, there are three misprints in Point I distorting the meaning: the text said political” instead of ”polytechnical“ education.

I should like to draw our comrades' attention to these instructions and to call for an exchange of opinion on some of the more important points.

A five-day Party Conference on educational questions was held in December 1920. It was attended by 134 delegates with voice and vote, and 29 with voice. A report of its proceedings is given in a *Supplement to the Bulletin of the Eighth Congress of Soviets on the Party Conference on Education* (published by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, January 10, 1921). The resolutions of the Conference, the report of the proceedings, all the articles published in the above-mentioned *Supplement*—except for the introductory article by Comrade Lunacharsky and the article by Comrade Grinko reveal

a wrong approach to polytechnical education. They suffer from the very defect on combating which the Central Committee in its instructions urges the People's Commissar and the Collegium to concentrate their attention, namely, too many general arguments and abstract slogans.

The question of polytechnical education has in the main been settled by our Party Programme in paragraphs 1 and 8 of the section dealing with the people's education. It is these paragraphs that are dealt with in the Central Committee's Instructions. Paragraph 1 deals with *polytech* meal education up to the age of seventeen; and Paragraph 8 speaks of "the extensive development of vocational training for persons of the age of seventeen and upwards *in conjunction with general polytechnical education.*"

Thus, the Party Programme puts the question squarely. The arguments about "*polytechnical or monotekhnical* education" (the words I have put in quotes and italics, monstrously absurd though they are, are the very words that we find on page 4 of the *Supplement*) are fundamentally wrong and downright impermissible for a Communist; they betray ignorance of the Programme and an idle inclination for abstract slogans. While we are *temporarily compelled to lower the age (for passing from general polytechnical education to polytechnical vocational training)* from seventeen to fifteen, the "*Party must regard*" this lowering of the age "as only" (point I of the Central Committee's Instructions) a practical expedient necessitated by the "*country's poverty and ruin.*"

General arguments with futile efforts to "substantiate" this lowering are claptrap. Let us stop this game of general arguments and "theorising"! Attention must be concentrated on the "recording and verification of *practical* experience" and the "*systematic application of its lessons.*"

We may have very few competent people with knowledge and practical pedagogical experience but we do have some. We suffer from our inability to find them, install them in the proper executive posts, and join them in studying the practical experience of Soviet state development. Now this is precisely what the Party Conference in December 1920 failed to do, and if this was not done at a conference of 163—one hundred and sixty three!—educational workers, it is quite evident that there must be a general, fundamental flaw in the organisation of this work, which made it necessary for the Party's Central Committee to issue special instructions.

In the Commissariat for Education there are two—just two—comrades who have special assignments. These are the People's Commissar, Comrade Lunacharsky, who exercises general direction, and Deputy Commissar, Comrade Pokrovsky, who directs affairs, firstly, as Deputy People's Commissar, and secondly, as official adviser (and director) on scientific matters and

questions of Marxism in general. The whole Party knows both Comrade Lunacharsky and Comrade Pokrovsky very well and has no doubt, of course, that in this respect both are, in their way, “specialists” in the People's Commissariat for Education. None of the other workers of the Commissariat can afford to “specialise” in this way: their “speciality” must lie in skilfully organising the enlistment of expert teachers, in organising their work properly, and in systematically applying the lessons of practical experience. The Central Committee's instructions refer to this in points 2, 3 and 5.

The Party workers' conference should have heard reports by specialist-teachers with some ten years' practical experience who could have told us what is being done and has been done in the various spheres, say, vocational training, how we are coping with it in our Soviet organisation, what has been achieved, illustrated with examples (which could surely be found, even if in small number), what were the main defects, and how these could be removed, stated in concrete terms.

The Party workers' conference made no such record of *practical* experience, and heard no teachers on their application of this experience; but fatuous efforts were made to produce “general arguments” and appraise “abstract slogans.” The whole Party, all the workers of the People's Commissariat for Education, must realise this defect and correct it in a common effort. Local workers should exchange experience and help the Party to give publicity to the exemplary gubernias, uyezds, districts, schools, or expert teachers who have achieved good results in a relatively narrow, local or special field. Taking as a basis the achievements that have stood the test of practice, we must press on and, after proper verification, apply this local experience on a nation-wide scale, promoting talented, or simply capable, teachers to more responsible posts, giving them a wider sphere of activity, etc.

The touchstone of a Communist's work in education (and educational institutions) should be his efforts in organising the enlistment of specialists, his ability to find them, utilise their knowledge, secure the cooperation of expert teachers with the Communist leadership, and verify what and how much is *being done*. He must show ability to make progress—even if very slowly and on a very small scale—so long as it is achieved in *practical* matters, on the basis of *practical* experience. But we shall not move forward if the People's Commissariat for Education continues to be full of people who pretend to provide “Communist leadership” while there is a vacuum in the practical sphere, a shortage, or total lack, of practical specialists, inability to promote them, hear what they have to say and take account of their experience. The Communist leader must prove his claim to leadership by recruiting a growing number of experienced teachers to help him, and by

showing his ability to help them. in their work, to promote them, and take account of and bring out their experience.

In this sense the invariable slogan must be: less “leadership,” more practical work, that is to say, fewer general arguments and more facts, and I mean verified facts, showing where, when and what progress we are making or whether we are marking time, or retreating. The Communist who is a real leader will correct the curricula drawn up by the experienced teachers, compile a good textbook and achieve *practical*, even if slight, improvements in the content of the work of a *score, a hundred, or a thousand expert teachers*. *But there is not much use in the Communist who talks about “leadership,” but is incapable of enlisting any specialists for practical work, getting them to achieve practical results in their work, and utilising the practical experience gained by hundreds upon hundreds of teachers.*

That this is the main flaw in the work of the People’s Commissariat for Education is evident from a paging through the fine booklet, *The People’s Commissariat for Education. October 1917—October 1920. Brie! Report*. Comrade Lunacharsky admits this when he refers in the preface (p. 5) to the “obvious lack of the practical approach.” But much more effort will be needed to drive this home to all the Communists in the People’s Commissariat for Education and make them practise these truths. This booklet shows that our knowledge of the facts is poor, very poor indeed; we do not know how to collect them; we are unable to judge how many questions we ought to raise and the number of answers we can expect to get (taking into consideration our level of culture, our customs, and our means of communication). We don’t know how to collect evidence of practical experience and sum it up. We indulge in empty “general arguments and abstract slogans,” but do not know how to utilise the services of competent teachers, in general, and of competent engineers and agronomists for technical education, in particular; we don’t know how to utilise factories, state farms, tolerably well-organised enterprises and electric power stations for the purpose of polytechnical education.

In spite of these defects, the Soviet Republic is making progress in public education; there is no doubt about that. There is a mighty urge for light and knowledge “down below,” that is to say, among the mass of working people whom capitalism had been hypocritically cheating out of an education and depriving of it by open violence. We can be proud that we are promoting and fostering this urge. But it would be a real crime to ignore the defects in our work, and the fact that we have not yet learned properly to organise the state apparatus of education.

Take also the distribution of newspapers and books, the question dealt with in the last point of the Central Committee's Instructions, point 7.

The Council of People's Commissars issued its decree on "The Centralisation of Libraries" (p. 439, *Collection of Statutes, 1920*, No. 87) on November 3, 1920, providing for the creation of *a single network of libraries of the R.S.F.S.R.*

Here are some of the data I have been able to obtain on the question from Comrade Malkin of the Central Periodicals Administration, and from Comrade Modestov of the Library Section of the Moscow Department of Education. In 38 gubernias, 305 uyezds, the number of libraries in central Soviet Russia (excluding Siberia and North Caucasus) was as follows:

Central libraries	342
District, urban libraries	521
Volost libraries	4,474
Travelling Volost libraries	1, 601
Village reading rooms	14 739
Miscellaneous ("rural, juvenile, reference, libraries of various institutions and organisations")	12,203
Total	33,940

Comrade Modestov believes, on the basis of his experience, that about three-quarters of this number actually exist, while the rest are only listed as such. For Moscow Gubernia, the Central Periodicals Administration gives the figure of 1,223 libraries, while Comrade Modestov's figure is 1,018; of these 204 are in the city proper and 814 in the gubernia, net counting the trade union libraries (probably about 16) and the army libraries (about 125).

As far as can be judged from a comparison of the different gubernias, these figures are not very reliable—let us hope the actual figure does not turn out to be under 75 per cent! In Vyalka Gubernia, for example, there are 1,703 village reading—rooms, in Vladimir Gubernia—37, in Petrograd Gubernia—98, in Ivanovo—Voznesensk Gubernia—75, etc. Of the "miscellaneous" libraries there are 36 in Petrograd Gubernia, 378 in Voronezh Gubernia, 525 in Ufa Gubernia, 31 in Pskov Gubernia, etc.

These figures seem to show that the thirst for knowledge among the mass of workers and peasants is tremendous, and that the striving for education and the establishment of libraries is mighty and "popular" in the real sense of the word. But we are still very short of ability in organising, regulating, shaping and properly satisfying this popular urge. Much remains to be done in creating a real integrated network of libraries.

How are we distributing the newspapers and books? According to the Administration's 1020 figures for elovcii months, we distributed 401 million copies of newspapers and 14 million books. Here are the figures for three newspapers (January 12, 1921), compiled by tho Periodicals Section of the Central Ad mijj istrat ion for ilte Distribution of Books.¹

	<i>Izvestta</i>	<i>Pravda</i>	<i>Bednota</i>
Branches of the Central Periodicals Administration	191,000	139,000	183,000
Military Bureau for the Supply of Literature and Newspapers to Divisional Dispatch Offices.	50,000	40,000	85,000
Railway organisations, Railway Dept., Central Periodicals Administration and Agitation Centres	30,000	25,000	16,000
City of Moscow 65,000	35,000	8,000	
Commandant of the City of Moscow	8,000	7,000	6,000
Passenger trains 1,000	1,000	1,000	
Public Reading stands and Files	5,000	3,000	1,000
Total	350,000	250,000	300,000

The figure for public reading stands, i.e., the really massive distribution, is astonishingly small, as against the enormous figures for the “establishments,” etc., in the capital, evidently the papers grabbed and bureaucratically utilised by “Soviet bureaucrats,” both military and civilian.

Here are a few more figures taken from the reports of the local branches of the Central Periodicals Administration. In September 1920, its Voronezh Gubernia branch received newspapers twelve times (that is to say, there were no papers on eighteen of the thirty days in September). Those received were distributed as follows: *Izvestia* (to 210rj105 of the G.P.A.): uyezd—t,986 copies (4,020; 4,310) [First figure—*Pravda*, second, *Bednota*.]; uistnct—'i.215 (5,850; 10,064); voioat—3,370 (3,200; 4,285); Party organisations—447 (569; 3,880); Soviet establishments—1,765 (1,641; 509)—note that Soviet establishments received nearly three times as many copies of *Pravda* as Party organisations! Then follow: Agitation and Educational Department of the Military Commissariat—5,532 (5,703; 12,832); agitation centres—352 (400; 593); village reading—rooms—nil. Subscribers—7,167 (3,080; 764). Thus, “subscribers” (actually, of course, “Soviet bureaucrats”) received a fat slice. Public reading stands—460 (508; 500). Total: 32,517 (25,104; 37,237).

In November 1920, Ufa Gubernia received 25 consignments, that is to say, there was no delivery on five days only. Distribution: Party organisations—113 (1,572; 153); Soviet establishments—2,753 (1,296; 1,267); Agitation and Educational Department of the Military Commissariat—687

(470; 6,500); Volost Executive Committees—903 (308; 3,511); village reading rooms—36 (*Pravda*—8, eight copies!—2,538); subscribers—nil; various uyezd organisations—1,044 (219; 991). Total: 5,841 (4,069; 15,429).

Lastly, the report of the branch in Pustoshensk Volost, Sudogoda Uyezd, Vladimir Gubernia for December 1920. Party organisations—1 (1; 2); Soviet offices—2 (1; 3); Agitation and Educational Department of the Military Commissariat—2 (1; 2); Volost Executive Committees—2 (1; 3); post and telegraph offices—1 (1; 1); Urshelsky Works Committee—1 (1; 2); District Department of Social Maintenance—1 (0; 3). Total: 10 (6; 16).

What is the conclusion to be drawn from these fragmentary data? I believe it is what our Party Programme says, namely: Only the first steps in the transition from capitalism to communism are being taken . . . at the present time.

Under capitalism, a newspaper is a capitalist enterprise, a means of enrichment, a medium of information and entertainment for the rich, and an instrument for duping and cheating the mass of working people. We have smashed this instrument of profit—making and deceit. We *have begun to convert the newspapers into an instrument for educating the masses and for teaching them to live and run their economy without the landowners and capitalists. But we are only at the start of the road. Not much has been done during the last three years or so. A great deal remains to be done: the road ahead is very long indeed. Let us have less political fireworks, fewer general arguments and abstract slogans from inexperienced Communists who fail to understand their tasks; let us have more production propaganda and, above all, more efficient and capable application of practical experience to fit the development of the masses.*

We have abolished newspaper subscriptions (I have no data on the distribution of books; there the situation is probably even worse). This is a step from capitalism to communism. But capitalism cannot be killed at one stroke; it rears its head in the form of “Soviet bureaucrats” grabbing the newspapers on various pretexts—they must be grabbing a great number, though we cannot say just how many. There must be a sustained drive in this field against the Soviet bureaucrats, who must be “rapped over the knuckles” for grabbing books and newspapers. Their share—and they themselves—must be steadily reduced. Unfortunately, we are unable to slash their number down to one-tenth, or one-hundredth—it would be a fraud to promise this at our present level of culture, but we can and must whittle it down. No real Communist will fail to do this.

We must see to it that books and newspapers are, as a rule, distributed gratis only to the libraries and reading-rooms, which provide a proper reading service for the whole country and the whole mass of workers, soldiers

and peasants. This will accelerate, intensify and make more effective the people's eager quest for knowledge. That is when education will advance by leaps and bounds.

Here is some simple arithmetic by way of illustration: there are 350,000 copies of *Izvestia* and 250,000 copies of *Pravda* for the whole of Russia. We are poor. We have no newsprint. The workers are short of fuel, food, clothes and footwear. The machines are worn out. The buildings are falling apart. Let us assume that we actually have for the country as a whole—that is some 10,000 odd volosts—50,000 libraries and reading-rooms. This would give no less than three for each volost, and certainly one for each factory and military unit. Let us further assume that we have not only learned to take the first stop from capitalism to communism," but also the second and the third. Let us assume that we have learned to distribute three copies of newspapers to every library and readingroom, of which, say, two go on the 'public reading stands" (assuming that we have taken the fourth stop from capitalism to communism, I make the bold assumption that instead of pasting newspapers on walls in the barbarous way which spoils them, we fix them with wooden pegs—we have no metal tacks, and there will be a shortage of metal even at the "fourth step"!—to a smooth board for convenient reading and to keep the papers from spoiling). And so, two copies each for 50,000 libraries and reading-rooms for "pasting up" and one copy to be kept in reserve. Let us also assume that we have learned to allow the Soviet bureaucrats, the pampered "grandees" of the Soviet Republic, a *moderate* number of newspapers for them to waste, let us say, no more than a few thousand copies.

On these bold assumptions the country will have a much better service with 160,000, or, say, 175,000 copies. The papers will be there for everyone to read the news (if the "travelling libraries" which, in my opinion, Comrade F. Dobler so successfully defended in *Pravda* just the other day, are properly organised²). All this needs is 350,000 copies of two newspapers. Today, there are 600,000 copies, a large part of which is being grabbed by the "Soviet bureaucrats," wasted as "cigarette paper," etc., simply through the habits acquired under capitalism. This would give us a saving of 250,000 copies, or, despite our extreme poverty, a saving equal to two dailies with a circulation of 125,000 each. Each of these could carry to the people every day serious and valuable literary material and the best modern and classical fiction, and textbooks on general educational subjects, agriculture and industry. Long before the war, the French bourgeoisie learned to make money by publishing popular fiction, not at 3.50 francs a volume for the gentry, but at 10 centimes (i.e., 35 times as cheap, 4 kopeks at the pre-war rate) in the form of a proletarian newspaper; why, in that case, can't we do

the same—at the second step from capitalism to communism. Why can't we do the same thing and learn, within a year, even in our present state of poverty, to give the people two copies of a newspaper through each of the 50,000 libraries and reading-rooms, all the necessary textbooks and world classics, and books on modern science and engineering.

We shall learn to do this, I am sure.

Notes

1. The Central Administration for the Distribution of Books under the State Publishing House was set up in December 1919 to work out a national plan for the stocktaking and distribution of literature.
2. F. Dobler's article "Modern Library Network" was published in *Pravda* No. 24, February 4, 1921.

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The New Economic Policy and the Tasks of the Political Education Departments

*Report to the Second All-Russia Congress of Political
Education Departments October 17, 1921*

Study and Discussion Guide

1. After offering such a strong critique of the first All-Russia Congress of Political Education Departments, Lenin offers this report to the second one in light of a “new” economic policy as the Soviet Union manages the difficult terrain of advancing toward communism given the enormity of external threats and internal limitations. How would you describe the tone and overall message of this report?
2. Why did the Soviet Union allow for state capitalism to build socialism in 1918, according to Lenin?
3. Why does Lenin argue that it was a mistake to move to communist production and distribution too soon after the Civil and imperialist war ended in 1920?
4. How does Lenin define the role of the Political Education Departments in light of the “strategical retreat”?

5. Regarding the new strategy, which includes a food tax to facilitate the distribution of grain, the product of peasant labor, the central question for Lenin is: who will the peasants follow? The proletariat and the socialist agenda or the capitalist seeking to completely restore capitalism because it is “safer”? Political education, in this context, is fundamentally important. Discuss this situation and how it might inform the role of political education in today’s communist movement in imperialist countries like the US.
6. Discuss the section, “Who will win, the capitalist or Soviet power?” How might we phrase this question so it is contextually relevant to our current situation?
7. What are the educational implications of the following passage where Lenin points to what he considers to be the heart of the struggle: “We ourselves must see clearly that the issue in this struggle is: Who will win? Who will gain the upper hand? and we must make the broadest masses of workers and peasants see it clearly.”
8. Why is it significant that Lenin conceives the proletarian struggle a global struggle?
9. Why does Lenin insist that “we cannot count on going straight to communism?”
10. Help us make sense of the following statement, which is part of the New Economic Policy’s education component: “When there is communism, the methods of education will be milder. Now, however, I say education must be harsh, otherwise we shall perish.”
11. How does Lenin discuss the role of cultural backwardness in preventing the Soviet Union from engaging in a “frontal assault” on capitalism?
12. Why does Lenin stress the importance of the masses being aware of the economic strategy needed to fend off capitalism while simultaneously become more productive and efficient?
13. What case does Lenin make for the need to eradicate illiteracy? Why does he argue literacy is not enough? What does he suggest is needed?
14. Discuss the task of political educationalists.
15. What does Lenin identify as the three chief enemies? What does he offer us in terms of strategies for combating them? What lessons might we adopt for our context?
16. Why is it significant for Lenin that cultural problems are more difficult to solve than military problems?

The New Economic Policy and the Tasks of the Political Education Departments

*Report to the Second All-Russia Congress of Political
Education Departments October 17, 1921¹*

Delivered: October 17, 1921

Source: Lenin's *Collected Works*, 2nd English edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, Volume 33, pages 60–79

Comrades, I intend to devote this report, or rather talk, to the New Economic Policy, and to the tasks of the Political Education Departments arising out of this policy, as I understand them. I think it would be quite wrong to limit reports on questions that do not come within the scope of a given congress to bare information about what is going on generally in the Party or in the Soviet Republic.

Abrupt Change of Policy of the Soviet Government and the R.C.P.

While I do not in the least deny the value of such information and the usefulness of conferences on all questions, I nevertheless find that the main

Learning with Lenin, pages 101–117
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defect in the proceedings of most of our congresses is that they are not directly and immediately connected with the practical problems before them. These are the defects that I should like to speak about both in connection with and in respect of the New Economic Policy.

I shall speak about the New Economic Policy briefly and in general terms. Comrades, the overwhelming majority of you are Communists, and although some of you are very young, you have worked magnificently to carry out our general policy in the first years of our revolution. Having done a large part of this work you cannot help seeing the abrupt change made by our Soviet government and our Communist Party in adopting the economic policy which we call “new,” new, that is, in respect of our previous economic policy.

In substance, however, this new policy contains more elements of the old than our previous economic policy did.

Why? Because our previous economic policy, if we cannot say counted on (in the situation then prevailing we did little counting in general), then to a certain degree assumed—we may say uncalculatingly assumed—that there would be a direct transition from the old Russian economy to state production and distribution on communist lines.

If we recall the economic literature that we ourselves issued in the past, if we recall what Communists wrote before and very soon after we took power in Russia—for example, in the beginning of 1918, when the first political assault upon old Russia ended in a smashing victory, when the Soviet Republic was created, when Russia emerged from the imperialist war, mutilated, it is true, but not so mutilated as she would have been had she continued to “defend the fatherland” as she was advised to do by the imperialists, the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries—if we recall all this we shall understand that in the initial period, when we had only just completed the first stage in the work of building up the Soviet government and had only just emerged from the imperialist war, what we said about our tasks in the field of economic development was much more cautious and circumspect than our actions in the latter half of 1918 and throughout 1919 and 1920.

The 1918 Decision of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on the Role of the Peasantry

Even if all of you were not yet active workers in the Party and the Soviets at that time, you have at all events been able to make, and of course have made, yourselves familiar with decisions such as that adopted by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee at the end of April 1918.[2] That

decision pointed to the necessity to take peasant farming into consideration, and it was based on a report which made allowance for the role of state capitalism in building socialism in a peasant country; a report which emphasised the importance of personal, individual, one-man responsibility; which emphasised the significance of that factor in the administration of the country as distinct from the political tasks of organising state power and from military tasks.

Our Mistake

At the beginning of 1918 we expected a period in which peaceful construction would be possible. When the Brest peace was signed it seemed that danger had subsided for a time and that it would be possible to start peaceful construction. But we were mistaken, because in 1918 a real military danger overtook us in the shape of the Czechoslovak mutiny and the outbreak of civil war, which dragged on until 1920. Partly owing to the war problems that overwhelmed us and partly owing to the desperate position in which the Republic found itself when the imperialist war ended—owing to these circumstances, and a number of others, we made the mistake of deciding to go over directly to communist production and distribution. We thought that under the surplus-food appropriation system the peasants would provide us with the required quantity of grain, which we could distribute among the factories and thus achieve communist production and distribution.

I cannot say that we pictured this plan as definitely and as clearly as that; but we acted approximately on those lines. That, unfortunately, is a fact. I say unfortunately, because brief experience convinced us that that line was wrong, that it ran counter to what we had previously written about the transition from capitalism to socialism, namely, that it would be impossible to bypass the period of socialist accounting and control in approaching even the lower stage of communism. Ever since 1917, when the problem of taking power arose and the Bolsheviks explained it to the whole people, our theoretical literature has been definitely stressing the necessity for a prolonged, complex transition through socialist accounting and control from capitalist society (and the less developed it is the longer the transition will take) to even one of the approaches to communist society.

A Strategic Retreat

At that time, when in the heat of the Civil War we had to take the necessary steps in economic organisation, it seemed to have been forgotten. In

substance, our New Economic Policy signifies that, having sustained severe defeat on this point, we have started a strategical retreat. We said in effect: "Before we are completely routed, let us retreat and reorganise everything, but on a firmer basis. " If Communists deliberately examine the question of the New Economic Policy there cannot be the slightest doubt in their minds that we have sustained a very severe defeat on the economic front. In the circumstances it is inevitable, of course, for some people to become very despondent, almost panic-stricken, and because of the retreat, these people will begin to give way to panic. That is inevitable. When the Red Army retreated, was its flight from the enemy not the prelude to its victory? Every retreat on every front, however, caused some people to give way to panic for a time. But on each occasion—on the Kolchak front, on the Denikin front, on the Yudenich front, on the Polish front and on the Wrangel front—once we had been badly battered (and sometimes more than once) we proved the truth of the proverb: "A man who has been beaten is worth two who haven't." After being beaten we began to advance slowly, systematically and cautiously.

Of course, tasks on the economic front are much more difficult than tasks on the war front, although there is a general similarity between the two elementary outlines of strategy. In attempting to go over straight to communism we, in the spring of 1921, sustained a more serious defeat on the economic front than any defeat inflicted upon us by Kolchak, Denikin or Pilsudski. This defeat was much more serious, significant and dangerous. It was expressed in the isolation of the higher administrators of our economic policy from the lower and their failure to produce that development of the productive forces which the Programme of our Party regards as vital and urgent.

The surplus-food appropriation system in the rural districts—this direct communist approach to the problem of urban development—hindered the growth of the productive forces and proved to be the main cause of the profound economic and political crisis that we experienced in the spring of 1921. That was why we had to take a step which from the point of view of our line, of our policy, cannot be called anything else than a very severe defeat and retreat. Moreover, it cannot be said that this retreat is—like retreats of the Red Army—a completely orderly retreat to previously prepared positions. True, the positions for our present retreat were prepared beforehand. That can be proved by comparing the decisions adopted by our Party in the spring of 1921 with the one adopted in April 1918, which I have mentioned. The positions were prepared beforehand; but the retreat to these positions took place (and is still taking place in many parts of the country) in disorder, and even in extreme disorder.

Purport of the New Economic Policy

It is here that the task of the Political Education Departments to combat this comes to the forefront. The main problem in the light of the New Economic Policy is to take advantage of the situation that has arisen as speedily as possible.

The New Economic Policy means substituting a tax for the requisitioning of food; it means reverting to capitalism to a considerable extent—to what extent we do not know. Concessions to foreign capitalists (true, only very few have been accepted, especially when compared with the number we have offered) and leasing enterprises to private capitalists definitely mean restoring capitalism, and this is part and parcel of the New Economic Policy; for the abolition of the surplus-food appropriation system means allowing the peasants to trade freely in their surplus agricultural produce, in whatever is left over after the tax is collected—and the tax takes only a small share of that produce. The peasants constitute a huge section of our population and of our entire economy, and that is why capitalism must grow out of this soil of free trading.

That is the very ABCs of economics as taught by the rudiments of that science, and in Russia taught, furthermore, by the profiteer, the creature who needs no economic or political science to teach us economics with. From the point of view of strategy the root question is: who will take advantage of the new situation first? The whole question is—whom will the peasantry follow? The proletariat, which wants to build socialist society? Or the capitalist, who says, “Let us turn back; it is safer that way; we don’t know anything about this socialism they have invented”?

Who Will Win, the Capitalist or Soviet Power?

The issue in the present war is—who will win, who will first take advantage of the situation: the capitalist, whom we are allowing to come in by the door, and even by several doors (and by many doors we are not aware of, and which open without us, and in spite of us), or proletarian state power? What has the latter to rely on economically? On the one hand, the improved position of the people. In this connection we must remember the peasants. It is absolutely incontrovertible and obvious to all that in spite of the awful disaster of the famine—and leaving that disaster out of the reckoning for the moment—the improvement that has taken place in the position of the people has been due to the change in our economic policy.

On the other hand, if capitalism gains by it, industrial production will grow, and the proletariat will grow too. The capitalists will gain from our policy and will create an industrial proletariat, which in our country, owing to the war and to the desperate poverty and ruin, has become declassed, i. e., dislodged from its class groove, and has ceased to exist as a proletariat. The proletariat is the class which is engaged in the production of material values in large-scale capitalist industry. Since large-scale capitalist industry has been destroyed, since the factories are at a standstill, the proletariat has disappeared. It has sometimes figured in statistics, but it has not been held together economically.

The restoration of capitalism would mean the restoration of a proletarian class engaged in the production of socially useful material values in big factories employing machinery, and not in profiteering, not in making cigarette-lighters for sale, and in other “work” which is not very useful, but which is inevitable when our industry is in a state of ruin.

The whole question is who will take the lead. We must face this issue squarely—who will come out on top? Either the capitalists succeed in organising first—in which case they will drive out the Communists and that will be the end of it. Or the proletarian state power, with the support of the peasantry, will prove capable of keeping a proper rein on those gentlemen, the capitalists, so as to direct capitalism along state channels and to create a capitalism that will be subordinate to the state and serve the state. The question must be put soberly. All this ideology, all these arguments about political liberties that we hear so much of, especially among Russian émigrés, in *Russia No. 2*, where scores of daily newspapers published by all the political parties extol these liberties in every key and every manner—all these are mere talk, mere phrase-mongering. We must learn to ignore this phrase mongering.

The Fight Will Be Even Fiercer

During the past four years we have fought many hard battles and we have learnt that it is one thing to fight hard battles and another to talk about them—something onlookers particularly indulge in. We must learn to ignore all this ideology, all this chatter, and see the substance of things. And the substance is that the fight will be even more desperate and fiercer than the fight we waged against Kolchak and Denikin. That fighting was war, something we were familiar with. There have been wars for hundreds, for thousands of years. In the art of human slaughter much progress has been made.

True, nearly every landowner had at his headquarters Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, who talked loudly about government by the people, the Constituent Assembly, and about the Bolsheviks having violated all liberties.

It was, of course, much easier to solve war problems than those that confront us now; war problems could be solved by assault, attack, enthusiasm, by the sheer physical force of the hosts of workers and peasants, who saw the landowners marching against them. Now there are no avowed landowners. Some of the Wrangels, Kolchaks and Denikins have gone the way of Nicholas Romanov, and some have sought refuge abroad. The people no longer see the open enemy as they formerly saw the landowners and capitalists. The people cannot clearly picture to themselves that the enemy is the same, that he is now in our very midst, that the revolution is on the brink of the precipice which all previous revolutions reached and recoiled from—they cannot picture this because of their profound ignorance and illiteracy. It is hard to say how long it will take all sorts of extraordinary commissions to eradicate this illiteracy by extraordinary means.

How can the people know that instead of Kolchak, Wrangel and Denikin we have in our midst the enemy who has crushed all previous revolutions? If the capitalists gain the upper hand there will be a return to the old regime. That has been demonstrated by the experience of all previous revolutions. Our Party must make the masses realise that the enemy in our midst is anarchic capitalism and anarchic commodity exchange. We ourselves must see clearly that the issue in this struggle is: Who will win? Who will gain the upper hand? And we must make the broadest masses of workers and peasants see it clearly. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the sternest and fiercest struggle that the proletariat must wage against the whole world, for the whole world was against us in supporting Kolchak and Denikin.

Now the bourgeoisie of the whole world are supporting the Russian bourgeoisie, and they are still ever so much stronger than we are. That, however, does not throw us into a panic. Their military forces were stronger than ours. Nevertheless, they failed to crush us in war, although, being immeasurably superior to us in artillery and aircraft, it should have been very easy for them to do so. Perhaps they would have crushed us had any of the capitalist states that were fighting us mobilised a few army corps in time, and had they not grudged a loan of several millions in gold to Kolchak.

However, they failed because the rank-and-file British soldiers who came to Archangel, and the sailors who compelled the French fleet to leave Odessa, realised that their rulers were wrong and we were right. Now, too,

we are being attacked by forces that are stronger than ours; and to win in this struggle we must rely upon our last source of strength. That last source of strength is the mass of workers and peasants, their class-consciousness and organisation.

Either organised proletarian power—and the advanced workers and a small section of the advanced peasants will understand this and succeed in organising a popular movement around themselves—in which case we shall be victorious; or we fail to do this—in which case the enemy, being technologically stronger, will inevitably defeat us.

Is This the Last Fight?

The dictatorship of the proletariat is fierce war. The proletariat has been victorious in one country, but it is still weak internationally. It must unite all the workers and peasants around itself in the knowledge that the war is not over. Although in our anthem we sing: “The last fight let us face,” unfortunately it is not quite true; it is not our last fight. Either you succeed in uniting the workers and peasants in this fight, or you fail to achieve victory.

Never before in history has there been a struggle like the one we are now witnesses of; but there have been wars between peasants and landowners more than once in history, ever since the earliest times of slavery. Such wars have occurred more than once; but there has never been a war waged by a government against the bourgeoisie of its own country and against the united bourgeoisie of all countries.

The issue of the struggle depends upon whether we succeed in organising the small peasants on the basis of the development of their productive forces with proletarian state assistance for this development, or whether the capitalists gain control over them. The same issue has arisen in scores of revolutions in the past; but the world has never witnessed a struggle like the one we are waging now. The people have had no way of acquiring experience in wars of this kind. We ourselves must create this experience and we can rely only on the class-consciousness of the workers and peasants. That is the keynote and the enormous difficulty of this task.

We Must Not Count on Going Straight to Communism

We must not count on going straight to communism. We must build on the basis of peasants’ personal incentive. We are told that the personal incentive of the peasants means restoring private property. But we have never interfered with personally owned articles of consumption and implements of

production as far as the peasants are concerned. We have abolished private ownership of land. Peasants farmed land that they did not own—rented land, for instance. That system exists in very many countries. There is nothing impossible about it from the standpoint of economics. The difficulty lies in creating personal incentive. We must also give every specialist an incentive to develop our industry.

Have we been able to do that? No, we have not! We thought that production and distribution would go on at communist bidding in a country with a declassed proletariat. We must change that now, or we shall be unable to make the proletariat understand this process of transition. No such problems have ever arisen in history before. We tried to solve this problem straight out, by a frontal attack, as it were, but we suffered defeat. Such mistakes occur in every war, and they are not even regarded as mistakes. Since the frontal attack failed, we shall make a flanking movement and also use the method of siege and undermining.

The Principle of Personal Incentive and Responsibility

We say that every important branch of the economy must be built up on the principle of personal incentive. There must be collective discussion, but individual responsibility. At every step we suffer from our inability to apply this principle. The New Economic Policy demands this line of demarcation to be drawn with absolute sharpness and distinction. When the people found themselves under new economic conditions they immediately began to discuss what would come of it, and how things should be reorganised. We could not have started anything without this general discussion because for decades and centuries the people had been prohibited from discussing anything, and the revolution could not develop without a period in which people everywhere hold meetings to argue about all questions.

This has created much confusion. This is what happened—this was inevitable, but it must be said that it was not dangerous. If we learn in good time to separate what is appropriate for meetings from what is appropriate for administration we shall succeed in raising the position of the Soviet Republic to its proper level. Unfortunately, we have not yet learnt to do this, and most congresses are far from business-like.

In the number of our congresses we excel all other countries in the world. Not a single democratic republic holds as many congresses as we do; nor could they permit it.

We must remember that ours is a country that has suffered great loss and impoverishment, and that we must teach it to hold meetings in such a

way as not to confuse, as I have said, what is appropriate for meetings with what is appropriate for administration. Hold meetings, but govern without the slightest hesitation; govern with a firmer hand than the capitalist governed before you. If you do not, you will not vanquish him. You must remember that government must be much stricter and much firmer than it was before.

After many months of meetings, the discipline of the Red Army was not inferior to the discipline of the old army. Strict, stern measures were adopted, including capital punishment, measures that even the former government did not apply. Philistines wrote and howled, “The Bolsheviks have introduced capital punishment.” Our reply is, “Yes, we have introduced it, and have done so deliberately.”

We must say: either those who wanted to crush us—and who we think ought to be destroyed—must perish, in which case our Soviet Republic will live or the capitalists will live, and in that case the Republic will perish. In an impoverished country either those who cannot stand the pace will perish, or the workers’ and peasants’ republic will perish. There is not and cannot be any choice or any room for sentiment. Sentiment is no less a crime than cowardice in wartime. Whoever now departs from order and discipline is permitting the enemy to penetrate our midst.

That is why I say that the New Economic Policy also has its educational aspect. You here are discussing methods of education. You must go as far as saying that we have no room for the half-educated. When there is communism, the methods of education will be milder. Now, however, I say education must be harsh, otherwise we shall perish.

Shall We Be Able to Work for Our Own Benefit?

We had deserters from the army, and also from the labour front. We must say that in the past you worked for the benefit of the capitalists, of the exploiters, and of course you did not do your best. But now you are working for yourselves, for the workers’ and peasants’ state. Remember that the question at issue is whether we shall be able to work for ourselves, for if we cannot, I repeat, our Republic will perish. And we say, as we said in the army, that either those who want to cause our destruction must perish, or we must adopt the sternest disciplinary measures and thereby save our country—and our Republic will live.

That is what our line must be, that is why (among other things) we need the New Economic Policy.

Get down to business, all of you! You will have capitalists beside you, including foreign capitalists, concessionaires and leaseholders. They will squeeze profits out of you amounting to 100 per cent; they will enrich themselves, operating alongside of you. Let them. Meanwhile you will learn from them the business of running the economy, and only when you do that will you be able to build up a communist republic. Since we must necessarily learn quickly, any slackness in this respect is a serious crime. And we must undergo this training, this severe, stern and sometimes even cruel training, because we have no other way out.

You must remember that our Soviet land is impoverished after many years of trial and suffering, and has no socialist France or socialist England as neighbours which could help us with their highly developed technology and their highly developed industry. Bear that in mind! We must remember that at present all their highly developed technology and their highly developed industry belong to the capitalists, who are fighting us.

We must remember that we must either strain every nerve in everyday effort, or we shall inevitably go under.

Owing to the present circumstances the whole world is developing faster than we are. While developing, the capitalist world is directing all its forces against us. That is how the matter stands! That is why we must devote special attention to this struggle.

Owing to our cultural backwardness we cannot crush capitalism by a frontal attack. Had we been on a different cultural level we could have approached the problem more directly; perhaps other countries will do it in this way when their turn comes to build their communist republics. But we cannot do it in the direct way.

The state must learn to trade in such a way that industry satisfies the needs of the peasantry, so that the peasantry may satisfy their needs by means of trade. We must see to it that everyone who works devotes himself to strengthening the workers' and peasants' state. Only then shall we be able to create large-scale industry.

The masses must become conscious of this, and not only conscious of it, but put it into practice. This, I say, suggests what the functions of the Central Political Education Department should be. After every deep-going political revolution the people require a great deal of time to assimilate the change. And it is a question of whether the people have assimilated the lessons they received. To my deep regret, the answer to this question must be in the negative. Had they assimilated the lessons we should have started creating large-scale industry much more quickly and much earlier.

After we had solved the problem of the greatest political revolution in history, other problems confronted us, cultural problems, which may be called “minor affairs.” This political revolution must be assimilated; we must help the masses of the people to understand it. We must see to it that the political revolution remains something more than a mere declaration.

Obsolete Methods

At one time we needed declarations, statements, manifestos and decrees. We have had enough of them. At one time we needed them to show the people how and what we wanted to build, what new and hitherto unseen things we were striving for. But can we go on showing the people what we want to build? No. Even an ordinary labourer will begin to sneer at us and say: “What use is it to keep on showing us what you want to build? Show us that you can build. If you can’t build, we’re not with you, and you can go to hell!” And he will be right.

Gone is the time when it was necessary to draw political pictures of great tasks; today these tasks must be carried out in practice. Today we are confronted with cultural tasks, those of assimilating that political experience, which can and must be put into practice. Either we lay an economic foundation for the political gains of the Soviet state, or we shall lose them all. This foundation has not yet been laid—that is what we must get down to.

The task of raising the cultural level is one of the most urgent confronting us. And that is the job the Political Education Departments must do, if they are capable of serving the cause of “political education,” which is the title they have adopted for themselves. It is easy to adopt a title; but how about acting up to it? Let us hope that after this Congress we shall have precise information about this. A Commission for the Abolition of Illiteracy was set up on July 19, 1920. Before coming to this Congress I purposely read the decree establishing that commission. It says: All-Russia Commission for the Abolition of Illiteracy. . . . More than that—Extraordinary Commission for the Abolition of Illiteracy. Let us hope that after this Congress we shall receive information about what has been done in this field, and in how many gubernias, and that the report will be concrete. But the very need to set up an Extraordinary Commission for the Abolition of Illiteracy shows that we are (what is the mildest term I can use for it?), well, something like semi-savages because in a country that was not semi-savage it would be considered a disgrace to have to set up an Extraordinary Commission for the Abolition of Illiteracy. In such countries illiteracy is abolished in schools. There they have tolerably good schools where people are taught.

What are they taught? First of all they are taught to read and write. If we have not yet solved this elementary problem it is ridiculous to talk about a New Economic Policy.

The Greatest Miracle of All

What talk can there be of a new policy? God grant that we manage to stick to the old policy if we have to resort to extraordinary measures to abolish illiteracy. That is obvious. But it is still more obvious that in the military and other fields we performed miracles. The greatest miracle of all, in my opinion, would be if the Commission for the Abolition of Illiteracy were completely abolished, and if no proposals, such as I have heard here, were made for separating it from the People's Commissariat of Education. If that is true, and if you give it some thought, you will agree with me that an extraordinary commission should be set up to abolish certain bad proposals.

More than that—it is not enough to abolish illiteracy, it is necessary to build up Soviet economy, and for that literacy alone will not carry us very far. We must raise culture to a much higher level. A man must make use of his ability to read and write; he must have something to read, he must have newspapers and propaganda pamphlets, which should be properly distributed and reach the people and not get lost in transit, as they do now, so that no more than half of them are read, and the rest are used in offices for some purpose or other. Perhaps not even one-fourth reach the people. We must learn to make full use of the scanty resources we do possess.

That is why we must, in connection with the New Economic Policy, ceaselessly propagate the idea that political education calls for raising the level of culture at all costs. The ability to read and write must be made to serve the purpose of raising the cultural level; the peasants must be able to use the ability to read and write for the improvement of their farms and their state.

Soviet laws are very good laws, because they give everyone an opportunity to combat bureaucracy and red tape, an opportunity the workers and peasants in any capitalist state do not have. But does anybody take advantage of this? Hardly anybody! Not only the peasants, but an enormous percentage of the Communists do not know how to utilise Soviet laws to combat red tape and bureaucracy, or such a truly Russian phenomenon as bribery. What hinders the fight against this? Our laws? Our propaganda? On the contrary! We have any number of laws! Why then have we achieved no success in this struggle? Because it cannot be waged by propaganda alone. It can be done if the masses of the people help. No less than half

our Communists are incapable of fighting, to say nothing of those who are a hindrance in the fight. True, ninety-nine per cent of you are Communists, and you know that we are carrying out an operation on these latter Communists. The operation is being carried out by the Commission for Purging the Party, and we have hopes of removing a hundred thousand or so from our Party. Some say two hundred thousand, and I much prefer that figure.

I hope very much that we shall expel a hundred thousand to two hundred thousand Communists who have attached themselves to the Party and who are not only incapable of fighting red tape and bribery, but are even a hindrance in this fight.

Tasks of Political Educationalists

If we purge the Party of a couple of hundred thousand it will be useful, but that is only a tiny fraction of what we must do. The Political Education Departments must adapt all their activities to this purpose. Illiteracy must be combated; but literacy alone is likewise not enough. We also need the culture which teaches us to fight red tape and bribery. It is an ulcer which no military victories and no political reforms can heal. By the very nature of things, it cannot be healed by military victories and political reforms, but only by raising the cultural level. And that is the task that devolves upon the Political Education Departments.

Political educationalists must not understand their job as that of functionaries, as often seems to be the case when people discuss whether representatives of Gubernia Political Education Departments should or should not be appointed to gubernia economic conferences.[3] Excuse me for saying so, but I do not think you should be appointed to any office; you should do your job as ordinary citizens. When you are appointed to some office you become bureaucrats; but if you deal with the people, and if you enlighten them politically, experience will show you that there will be no bribery among a politically enlightened people. At present bribery surrounds us on all sides. You will be asked what must be done to abolish bribery, to prevent so-and-so on the Executive Committee from taking bribes. You will be asked to teach people how to put a stop to it. And if a political educationalist replies that it does not come within the functions of his department, or that pamphlets have been published and proclamations made on the subject, the people will say that he is a bad Party member. True, this does not come within the functions of your department, we have the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection for that; but are you not members of the Party? You have adopted the title of political educationalists. When you were about to adopt

that title you were warned not to choose such a pretentious one, to choose something more modest. But you wanted the title of political educationalists, and that title implies a great deal. You did not take the title of general educationalists, but of political educationalists. You may be told, "It is a good thing that you are teaching the people to read and write and to carry on economic campaigns; that is all very well, but it is not political education, because political education is the sum total of everything."

We are carrying on propaganda against barbarism and against ulcers like bribery, and I hope you are doing the same, but political education is much more than this propaganda—it means practical results, it means teaching the people how to achieve these results, and setting an example to others, not as members of an Executive Committee, but as ordinary citizens who, being politically better educated, are able not only to hurl imprecations at red tape—that is very widely practised among us—but to show how this evil can really be overcome. This is a very difficult art, which cannot be practised until the general level of culture is raised, until the mass of workers and peasants is more cultured than now. It is to this function that I should like most of all to draw the attention of the Central Political Education Department.

I should now like to sum up all that I have said and to suggest practical solutions for the problems that confront the Gubernia Political Education Departments.

The Three Chief Enemies

In my opinion, three chief enemies now confront one, irrespective of one's departmental functions; these tasks confront the political educationalist, if he is a Communist—and most of the political educationalists are. The three chief enemies that confront him are the following: the first is communist conceit; the second—illiteracy, and the third—bribery.

The First Enemy—Communist Conceit

A member of the Communist Party, who has not yet been combed out, and who imagines he can solve all his problems by issuing communist decrees, is guilty of communist conceit. Because he is still a member of the ruling party and is employed in some government office, he imagines this entitles him to talk about the results of political education. Nothing of the sort! That is only communist conceit. The point is to learn to impart political knowledge; but that we have not yet learnt; we have not yet learnt how to approach the subject properly.

The Second Enemy—Illiteracy

As regards the second enemy, illiteracy, I can say that so long as there is such a thing as illiteracy in our country it is too much to talk about political education. This is not a political problem; it is a condition without which it is useless talking about politics. An illiterate person stands outside politics, he must first learn his ABCs. Without that there can be no politics; without that there are rumours, gossip, fairy-tales and prejudices, but not politics.

The Third Enemy—Bribery

Lastly, if such a thing as bribery is possible it is no use talking about politics. Here we have not even an approach to politics; here it is impossible to pursue politics, because all measures are left hanging in the air and produce absolutely no results. A law applied in conditions which permit of widespread bribery can only make things worse. Under such conditions no politics whatever can be pursued; the fundamental condition for engaging in politics is lacking. To be able to outline our political tasks to the people, to be able to say to the masses what things we must strive for (and this is what we should be doing!), we must understand that a higher cultural level of the masses is what is required. This higher level we must achieve, otherwise it will be impossible really to solve our problems.

Difference Between Military and Cultural Problems

A cultural problem cannot be solved as quickly as political and military problems. It must be understood that conditions for further progress are no longer what they were. In a period of acute crisis it is possible to achieve a political victory within a few weeks. It is possible to obtain victory in war in a few months. But it is impossible to achieve a cultural victory in such a short time. By its very nature it requires a longer period; and we must adapt ourselves to this longer period, plan our work accordingly, and display the maximum of perseverance, persistence and method. Without these qualities it is impossible even to start on the work of political education. And the only criterion of the results of political education is the improvement achieved in industry and agriculture. We must not only abolish illiteracy and the bribery which persists on the soil of illiteracy, but we must get the people really to accept our propaganda, our guidance and our pamphlets, so that the result may be an improvement in the national economy.

Those are the functions of the Political Education Departments in connection with the New Economic Policy, and I hope this Congress will help us to achieve greater success in this field.

Notes

1. Held in Moscow on October 17–22, 1921, this Congress was attended by 307 delegates.
Its main object was to endorse a plan of work for 1922 and work out the forms and methods of agitation and propaganda in the situation called forth by the New Economic Policy.
Lenin, who was given an ovation by the delegates, spoke at the evening session on October 17.
The *Political Education Departments* were formed by local (volost, uyezd and gubernia) public education bodies in conformity with a decree issued on February 23, 1920. Their work was guided by the Central Political Education Committee at the People's Commissariat of Education.
2. The All-Russia Central Executive Committee passed its decision of April 29, 1918 on the basis of Lenin's report *On the Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government*. The propositions in that report and in the article *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government* were summed up by Lenin in six theses, which, with some additions, were unanimously endorsed by the Party Central Committee on May 3, 1918. See *Six Theses on the Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government*.
3. *Gubernia economic conferences* were local organs of the Council of Labour and Defence. They were set up by the Executive Committees of the gubernia Soviets in conformity with the decision passed by the Eighth All-Russia Congress of Soviets in December 1920.

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9

Pages From a Diary

Study and Discussion Guide

1. While celebrating the significant gains in literacy after the revolution, Lenin points to the fact that in 1920, compared to Western European countries, they were still extremely low. Discuss how concerning this must have been to Lenin given the importance that he affords education and the cultural work of overcoming bourgeois indoctrination.
2. Lenin talks about cutting other departments' budgets so as to have more resources for education. Compare this to the bourgeois state that cuts budgets to redistribute tax funds upward, through privatization schemes, to further enrich the capitalist class.
3. To contribute to solving the cultural problem Lenin not only stresses the need to re-train teachers and support their various party-related interests, but they should be materially elevated as well to ensure maximum energy and strength is offered the task of education.
4. What does Lenin offer the challenges of town and country, proletariat and peasant, and the old bourgeois alliances?

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Pages From a Diary

Dictated by Telephone: 15 December, 1922

Source: Lenin's *Collected Works*, 2nd English edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, Volume 33, pages 462–466

The recent publication of the report on literacy among the population of Russia, based on the census of 1920 (*Literacy in Russia*, issued by the Central Statistical Board, Public Education Section, Moscow, 1922), is a very important event.

Below I quote a table from this report on the state of literacy among the population of Russia in 1897 and 1920.

	Literates per thousand males		Literates per thousand females		Literates per thousand population	
	1897	1920	1897	1920	1897	1920
1. European Russia	326	422	136	255	229	330
2. North Caucasus	241	357	56	215	150	281
3. Siberia (Western)	170	307	46	134	108	218
Overall average	318	409	131	244	223	319

At a time when we hold forth on proletarian culture and the relation in which it stands to bourgeois culture, facts and figures reveal that we are in a very bad way even as far as bourgeois culture is concerned. As might have

been expected, it appears that we are still a very long way from attaining universal literacy, and that even compared with tsarist times (1897) our progress has been far too slow. This should serve as a stern warning and reproach to those who have been soaring in the empyreal heights of “proletarian culture.” It shows what a vast amount of urgent spade-work we still have to do to reach the standard of an ordinary West-European civilised country. It also shows what a vast amount of work we have to do today to achieve, on the basis of our proletarian gains, anything like a real cultural standard.

We must not confine ourselves to this incontrovertible but too theoretical proposition. The very next time we revise our quarterly budget we must take this matter up in a practical way as well. In the first place, of course, we shall have to cut down the expenditure of government departments other than the People’s Commissariat of Education, and the sums thus released should be assigned for the latter’s needs. In a year like the present, when we are relatively well supplied, we must not be chary in increasing the bread ration for schoolteachers.

Generally speaking, it cannot be said that the work now being done in public education is too narrow. Quite a lot is being done to get the old teachers out of their rut, to attract them to the new problems, to rouse their interest in new methods of education, and in such problems as religion.

But we are not doing the main thing. We are not doing anything—or doing far from enough—to raise the school-teacher to the level that is absolutely essential if we want any culture at all, proletarian or even bourgeois. We must bear in mind the semi-Asiatic ignorance from which we have not yet extricated ourselves, and from which we cannot extricate ourselves without strenuous effort—although we have every opportunity to do so, because nowhere are the masses of the people so interested in real culture as they are in our country; nowhere are the problems of this culture tackled so thoroughly and consistently as they are in our country; in no other country is state power in the hands of the working class which, in its mass, is fully aware of the deficiencies, I shall not say of its culture, but of its literacy; nowhere is the working class so ready to make, and nowhere is it actually making, such sacrifices to improve its position in this respect as in our country.

Too little, far too little, is still being done by us to adjust our state budget to satisfy, as a first measure, the requirements of elementary public education. Even in our People’s Commissariat of Education we all too often find disgracefully inflated staffs in some state publishing establishment, which is contrary to the concept that the state’s first concern should not be publishing houses but that there should be people to read, that the number of people able to read is greater, so that book publishing should have a

wider political field in future Russia. Owing to the old (and bad) habit, we are still devoting much more time and effort to technical questions, such as the question of book publishing, than to the general political question of literacy among the people.

If we take the Central Vocational Education Board, we are sure that there, too, we shall find far too much that is superfluous and inflated by departmental interests, much that is ill-adjusted to the requirements of broad public education. Far from everything that we find in the Central Vocational Education Board can be justified by the legitimate desire first of all to improve and give a practical slant to the education of our young factory workers. If we examine the staff of the Central Vocational Education Board carefully we shall find very much that is inflated and is in that respect fictitious and should be done away with. There is still very much in the proletarian and peasant state that can and must be economised for the purpose of promoting literacy among the people; this can be done by closing institutions which are playthings of a semi-aristocratic type, or institutions we can still do without and will be able to do without, and shall have to do without, for a long time to come, considering the state of literacy among the people as revealed by the statistics.

Our school-teacher should be raised to a standard he has never achieved, and cannot achieve, in bourgeois society. This is a truism and requires no proof. We must strive for this state of affairs by working steadily, methodically and persistently to raise the teacher to a higher cultural level, to train him thoroughly for his really high calling and—mainly, mainly and mainly—to improve his position materially.

We must systematically step up our efforts to organise the schoolteachers so as to transform them from the bulwark of the bourgeois system that they still are in all capitalist countries without exception, into the bulwark of the Soviet system, in order, through their agency, to divert the peasantry from alliance with the bourgeoisie and to bring them into alliance with the proletariat.

I want briefly to emphasise the special importance in this respect of regular visits to the villages; such visits, it is true, are already being practised and should be regularly promoted. We should not stint money—which we all too often waste on the machinery of state that is almost entirely a product of the past historical epoch—on measures like these visits to the villages.

For the speech I was to have delivered at the Congress of Soviets in December 1922 I collected data on the patronage undertaken by urban workers over villagers. Part of these data was obtained for me by Comrade Khodorovsky, and since I have been unable to deal with this problem and

give it publicity through the Congress, I submit the matter to the comrades for discussion now.

Here we have a fundamental political question—the relations between town and country—which is of decisive importance for the whole of our revolution. While the bourgeois state methodically concentrates all its efforts on doping the urban workers, adapting all the literature published at state expense and at the expense of the tsarist and bourgeois parties for this purpose, we can and must utilise our political power to make the urban worker an effective vehicle of communist ideas among the rural proletariat.

I said “communist,” but I hasten to make a reservation for fear of causing a misunderstanding, or of being taken too literally. Under no circumstances must this be understood to mean that we should immediately propagate purely and strictly communist ideas in the countryside. As long as our countryside lacks the material basis for communism, it will be, I should say, harmful, in fact, I should say, fatal, for communism to do so.

That is a fact. We must start by establishing contacts between town and country without the preconceived aim of implanting communism in the rural districts. It is an aim which cannot be achieved at the present time. It is inopportune, and to set an aim like that at the present time would be harmful, instead of useful, to the cause.

But it is our duty to establish contacts between the urban workers and the rural working people, to establish between them a form of comradeship which can easily be created. This is one of the fundamental tasks of the working class which holds power. To achieve this we must form a number of associations (Party, trade union and private) of factory workers, which would devote themselves regularly to assisting the villages in their cultural development.

Is it possible to “attach” all the urban groups to all the village groups, so that every working-class group may take advantage regularly of every opportunity, of every occasion to serve the cultural needs of the village group it is “attached” to? Or will it be possible to find other forms of contact? I here confine myself solely to formulating the question in order to draw the comrades’ attention to it, to point out the available experience of Western Siberia (to which Comrade Khodorovsky drew my attention) and to present this gigantic, historic cultural task in all its magnitude.

We are doing almost nothing for the rural districts outside our official budget or outside official channels. True, in our country the nature of the cultural relations between town and village is automatically and inevitably changing. Under capitalism the town introduced political, economic, moral, physical, etc., corruption into the countryside. In our case, towns

are automatically beginning to introduce the very opposite of this into the countryside. But, I repeat, all this is going on automatically, spontaneously, and can be improved (and later increased a hundredfold) by doing it consciously, methodically and systematically.

We shall begin to advance (and shall then surely advance a hundred times more quickly) only after we have studied the question, after we have formed all sorts of workers' organisations—doing everything to prevent them from becoming bureaucratic—to take up the matter, discuss it and get things done.

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PART **II**

Foundational Texts

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10

What Is to Be Done?

Study and Discussion Guide

As you read this text, keep a running list of everything Lenin says the vanguard party is or should be, and everything he says it isn't or shouldn't be.

I

1. What two tendencies does Lenin identify in international social-democracy (which, at this time, was the name of the socialist movement)?
2. What fundamental components of Marxism does Bernstein reject?
3. What does this opening section tell us about the word “critical”?
4. Why is this important for us today?
5. What, in the end, is the problem with the demand for freedom of criticism?
6. Why did the theory of Marxism become confused during the period of “legal Marxism” in Russia?

7. What is required for entering into alliances with forces who are unreliable?
8. What about for Marxists who enter into alliances with non-Marxists?
9. What is Lenin's definition of spontaneity?
10. What is required *before* entering into a united front?
11. What does freedom of criticism imply for Marxist organizations?
12. Lenin writes that, "without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement." What does he mean by this?
13. What does this statement have to do with spontaneity?
14. What role does theory play in the vanguard party?
15. What three forms—or sides—of struggle does Engels mention?

II

1. Why is the relationship between consciousness and spontaneity so important?
2. What does Lenin mean when he writes that, "There is a difference between spontaneity and spontaneity"? What *is* the difference?
3. What is the relationship between spontaneity and consciousness?
4. What kind of consciousness can the working class develop on its own?
5. What are the limitations to this kind of consciousness?
6. To what does Lenin attribute the fortitude of the workers' movement?
7. Although theory doesn't arise spontaneously from *within* the workers' movement, does this mean that workers don't play a part in theory?
8. Why does the spontaneous movement tend toward bourgeois ideology?
9. What two ways can we interpret the phrase: the labor movement will determine the tasks?
10. What is at stake in each definition?
11. What does Lenin mean when he says that the party has to be a "spirit"?

III

1. What is "exposure literature?" What effect did its introduction have on workers?
2. What is the role of this literature in advancing the class struggle?
3. Should we limit ourselves to the economic struggle? Why or why not?
4. What are all the areas of life we should be concerned with? Write a list, and add to the sphere's Lenin mentions.

5. Is the economic arena the best way to draw people into political struggle? Why or why not?
6. What is required for class consciousness to be genuinely political?
7. Think of a contemporary example of non-economic struggles activating political consciousness.
8. Instead of begging for increased activity, what should intellectuals do for the socialist struggle?
9. What is the common foundation of the economism and terrorism?
10. Why is it important to link together different struggles? What is the role of education in this?
11. How do the economists underestimate mass activity?
12. Lenin writes that “political consciousness can be brought to the workers *only from without* . . . the economic struggle.” Does he mean that workers need intellectuals to achieve political consciousness? If not, what does he mean?
13. Is the vanguard party only concerned with industrial workers?
14. Can the vanguard call itself a vanguard? If not, what else is required?
15. What reason does Lenin give for the failure of the revolutionary social-democrats in February and March?

IV

1. How does Lenin characterize the student involvement in Marxism? How did it start and how did it grow?
2. How can this relate to today’s student movement? What potential is there? How about obstacles?
3. Why did the workers abandon the intelligentsia?
4. What is wrong with limiting the struggle to immediate and concrete tasks?
5. Do you hear demands for such limits in today’s struggles? Where do they come from? How might you agitate against them?
6. What are the components of the professional revolutionary?
7. Should we maintain a distinction between workers and intellectuals in the Party? Why or why not?
8. What are the practical advantages of broad organizations like unions? What are their practical disadvantages?
9. What is the argument against pushing the working-class movement “from the outside?”
10. Where do you find similar arguments today?
11. What is Lenin’s response to this argument?
12. How might you respond to it today?

13. What is the relationship between the revolutionary crowds and the mass movement, on the one hand, and the organization of professional revolutionaries, on the other?
14. Should the party be specialized? Why or why not?
15. What does Lenin say about talking down to workers?
16. How does the professional revolutionary develop?
17. What are the two conditions of democratic principles?
18. What is the real meaning of phrases such as “broad democracy”? What is their real impact on the struggle?
19. Why are broad democratic principles *limiting*?
20. What should the relationship between local and national work be?
21. Lenin gives a concrete example of how the Party unites local and national work. What is it, and what does it reveal about the relationship between the Party and the mass struggle?

What Is to Be Done?

Burning Questions of Our Movement

Written: Written between the autumn of 1901 and February 1902

Source: Lenin's *Collected Works*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961, Moscow, Volume 5, pp. 347–530

“... Party struggles lend a party strength and vitality; the greatest proof of a party's weakness is its diffuseness and the blurring of clear demarcations; a party becomes stronger by purging itself. . .

—From a letter of Lassalle to Marx, of June 24, 1852

Preface

According to the author's original plan, the present pamphlet was to have been devoted to a detailed development of the ideas expressed in the article “Where to Begin,” (*Iskra*, No. 4, May 1901).¹ We must first apologise to the reader for the delay in fulfilling the promise made in that article (and repeated in response to many private inquiries and letters). One of the reasons for this delay was the attempt, undertaken in June of the past year (1901), to unite all the Social-Democratic organisations abroad. It was

Learning with Lenin, pages 133–284

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natural to wait for the results of this attempt, for, had the effort proved successful, it would perhaps have been necessary to expound *Iskra's* conceptions of organisation from a somewhat different approach; in any case, such a success promised to put an end very quickly to the existence of the two trends in the Russian Social-Democratic movement. As the reader knows, the attempt failed, and, as we propose to show, was bound to fail after the new swing, of *Rabocheye Dyelo*, in its issue No. 10, towards Economism. It was found to be absolutely essential to begin a determined struggle against this trend, diffuse and ill-defined, but for that reason the more persistent, the more capable of reasserting itself in diverse forms. Accordingly, the original plan of the pamphlet was altered and considerably enlarged.

Its main theme was to have been the three questions raised in the article "Where to Begin"—the character and main content of our political agitation; our organisational tasks; and the plan for building, simultaneously and from various sides, a militant, all-Russia organisation. These questions have long engaged the mind of the author, who tried to raise them in *Rabochaya Gazeta*³ during one of the unsuccessful attempts to revive that paper (see Chapter V). But the original plan to confine the pamphlet to an analysis of only these three questions and to set forth our views as far as possible in a positive form, without, or almost without, entering into polemics, proved wholly impracticable, for two reasons. On the one hand, Economism proved to be much more tenacious than we had supposed (we employ the term Economism in the broad sense, as explained in *Iskra*, No. 12 (December 1901), in the article entitled "A Talk With Defenders of Economism," which was a synopsis, so to speak, of the present pamphlet²). It became clear beyond doubt that the differences regarding the solution of the three questions mentioned were explainable to a far greater degree by the basic antithesis between the two trends in the Russian Social-Democratic movement than by differences over details. On the other hand, the perplexity of the Economists over the practical application of our views in *Iskra* clearly revealed that we often speak literally in different tongues and therefore *cannot* arrive at an understanding without beginning *ab ovo*, and that an attempt must be made, in the simplest possible style, illustrated by numerous and concrete examples, *systematically to "clarify" all our basic points of difference with all the Economists*. I resolved to make such an attempt at "clarification," fully realising that it would greatly increase the size of the pamphlet and delay its publication; I saw *no other way* of meeting my pledge I had made in the article "Where To Begin." Thus, to the apologies for the delay, I must add others for the serious literary shortcomings of the pamphlet. I had to work *in great haste*, with frequent interruptions by a variety of other tasks.

The examination of the above three questions still constitutes the main theme of this pamphlet, but I found it necessary to begin with two questions of a more general nature—why such an “innocent” and “natural” slogan as “freedom of criticism” should be for us a veritable war-cry, and why we cannot come to an understanding even on the fundamental question of the role of Social-Democrats in relation to the spontaneous mass movement. Further, the exposition of our views on the character and substance of political agitation developed into an explanation of the difference between trade-unionist politics and Social-Democratic politics, while the exposition of our views on organisational tasks developed into an explanation of the difference between the amateurish methods which satisfy the Economists, and the organisation of revolutionaries which we hold to be indispensable. Further, I advance the “plan” for an all-Russia political newspaper with all the more insistence because the objections raised against it are untenable, and because no real answer has been given to the question I raised in the article “Where To Begin” as to how we can set to work from all sides simultaneously to create the organisation we need. Finally, in the concluding part, I hope to show that we did all we could to prevent a decisive break with the Economists, a break which nevertheless proved inevitable; that *Rabocheye Dyelo* acquired a special significance, a “historical” significance, if you will, because it expressed fully and strikingly, not consistent Economism, but the confusion and vacillation which constitute the distinguishing feature of *an entire period* in the history of Russian Social-Democracy; and that therefore the polemic with *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which may upon first view seem excessively detailed, also acquires significance, for we can make no progress until we have completely put an end to this period.

N. Lenin

February 1902

Notes

1. See present volume [5], pp. 13–24. —*Ed.*
2. See present volume [5], pp. 313–20. —*Ed.*
3. *Rabochaya Gazeta* (*Workers' Gazette*)—an illegal newspaper issued by the Kiev group of Social-Democrats. Two issues appeared—No. 1 in August and No. 2 in December (dated November) 1897. The First Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. adopted *Rabochaya Gazeta* as the official organ of the Party, but the newspaper discontinued publication shortly after the Congress, as a result of a police raid on the printing-press and the arrest of the Central Committee.

I

Dogmatism and “Freedom of Criticism”

A. What Does “Freedom of Criticism” Mean?

“Freedom of criticism” is undoubtedly the most fashionable slogan at the present time, and the one most frequently employed in the controversies between socialists and democrats in all countries. At first sight, nothing would appear to be more strange than the solemn appeals to freedom of criticism made by one of the parties to the dispute. Have voices been raised in the advanced parties against the constitutional law of the majority of European countries which guarantees freedom to science and scientific investigation? “Something must be wrong here,” will be the comment of the onlooker who has heard this fashionable slogan repeated at every turn but has not yet penetrated the essence of the disagreement among the disputants; evidently this slogan is one of the conventional phrases which, like nicknames, become legitimised by use, and become almost generic terms.”

In fact, it is no secret for anyone that two trends have taken form in present-day international¹ Social-Democracy. The conflict between these trends now flares up in a bright flame and now dies down and smoulders under the ashes of imposing “truce resolutions.” The essence of the “new” trend, which adopts a “critical” attitude towards “obsolete dogmatic” Marxism, has been clearly enough *presented* by Bernstein and *demonstrated* by Millerand.

Social-Democracy must change from a party of social revolution into a democratic party of social reforms. Bernstein has surrounded this political demand with a whole battery of well-attuned “new” arguments and reasonings. Denied was the possibility of putting socialism on a scientific basis and of demonstrating its necessity and inevitability from the point of view of the materialist conception of history. Denied was the fact of growing impoverishment, the process of proletarianisation, and the intensification of capitalist contradictions; the very concept, “*ultimate aim*,” was declared to be unsound, and the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat was completely rejected. Denied was the antithesis in principle between liberalism and socialism. Denied was *the theory of the class struggle*, on the alleged grounds that it could not be applied to a strictly democratic society governed according to the will of the majority, etc.

Thus, the demand for a decisive turn from revolutionary Social-Democracy to bourgeois social-reformism was accompanied by a no less decisive turn towards bourgeois criticism of all the fundamental ideas of Marxism. In view of the fact that this criticism of Marxism has long been directed

from the political platform, from university chairs, in numerous pamphlets and in a series of learned treatises, in view of the fact that the entire younger generation of the educated classes has been systematically reared for decades on this criticism, it is not surprising that the “new critical” trend in Social-Democracy should spring up, all complete, like Minerva from the head of Jove. The content of this new trend did not have to grow and take shape, it was transferred bodily from bourgeois to socialist literature.

To proceed. If Bernstein’s theoretical criticism and political yearnings were still unclear to anyone, the French took the trouble strikingly to demonstrate the “new method.” In this instance, too, France has justified its old reputation of being “the land where, more than anywhere else, the historical class struggles were each time fought out to a decision . . .” (Engels, Introduction to Marx’s *Der 18 Brumaire*).¹² The French socialists have begun, not to theorise, but to act. The democratically more highly developed political conditions in France have permitted them to put “Bernsteinism into practice” immediately, with all its consequences. Millerand has furnished an excellent example of practical Bernsteinism; not without reason did Bernstein and Vollmar rush so zealously to defend and laud him. Indeed, if Social-Democracy, in essence, is merely a party of reform and must be bold enough to admit this openly, then not only has a socialist the right to join a bourgeois cabinet, but he must always strive to do so. If democracy, in essence, means the abolition of class domination, then why should not a socialist minister charm the whole bourgeois world by orations on class collaboration? Why should he not remain in the cabinet even after the shooting-down of workers by gendarmes has exposed, for the hundredth and thousandth time, the real nature of the democratic collaboration of classes? Why should he not personally take part in greeting the tsar, for whom the French socialists now have no other name than hero of the gallows, knout, and exile (*knouteur, pendeur et deportateur*)? And the reward for this utter humiliation and self-degradation of socialism in the face of the whole world, for the corruption of the socialist consciousness of the working masses—the only basis that can guarantee our victory—the reward for this is pompous *projects* for miserable reforms, so miserable in fact that much more has been obtained from bourgeois governments!

He who does not deliberately close his eyes cannot fail to see that the new “critical” trend in socialism is nothing more nor less than a new variety of *opportunism*. And if we judge people, not by the glittering uniforms they don or by the high-sounding appellations they give themselves, but by their actions and by what they actually advocate, it will be clear that “freedom of criticism” means’ freedom for an opportunist trend in Social-Democracy, freedom to

convert Social-Democracy into a democratic party of reform, freedom to introduce bourgeois ideas and bourgeois elements into socialism.

“Freedom” is a grand word, but under the banner of freedom for industry the most predatory wars were waged, under the banner of freedom of labour, the working people were robbed. The modern use of the term “freedom of criticism” contains the same inherent falsehood. Those who are really convinced that they have made progress in science would not demand freedom for the new views to continue side by side with the old, but the substitution of the new views for the old. The cry heard today, “Long live freedom of criticism,” is too strongly reminiscent of the fable of the empty barrel.

We are marching in a compact group along a precipitous and difficult path, firmly holding each other by the hand. We are surrounded on all sides by enemies, and we have to advance almost constantly under their fire. We have combined, by a freely adopted decision, for the purpose of fighting the enemy, and not of retreating into the neighbouring marsh, the inhabitants of which, from the very outset, have reproached us with having separated ourselves into an exclusive group and with having chosen the path of struggle instead of the path of conciliation. And now some among us begin to cry out: Let us go into the marsh! And when we begin to shame them, they retort: What backward people you are! Are you not ashamed to deny us the liberty to invite you to take a better road! Oh, yes, gentlemen! You are free not only to invite us, but to go yourselves wherever you will, even into the marsh. In fact, we think that the marsh is your proper place, and we are prepared to render you every assistance to get there. Only let go of our hands, don’t clutch at us and don’t besmirch the grand word freedom, for we too are “free” to go where we please, free to fight not only against the marsh, but also against those who are turning towards the marsh!

B. The New Advocates of “Freedom of Criticism”

Now, this slogan (“freedom of criticism”) has in recent times been solemnly advanced by *Rabocheye Dyelo* (No. 10), organ of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad, not as a theoretical postulate, but as a political demand, as a reply to the question, “Is it possible to unite the Social-Democratic organisations operating abroad?”: “For a durable unity, there must be freedom of criticism” (p. 36).

From this statement two definite conclusions follow: (1) that *Rabocheye Dyelo* has taken under its wing the opportunist trend in international Social-Democracy in general, and (2) that *Rabocheye Dyelo* demands freedom

for opportunism in Russian Social-Democracy. Let us examine these conclusions.

Rabocheye Dyelo is “particularly” displeased with the “inclination of *Iskra* and *Zarya* to predict a rupture between the *Mountain* and the *Gironde* in international Social-Democracy.”²

“Generally speaking,” writes B. Krichevsky, editor of *Rabocheye Dyelo*, “this talk of the *Mountain* and the *Gironde* heard in the ranks of Social-Democracy represents a shallow historical analogy, a strange thing to come from the pen of a Marxist. The *Mountain* and the *Gironde* did not represent different temperaments-, or intellectual trends, as the historians of social thought may think, but different classes or strata—the middle bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat, on the other. In the modern socialist movement, however, there is no conflict of class interests; the socialist movement in its entirety, in *all* of its diverse forms (Krichevsky’s italics), including the most pronounced Bernsteinians, stands on the basis of the class interests of the proletariat and its class struggle for political and economic emancipation” (pp. 32–33).

A bold assertion! Has not Krichevsky heard of the fact, long ago noted, that it is precisely the extensive participation of an “academic” *stratum* in the socialist movement in recent years that has promoted such a rapid spread of Bernsteinism? And what is most important—on what does our author found his opinion that even “the most pronounced Bernsteinians” stand on the basis of the class struggle for the political and economic emancipation of the proletariat? No one knows. This determined defence of the most pronounced Bernsteinians is not supported by any argument or reasoning whatever. Apparently, the author believes that if he repeats what the most pronounced Bernsteinians say about themselves his assertion requires no proof. But can anything more “shallow” be imagined than this judgement of an entire trend based on nothing more than what the representatives of that trend say about themselves? Can anything more shallow be imagined than the subsequent “homily” on the two different and even diametrically opposite types, or paths, of party development? (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, pp. 34–35.) The German Social-Democrats, in other words, recognise complete freedom of criticism, but the French do not, and it is precisely their example that demonstrates the “bane of intolerance.”

To this we can only say that the very example B. Krichevsky affords us attests to the fact that the name Marxists is at times assumed by people who conceive history literally in the “Ilovaisky manner.”¹³ To explain the unity of the German Socialist Party and the disunity of the French Socialist Party, there is no need whatever to go into the special features in the history of

these countries, to contrast the conditions of military semiabsolutism in the one with republican parliamentarism in the other, to analyse the effects of the Paris Commune and the effects of the Exceptional Law Against the Socialists, to compare the economic life and economic development of the two countries, or to recall that “the unexampled growth of German Social-Democracy” was accompanied by a strenuous struggle, unique in the history of socialism, not only against erroneous theories (Mühlberger, Dühring,³ the *Katheders*-Socialists¹⁴), but also against erroneous tactics (Lassalle), etc., etc. All that is superfluous! The French quarrel among themselves because they are intolerant; the Germans are united because they are good boys.

And observe, this piece of matchless profundity is designed to “refute” the fact that puts to rout the defence of the Bernsteinians. The question whether or not the Bernsteinians *stand* on the basis of the class struggle of the proletariat is one that can be completely and irrevocably answered only by historical experience. Consequently, the example of France holds greatest significance in this respect, because France is the only country in which the Bernsteinians attempted *to stand* independently, on their own feet, with the warm approval of their German colleagues (and partly also of the Russian opportunists; cf. *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 2–3, pp. 83–84). The reference to the “intolerance” of the French, apart from its “historical” significance (in the Nozdryov¹⁵ sense), turns out to be merely an attempt to hush up very unpleasant facts with angry invectives.

Nor are we inclined to make a present of the Germans to Krichevsky and the numerous other champions of “freedom of criticism.” If the “most pronounced Bernsteinians” are still tolerated in the ranks of the German party, it is only to the extent that they *submit* to the Hanover resolution,¹⁶ which emphatically rejected Bernstein’s “amendments,” and to the Lübeck resolution, which (notwithstanding the diplomatic terms in which it is couched) contains a direct warning to Bernstein. It is debatable, from the standpoint of the interests of the German party, whether diplomacy was appropriate and whether, in this case, a bad peace is better than a good quarrel; in short, opinions may differ as to the expediency of any one of the *methods* employed to reject Bernsteinism, but that the German party *did reject* Bernsteinism on two occasions, is a fact no one can fail to see. Therefore, to think that the German example confirms the thesis that “the most pronounced Bernsteinians stand on the basis of the class struggle of the proletariat, for political and economic emancipation,” means to fail completely to understand what is going on under our very eyes.⁴

Nor is that all. As we have seen, *Rabocheye Dyelo* demands “freedom of criticism” and defends Bernsteinism before *Russian Social-Democracy*. Apparently it convinced itself that we were unfair to our “Critics” and

Bernsteinians. But to which ones? who? where? when? What did the unfairness represent? About this, not a word. *Rabocheye Dyelo* does not name a single Russian Critic or Bernsteinian! We are left with but one of two possible suppositions. *Either* the unfairly treated party is none other than *Rabocheye Dyelo* itself (this is confirmed by the fact that in the two articles in No. 10 reference is made only to the wrongs suffered by *Rabocheye Dyelo* at the hands of *Zarya* and *Iskra*). If that is the case, how is the strange fact to be explained that *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which always vehemently dissociated itself from all solidarity with Bernsteinism, could not defend itself without putting in a word in defence of the “most pronounced Bernsteinians” and of freedom of criticism? Or some third persons have been treated unfairly. if this is the case, then what reasons may there be for not naming them?

We see, therefore, that *Rabocheye Dyelo* is continuing to play the game of hide-and-seek it has played (as we shall show below) ever since its founding. And let us note further this *first* practical application of the vaunted “freedom of criticism.” In actual fact, not only was it forthwith reduced to abstention from all criticism, but also to abstention from expressing independent views altogether. The very *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which avoids mentioning Russian Bernsteinism as if it were a shameful disease (to use Starover’s¹⁷ apt expression), proposes, for the treatment of this disease, to copy word for word the latest German prescription for the German variety of the malady! Instead of freedom of criticism slavish (worse: apish) imitation! The very same social and political content of modern international opportunism reveals itself in a variety of ways according to national peculiarities. In one country the opportunists have long ago come out under a separate flag; in another, they have ignored theory and in fact pursued the policy of the Radicals-Socialists; in a third, some members of the revolutionary party have deserted to the camp of opportunism and strive to achieve their aims, not in open struggle for principles and for new tactics, but by gradual, imperceptible, and, if one may so put it, unpunishable corruption of their party; in a fourth country, similar deserters employ the same methods in the gloom of political slavery, and with a completely original combination of “legal” and “illegal” activity, etc. To talk of freedom of criticism and of Bernsteinism as a condition for uniting the *Russian* Social Democrats and not to explain how *Russian* Bernsteinism has manifested itself and what particular fruits it has borne, amounts to talking with the aim of saying nothing.

Let us ourselves try, if only in a few words, to say what *Rabocheye Dyelo* did not want to say (or which was, perhaps, beyond its comprehension).

C. *Criticism in Russia*

The chief distinguishing feature of Russia in regard to the point we are examining is that *the very beginning* of the spontaneous working-class movement, on the one hand, and of the turn of progressive public opinion towards Marxism, on the other, was marked by the combination of manifestly heterogeneous elements under a common flag to fight the common enemy (the obsolete social and political world outlook). We refer to the heyday of “legal Marxism.” Speaking generally, this was an altogether curious phenomenon that no one in the eighties or the beginning of the nineties would have believed possible. In a country ruled by an autocracy, with a completely enslaved press, in a period of desperate political reaction in which even the tiniest outgrowth of political discontent and protest is persecuted, the theory of revolutionary Marxism suddenly forces its way into the *censored* literature and, though expounded in Aesopian language, is understood by all the “interested.” The government had accustomed itself to regarding only the theory of the (revolutionary) Narodnaya Volya as dangerous, without, as is usual, observing its internal evolution, and rejoicing at any criticism levelled against it. Quite a considerable time elapsed (by our Russian standards) before the government realised what had happened and the unwieldy army of censors and gendarmes discovered the new enemy and flung itself upon him. Meanwhile, Marxist books were published one after another, Marxist journals and newspapers were founded, nearly everyone became a Marxist, Marxists were flattered, Marxists were courted, and the book publishers rejoiced at the extraordinary, ready sale of Marxist literature. It was quite natural, therefore, that among the Marxian neophytes who were caught up in this atmosphere, there should be more than one “author who got a swelled head . . .”¹⁸

We can now speak calmly of this period as of an event of the past. It is no secret that the brief period in which Marxism blossomed on the surface of our literature was called forth by an alliance between people of extreme and of very moderate views. In point of fact, the latter were bourgeois democrats; this conclusion (so markedly confirmed by their subsequent “critical” development) suggested itself to some even when the “alliance” was still intact.⁵

That being the case, are not the revolutionary Social-Democrats who entered into the alliance with the future “Critics” mainly responsible for the subsequent “confusion”? This question, together with a reply in the affirmative, is sometimes heard from people with too rigid a view. But such people are entirely in the wrong. Only those who are not sure of themselves can fear to enter into temporary alliances even with unreliable people; not

a single political party could exist without such alliances. The combination with the legal Marxists was in its way the first really political alliance entered into by Russian Social-Democrats. Thanks to this alliance, an astonishingly rapid victory was obtained over Narodism, and Marxist ideas (even though in a vulgarised form) became very widespread. Moreover, the alliance was not concluded altogether without “conditions.” Evidence of this is the burning by the censor, in 1895, of the Marxist collection *Material on the Question of the Economic Development of Russia*.¹⁹ If the literary agreement with the legal Marxists can be compared with a political alliance, then that book can be compared with a political treaty.

The rupture, of course, did not occur because the “allies” proved to be bourgeois democrats. On the contrary, the representatives of the latter trend are natural and desirable allies of Social-Democracy insofar as its democratic tasks, brought to the fore by the prevailing situation in Russia, are concerned. But an essential condition for such an alliance must be the full opportunity for the socialists to reveal to the working class that its interests are diametrically opposed to the interests of the bourgeoisie. However, the Bernsteinian and “critical” trend, to which the majority of the legal Marxists turned, deprived the socialists of this opportunity and demoralised the socialist consciousness by vulgarising Marxism, by advocating the theory of the blunting of social contradictions, by declaring the idea of the social revolution and of the dictatorship of the proletariat to be absurd, by reducing the working-class movement and the class struggle to narrow trade-unionism and to a “realistic” struggle for petty, gradual reforms. This was synonymous with bourgeois democracy’s denial of socialism’s right to independence and, consequently, of its right to existence; in practice it meant a striving to convert the nascent working-class movement into an appendage of the liberals.

Naturally, under such circumstances the rupture was necessary. But the “peculiar” feature of Russia manifested itself in the fact that this rupture simply meant the elimination of the Social-Democrats from the most accessible and widespread “legal” literature. The “ex-Marxists,” who took up the flag of “criticism” and who obtained almost a monopoly to “demolish Marxism, entrenched themselves in this literature. Catchwords like “Against orthodoxy” and “Long live freedom of criticism” (now repeated by *Rabocheye Dyelo*) forthwith became the vogue, and the fact that neither the censor nor the gendarmes could resist this vogue is apparent from the publication of three Russian editions of the work of the celebrated Bernstein (celebrated in the Herostratean sense) and from the fact that the works of Bernstein, Mr. Prokopovich, and others were recommended by Zubatov (*Iskra*, No. 10). A task now devolved upon the Social Democrats that was difficult in itself and

was made incredibly more difficult by purely external obstacles—the task of combating the new trend. This trend did not confine itself to the sphere of literature. The turn towards “criticism” was accompanied by an infatuation for Economism among Social-Democratic practical workers.

The manner in which the connection between, and interdependence of, legal criticism and illegal Economism arose and grew is in itself an interesting subject, one that could serve as the theme of a special article. We need only note here that this connection undoubtedly existed. The notoriety deservedly acquired by the *Credo* was due precisely to the frankness with which it formulated this connection and blurted out the fundamental political tendency of Economism—let the workers carry on the economic struggle (it would be more correct to say the trade unionist struggle, because the latter also embraces specifically working class politics) and let the Marxist intelligentsia merge with the liberals for the political “struggle.” Thus, trade-unionist work “among the people” meant fulfilling the first part of this task, while legal criticism meant fulfilling the second. This statement was such an excellent weapon against Economism that, had there been no *Credo*, it would have been worth inventing one.

The *Credo* was not invented, but it was published without the consent and perhaps even against the will of its authors. At all events, the present writer, who took part in dragging this new “programme” into the light of day,⁶ has heard complaints and reproaches to the effect that copies of the resume of the speakers’ views were distributed, dubbed the *Credo*, and even published in the press together with the protest! We refer to this episode because it reveals a very peculiar feature of our Economism—fear of publicity. This is a feature of Economism generally, and not of the authors of the *Credo* alone. It was revealed by that most outspoken and honest advocate of Economism, *Rabochaya Mysl*, and by *Rabocheye Dyelo* (which was indignant over the publication of “Economist” documents in the *Vademecum*²⁰), as well as by the Kiev Committee, which two years ago refused to permit the publication of its *profession de foi*,⁷ together with a repudiation of it,⁸ and by many other individual representatives of Economism.

This fear of criticism displayed by the advocates of freedom of criticism cannot be attributed solely to craftiness (although, on occasion, no doubt craftiness is brought into play: it would be improvident to expose the young and as yet frail shoots of the new trend. to attacks by opponents). No, the majority of the Economists look with sincere resentment (as by the very nature of Economism they must) upon all theoretical controversies, factional disagreements, broad political questions, plans for organising revolutionaries, etc. “Leave all that to the people abroad!” said a fairly consistent Economist to me one day, thereby expressing a very widespread (and again

purely trade-unionist) view; our concern is the working-class movement, the workers, organisations here, in our localities; all the rest is merely the invention of doctrinaires, “the overrating of ideology,” as the authors of the letter, published in *Iskra*, No. 12, expressed it, in unison with *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10.

The question now arises: such being the peculiar features of Russian “criticism” and Russian Bernsteinism, what should have been the task of those who sought to oppose opportunism in deeds and not merely in words? First, they should have made efforts to resume the theoretical work that had barely begun in the period of legal Marxism and that fell anew on the shoulders of the comrades working underground. Without such work the successful growth of the movement was impossible. Secondly, they should have actively combated the legal “criticism” that was perverting people’s minds on a considerable scale. Thirdly, they should have actively opposed confusion and vacillation in the practical movement, exposing and repudiating every conscious or unconscious attempt to degrade our programme and our tactics.

That *Rabocheye Dyelo* did none of these things is well known; we shall have occasion below to deal with this well-known fact in detail and from various aspects. At the moment, however, we desire merely to show the glaring contradiction that exists between the demand for “freedom of criticism” and the specific features of our native criticism and Russian Economism. It suffices but to glance at the text of the resolution in which the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad endorsed the point of view of *Rabocheye Dyelo*.

“In the interests of the further ideological development of Social-Democracy, we recognise the freedom of criticism of Social-Democratic theory in Party literature to be absolutely necessary insofar as the criticism does not run counter to the class and revolutionary character of this theory” (*Two Conferences*, p. 10).

And the motivation? The resolution “in its first part coincides with the resolution of the Lubeck Party Congress on Bernstein.” . . . In the simplicity of their souls the “Unionists” failed to observe what a *testimonium paupertatis* (attestation of poverty) they betray with this copying. . . . “But . . . in its second part, it restricts freedom of criticism much more than did the Lubeck Party Congress.”

The resolution of the Union Abroad, then, is directed against the Russian Bernsteinians? If it is not, then the reference to Lubeck would be utterly absurd. But it is not true to say that it “restricts freedom of criticism.” In adopting their Hanover resolution, the Germans, point by point,

rejected *precisely* the amendments proposed by Bernstein, while in their Lubeck resolution they cautioned *Bernstein personally*, by naming him. Our “free” imitators, however, make *not a single allusion* to a *single* manifestation of specifically Russian “criticism” and Russian Economism. In view of this omission, the bare reference to the class and revolutionary character of the theory leaves far wider scope for misinterpretation, particularly when the Union Abroad refuses to identify “so-called Economism” with opportunism (*Two Conferences*, p. 8, Paragraph 1). But all this, in passing. The main thing to note is that the positions of the opportunists in relation to the revolutionary Social-Democrats in Russia are diametrically opposed to those in Germany. In that country, as we know, the revolutionary Social-Democrats are in favour of preserving that which exists—the old programme and the tactics, which are universally known and have been elucidated in all their details by many decades of experience. But the “Critics” desire to introduce changes, and since these Critics represent an insignificant minority, and since they are very timid in their revisionist efforts, one can understand the motives of the majority in confining themselves to the dry rejection of “innovations.” In Russia, however, it is the Critics and the Economists who are in favour of preserving that which exists: the “Critics” want us to go on regarding them as Marxists and to guarantee them the “freedom of criticism” they enjoyed to the full (for, in fact, they never recognised any kind of *party ties*,⁹ and, moreover, we never had a generally recognised party body that could “restrict” freedom of criticism, if only by counsel); the Economists want the revolutionaries to recognise the sovereign character of the present movement” (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 25), i.e., to recognise the “legitimacy” of that which exists; they want the “ideologists” not to try to “divert” the movement from the path that “is determined by the interaction of material. elements and material environment” (“Letter” in *Iskra*, No. 12); they want to have that struggle recognised as desirable “which it is possible for the workers to wage under the present conditions,” and as the only possible struggle, that “which they are actually waging at the present time” (“*Separate Supplement*” to *Rabochaya Mysl*, p. 14). We revolutionary Social-Democrats, on the contrary, are dissatisfied with this worship of spontaneity, i.e., of that which exists “at the present moment.” We demand that the tactics that have prevailed in recent years be changed; we declare that “before we can unite, and in order that we may unite, we must first of all draw firm and definite lines of demarcation” (see announcement of the publication of *Iskra*).¹⁰ In a word, the Germans stand for that which exists and reject changes; we demand a change of that which exists, and reject subservience thereto and reconciliation to it.

This “slight” difference our “free” copyists of German resolutions failed to notice.

D. Engels on the Importance of the Theoretical Struggle

“Dogmatism, doctrinairism,” “ossification of the party—the inevitable retribution that follows the violent strait-lacing of thought”—these are the enemies against which the knightly champions of “freedom of criticism” in *Rabocheye Dyelo* rise up in arms. We are very glad that this question has been placed on the order of the day and we would only propose to add to it one other:

And who are the judges?

We have before us two publishers’ announcements. One, “The Programme of the Periodical Organ of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad —*Rabocheye Dyelo*” (reprint from No. 1 of *Rabocheye Dyelo*), and the other, the “Announcement of the Resumption of the Publications of the Emancipation of Labour Group.” Both are dated 1899, when the “crisis of Marxism” had long been under discussion. And what do we find? We would seek in vain in the first announcement for any reference to this phenomenon, or a definite statement of the position the new organ intends to adopt on this question. Not a word is said about theoretical work and the urgent tasks that now confront it, either in this programme or in the supplements to it that were adopted by the Third Congress of the Union Abroad in 1901 (*Two Conferences*, pp. 15–18). During this entire time the Editorial Board of *Rabocheye Dyelo* ignored theoretical questions, in spite of the fact that these were questions that disturbed the minds of all Social-Democrats the world over.

The other announcement, on the contrary, points first of all to the declining interest in theory in recent years, imperatively demands “vigilant attention to the theoretical aspect of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat,” and calls for “ruthless criticism of the Bernsteinian and other anti-revolutionary tendencies” in our movement. The issues of *Zarya* to date show how this programme has been carried out.

Thus, we see that high-sounding phrases against the ossification of thought, etc., conceal unconcern and helplessness with regard to the development of theoretical thought. The case of the Russian Social-Democrats manifestly illustrates the general European phenomenon (long ago noted also by the German Marxists) that the much vaunted freedom of criticism does not imply substitution of one theory for another, but freedom from all integral and pondered theory; it implies eclecticism and lack of principle.

Those who have the slightest acquaintance with the actual state of our movement cannot but see that the wide spread of Marxism was accompanied by a certain lowering of the theoretical level. Quite a number of people with very little, and even a total lack of theoretical training joined the movement because of its practical significance and its practical successes. We can judge from that how tactless *Rabocheye Dyelo* is when, with an air of triumph, it quotes Marx's statement: "Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes."²¹ To repeat these words in a period of theoretical disorder is like wishing mourners at a funeral many happy returns of the day. Moreover, these words of Marx are taken from his letter on the Gotha Programme,²² in which he *sharply condemns* eclecticism in the formulation of principles. If you must unite, Marx wrote to the party leaders, then enter into agreements to satisfy the practical aims of the movement, but do not allow any bargaining over principles, do not make theoretical "concessions." This was Marx's idea, and yet there are people among us who seek in his name to belittle the significance of theory!

Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This idea cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity. Yet, for Russian Social-Democrats the importance of theory is enhanced by three other circumstances, which are often forgotten: first, by the fact that our Party is only in process of formation, its features are only just becoming defined, and it has as yet far from settled accounts with the other trends of revolutionary thought that threaten to divert the movement from the correct path. On the contrary, precisely the very recent past was marked by a revival of non-Social-Democratic revolutionary trends (an eventuation regarding which Axelrod long ago warned the Economists). Under these circumstances, what at first sight appears to be an "unimportant" error may lead to most deplorable consequences, and only short-sighted people can consider factional disputes and a strict differentiation between shades of opinion inopportune or superfluous. The fate of Russian Social-Democracy for very many years to come may depend on the strengthening of one or the other "shade."

Secondly, the Social-Democratic movement is in its very essence an international movement. This means, not only that we must combat national chauvinism, but that an incipient movement in a young country can be successful only if it makes use of the experiences of other countries. In order to make use of these experiences it is not enough merely to be acquainted with them, or simply to copy out the latest resolutions. What is required is the ability to treat these experiences critically and to test them independently. He who realises how enormously the modern working-class

movement has grown and branched out will understand what a reserve of theoretical forces and political (as well as revolutionary) experience is required to carry out this task.

Thirdly, the national tasks of Russian Social-Democracy are such as have never confronted any other socialist party in the world. We shall have occasion further on to deal with the political and organisational duties which the task of emancipating the whole people from the yoke of autocracy imposes upon us. At this point, we wish to state only that the *role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory*. To have a concrete understanding of what this means, let the reader recall such predecessors of Russian Social Democracy as Herzen, Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and the brilliant galaxy of revolutionaries of the seventies; let him ponder over the world significance which Russian literature is now acquiring; let him . . . but be that enough!

Let us quote what Engels said in 1874 concerning the significance of theory in the Social-Democratic movement. Engels recognizes, *not two* forms of the great struggle of Social Democracy (political and economic), as is the fashion among us, *but three, placing the theoretical struggle on a par with the first two*. His recommendations to the German working-class movement, which had become strong, practically and politically, are so instructive from the standpoint of present-day problems and controversies, that we hope the reader will not be vexed with us for quoting a long passage from his prefatory note to *Der deutsche Bauernkrieg*,¹¹ which has long become a great bibliographical rarity:

“The German workers have two important advantages over those of the rest of Europe. First, they belong to the most theoretical people of Europe; and they have retained that sense of theory which the so-called ‘educated’ classes of Germany have almost completely lost. Without German philosophy, which preceded it, particularly that of Hegel, German scientific socialism—the only scientific socialism that has ever existed—would never have come into being. Without a sense of theory among the workers, this scientific socialism would never have entered their flesh and blood as much as is the case. What an immeasurable advantage this is may be seen, on the one hand, from the indifference towards all theory, which is one of the main reasons why the English working-class movement crawls along so slowly in spite of the splendid organisation of the individual unions; on the other hand, from the mischief and confusion wrought by Proudhonism, in its original form, among the French and Belgians, and, in the form further caricatured by Bakunin, among the Spaniards and Italians.

“The second advantage is that, chronologically speaking, the Germans were about the last to come into the workers’ movement. Just as German theoretical socialism will never forget that it rests on the shoulders of Saint-Simon,

Fourier, and Owen—three men who, in spite of all their fantastic notions and all their utopianism, have their place among the most eminent thinkers of all times, and whose genius anticipated innumerable things, the correctness of which is now being scientifically proved by us—so the practical workers' movement in Germany ought never to forget that it has developed on the shoulders of the English and French movements, that it was able simply to utilise their dearly bought experience, and could now avoid their mistakes, which in their time were mostly unavoidable. Without the precedent of the English trade unions and French workers' political struggles, without the gigantic impulse given especially by the Paris Commune, where would we be now?

“It must be said to the credit of the German workers that they have exploited the advantages of their situation with rare understanding. For the first time since a workers' movement has existed, the struggle is being conducted pursuant to its three sides—the theoretical, the political, and the practical-economic (resistance to the capitalists)—in harmony and in its interconnections, and in a systematic way. It is precisely in this, as it were, concentric attack, that the strength and invincibility of the German movement lies.

“Due to this advantageous situation, on the one hand, and to the insular peculiarities of the English and the forcible suppression of the French movement, on the other, the German workers have for the moment been placed in the vanguard of the proletarian struggle. How long events will allow them to occupy this post of honour cannot be foretold. But let us hope that as long as they occupy it, they will fill it fittingly. This demands redoubled efforts in every field of struggle and agitation. In particular, it will be the duty of the leaders to gain an ever clearer insight into all theoretical questions, to free themselves more and more from the influence of traditional phrases inherited from the old world outlook, and constantly to keep in mind that socialism, since it has become a science, demands that it be pursued as a science, i.e., that it be studied. The task will be to spread with increased zeal among the masses of the workers the ever more clarified understanding thus acquired, to knit together ever more firmly the organisation both of the party and of the trade unions. . . .

“If the German workers progress in this way, they will not be marching exactly at the head of the movement—it is not at all in the interest of this movement that the workers of any particular country should march at its head—but they will occupy an honourable place in the battle line; and they will stand armed for battle when either unexpectedly grave trials or momentous events demand of them increased courage, increased determination and energy.”²³

Engels's words proved prophetic. Within a few years the German workers were subjected to unexpectedly grave trials in the form of the

Exceptional Law Against the Socialists. And they met those trials armed for battle and succeeded in emerging from them victorious.

The Russian proletariat will have to undergo trials immeasurably graver; it will have to fight a monster compared with which an antisocialist law in a constitutional country seems but a dwarf. History has now confronted us with an immediate task which is the *most revolutionary* of all the *immediate* tasks confronting the proletariat of any country. The fulfilment of this task, the destruction of the most powerful bulwark, not only of European, but (it may now be said) of Asiatic reaction, would make the Russian proletariat the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat. And we have the right to count upon acquiring this honourable title, already earned by our predecessors, the revolutionaries of the seventies, if we succeed in inspiring our movement, which is a thousand times broader and deeper, with the same devoted determination and vigour.

Notes

1. Incidentally, in the history of modern socialism this is a phenomenon, perhaps unique and in its way very consoling, namely, that the strife of the various trends within the socialist movement has from national become international. Formerly, the disputes between Lassalleans and Eisenachers,²⁴ between Guesdists and Possibilists,²⁵ between Fabians and Social-Democrats, and between Narodnaya Volya adherents and Social-Democrats, remained confined within purely national frameworks, reflecting purely national features, and proceeding, as it were, on different planes. At the present time (as is now evident), the English Fabians, the French Ministerialists, the German Bernsteinians, and the Russian Critics—all belong to the same family, all extol each other, learn from each other, and together take up arms against “dogmatic” Marxism. In this first really international battle with socialist opportunism, international revolutionary Social-Democracy will perhaps become sufficiently strengthened to put an end to the political reaction that has long reigned in Europe? —*Lenin*
2. A comparison of the two trends within the revolutionary proletariat (the revolutionary and the opportunist), and the two trends within the revolutionary bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century (the Jacobin, known as the Mountain, and the Girondist) was made in the leading article in No. 2 of *Iskra* (February 1901). The article was written by Plekhanov. The Cadets,²⁶ the Bezzaglavtsi,²⁷ and the Mensheviks to this day love to refer to Jacobinism in Russian Social-Democracy. But how Plekhanov came to apply this concept for the first time against the Right wing of Social-Democracy—about this they prefer to keep silent or to forget. (Author’s note to the 1907 edition —*Ed.*) —*Lenin*
3. At the time Engels dealt his blows at Dühring, many representatives of German Social-Democracy inclined towards the latter’s views, and accusations of acerbity, intolerance, uncomradely polemics, etc., were hurled at Engels even publicly at a Party Congress. At the Congress of 1877, Most, and his support-

ers, introduced a resolution to prohibit the publication of Engels's articles in *Vorwärts* because "they do not interest the overwhelming majority of the readers," and VahItch declared that their publication had caused great damage to the Party, that Duhring too had rendered services to Social-Democracy: "We must utilise everyone in the interests of the Party; let the professors engage in polemics if they care to do so, but *Vorwärts* is not the place in which to conduct them" (*Vorwärts*, No. 65, June 6, 1877). Here we have another example of the defence of "freedom of criticism," and our legal critics and illegal opportunists, who love so much to cite the example of the Germans, would do well to ponder it! —*Lenin*

4. It should be observed that *Rabocheye Dyelo* has always confined itself to a bare statement of facts concerning Bernsteinism in the German party and completely "refrained" from expressing its own opinion. See, for instance, the reports of the Stuttgart Congress²⁸ in No. 2–3 (p. 66), in which all the disagreements are reduced to "tactics" and the statement is merely made that the overwhelming majority remain true to the previous revolutionary tactics. Or, No. 4–5 (p. 25, et seq.), in which we have nothing but a paraphrasing of the speeches delivered at the Hanover Congress, with a reprint of Bebel's resolution. An exposition and a criticism of Bernstein's views are again put off (as was the case in No. 2–8) to be dealt with in a "special article." Curiously enough, in No. 4–5 (p. 33), we read the following: "... the views expounded by Bebel have the support of the vast majority of the Congress," and a few lines thereafter: "... David defended Bernstein's views. ... First of all, he tried to show that ... Bernstein and his friends, after all is said and done (sic!), stand on the basis of the class struggle ..." This was written in December 1899, and in September 1901 *Rabocheye Dyelo*, apparently no longer believing that Bebel was right, repeats David's views as its own! —*Lenin*
5. The reference is to an article by K. Tulin directed against Struve. (See *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 333–507. — *Ed.*) The article was based on an essay entitled "The Reflection of Marxism in Bourgeois Literature." (Author's note to the 1907 edition —*Ed.*) —*Lenin*
6. The reference is to the *Protest of the Seventeen against the Credo*. The present writer took part in drawing up this protest (the end of 1899).²⁹ The *Protest* and the *Credo* were published abroad in the spring of 1900. (See "A Protest of Russian Social-Democrats," *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 167–182 —*Ed.*) It is now known from the article written by Madame Kuskova (I think in *Byloye*³⁰) that she was the author of the *Credo* and that Mr. Prokopovich was very prominent among the Economists abroad at the time. (Author's note to the 1907 edition — *Ed.*) —*Lenin*
7. Confession of faith.³¹ —*Lenin*
8. As far as our information goes, the composition of the Kiev Committee has changed since then. —*Lenin*
9. The fact alone of the absence of public party ties and party traditions, representing as it does a cardinal difference between Russia and Germany, should have warned all sensible socialists against blind imitation. But here is an instance of the lengths to which "freedom of criticism" goes in Russia. Mr. Bulgakov, the Russian Critic, utters the following reprimand to the Austrian Critic,

Hertz: “Notwithstanding the independence of his conclusions, Hertz on this point on the question of co-operative societies) apparently remains excessively bound by the opinions of his party, and although he disagrees with it in details, he dare not reject the common principle” (*Capitalism and Agriculture*, Vol. II, p. 287). The subject of a politically enslaved state, in which nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand of the population are corrupted to the marrow by political subservience and completely lack the conception of party honour and party ties, superciliously reproves a citizen of a constitutional state for being excessively “bound by the opinions of his party”! Our illegal organisations have nothing else to do, of course, but draw up resolutions on freedom of criticism. . . . —*Lenin*

10. See present edition, Vol. 4, p. 354. —*Ed.*
11. Dritter Abdruck, Leipzig, 1875. Verlag der Genossenschaftsbuchdruckerei. (*The Peasant War in Germany*. Third impression. Co-operative Publishers, Leipzig, 1875. —*Ed.*) —*Lenin*
12. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1959, p. 245.
13. *Ilovaisky, D. I.* (1832–1920)—historian; author of numerous official textbooks of history that were extensively used in primary and secondary schools in pre-revolutionary Russia. In Ilovaisky’s texts history was reduced mainly to acts of kings and generals; the historical process was explained through secondary and fortuitous circumstances.
14. *Katheder-Socialism*—a trend in bourgeois political economy that emerged in Germany in the seventies and eighties of the nineteenth century. Under the guise of socialism the Katheder-Socialists preached bourgeois-liberal reformism from university chairs (*Katheder*). They maintained that the bourgeois state was above classes, that it was capable of reconciling hostile classes and gradually introducing “socialism,” without affecting the interests of the capitalists, while, at the same time, taking the demands of the workers as far as possible into consideration. In Russia the views of the Katheder-Socialists were disseminated by the “legal Marxists.”
15. *Nozdryov*—a character in Gogol’s *Dead Souls* whom the author called “an historical personage” for the reason that wherever he went he left behind him a scandalous “history.”
16. *The Hanover resolution*—resolution on “Attacks on the Fundamental Views and Tactics of the Party,” adopted by the German Social-Democratic Party Congress at Hanover, September 27–October 2 (October 9–14), 1899. A discussion of this question at the Congress and the adoption of a special resolution were necessitated by the fact that the opportunists, led by Bernstein, launched a revisionist attack on Marxist theory and demanded a reconsideration of Social-Democratic revolutionary policy and tactics. The resolution adopted by the Congress rejected the demands of the revisionists, but failed to criticise and expose Bernsteinism. Bernstein’s supporters also voted for the resolution.
17. *Starover* (Old Believer)—the pseudonym of A. N. Potresov, a member of the *Iskra* Editorial Board; he subsequently became a Menshevik.
18. “*The Author Who Got a Swelled Head*”—the title of one of Maxim Gorky’s early stories.

19. The reference is to the collection *Material for a Characterisation of Our Economic Development*, printed legally in an edition of 2,000 copies in April 1895. The collection included Lenin's article (signed *K. Tulin*) "The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve's Book (*The Reflection of Marxism in Bourgeois Literature*)," directed against the "legal Marxists" (see present edition, Vol. 1, pp. 333–507).
20. *Vademecum for the Editors of Rabocheye Dyelo*—a collection of articles and documents compiled and prefaced by G. V. Plekhanov and published by the Emancipation of Labour group in Geneva in 1900; it exposed the opportunist views of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad and of the Editorial Board of its periodical, *Rabocheye Dyelo*.
21. See Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Moscow, 1958, p. 16.
22. *The Gotha Programme*—the programme adopted by the German Social-Democratic Party at the Gotha Congress in 1875 when the Eisenachers and Lassalleans united. The programme suffered from eclecticism and opportunism, since the Eisenachers made concessions to the Lassalleans on the most important points and accepted their formulations. Marx and Engels subjected the Gotha Programme to scathing criticism and characterised it as a retrograde step as compared with the Eisenach Programme of 1869 (See Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Moscow, 1958, pp. 13–48).
23. See Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1958, pp. 652–54.
24. *Lassalleans and Eisenachers*—two parties in the German working-class movement in the sixties and early seventies of the nineteenth century.
Lassalleans—supporters of Ferdinand Lassalle (1825–1864) and adherents of his theories; Lassalle was a German petty-bourgeois socialist who played an active part in organising (in 1863) the General Association of German Workers, a political organisation that existed up to 1875. The programmatic demands of the Association were formulated by Lassalle in a number of articles and speeches. Lassalle regarded the state as a supra-class organisation and, in conformity with that philosophically idealist view, believed that the Prussian state could be utilised to solve the social problem through the setting up of producers' co-operatives with its aid. Marx said that Lassalle advocated a "Royal-Prussian state socialism." Lassalle directed the workers towards peaceful, parliamentary forms of struggle, believing that the introduction of universal suffrage would make Prussia a "free people's state." To obtain universal suffrage he promised Bismarck the support of his Association against the liberal opposition and also in the implementation of Bismarck's plan to reunite Germany "from above" under the hegemony of Prussia. Lassalle repudiated the revolutionary class struggle, denied the importance of trade unions and of strike action, ignored the international tasks of the working class, and infected the German workers with nationalist ideas. His contemptuous attitude towards the peasantry, which he regarded as a reactionary force, did much damage to the German working-class movement. Marx and Engels fought his harmful utopian dogmatism and his reformist views. Their criticism helped free the German workers from the influence of Lassallean opportunism.

Eisenachers—members of the Social-Democratic Workers' Party of Germany, founded in 1869 at the Eisenach Congress. The leaders of the Eisenachers were August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht, who were under the ideological influence of Marx and Engels. The Eisenach programme stated that the Social-Democratic Workers' Party of Germany considered itself "a section of the International Working Men's Association and shared its aspirations." Thanks to the regular advice and criticism of Marx and Engels, the Eisenachers pursued a more consistent revolutionary policy than did Lassalle's General Association of German Workers; in particular, on the question of German reunification, they followed "the democratic and proletarian road, struggling against the slightest concession to Prussianism, Bismarckism, and nationalism" (see present edition, Vol. 19, "August Bebel"). Under the influence of the growing working-class movement and of increased government repressions, the two parties united at the Gotha Congress in 1875 to form the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany, of which the Lassalleans formed the opportunist wing.

25. *Guesdists and Possibilists*—two trends in the French socialist movement arising out of the split in the French Workers' Party in 1882.

Guesdists—followers of Jules Guesde, constituted the Marxist wing of the movement and advocated an independent revolutionary policy of the proletariat. In 1901 they formed the Socialist Party of France.

Possibilists—a petty-bourgeois, reformist trend that sought to divert the proletariat from revolutionary methods of struggle. The Possibilists advocated the restriction of working-class activity to what is "possible" under capitalism. In 1902, in conjunction with other reformist groups, the Possibilists organised the French Socialist Party.

In 1905 the Socialist Party of France and the French Socialist Party united to form a single party. During the imperialist war of 1914–18, Jules Guesde, together with the entire leadership of the French Socialist Party, went over to the camp of social-chauvinism.

26. *Cadets*—the Constitutional-Democratic Party, the principal bourgeois party in Russia, representing the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie. It was formed in October 1905. Parading as democrats and calling themselves the party of "people's freedom," the Cadets tried to win the following of the peasantry. Their aim was to preserve tsarism in the form of a constitutional monarchy. After the victory of the October Socialist Revolution, the Cadets organised counter-revolutionary conspiracies and revolts against the Soviet Republic.
27. *Bezzaglavtsi*—from the title of the journal *Bes Zaglavviya* (*Without a Title*)—were organisers of, and contributors to, the journal published in St. Petersburg in 1906 by S. N. Prokopovich, Y. D. Kuskova, V. Y. Bogucharsky, and others. The journal openly advocated revisionism, supported the Mensheviks and liberals, and opposed an independent proletarian policy. Lenin called the group "pro-Menshevik Cadets or pro-Cadet Mensheviks."
28. *The Stuttgart Congress* of the German Social-Democratic Party held on September 21–26 (October 3–8), 1898, was the first congress to discuss the question of revisionism in the German Social-Democratic Party. A statement from Bernstein (who did not attend) was read to the Congress; it amplified and defended the opportunist views he had previously set forth in a number of articles.

There was, however, no unity among his opponents at the Congress. Some (Bebel, Kautsky, and others) called for an ideological struggle and a criticism of Bernstein's errors, but opposed the adoption of organisational measures toward him. The others, led by Rosa Luxemburg—the minority—urged a more vigorous struggle against Bernsteinism.

29. “*A Protest by Russian Social-Democrats*” was written by Lenin in 1899, in exile. It was a reply to the *Credo* of a group of “Economists” (S. N. Prokopovich, Y. D. Kuskova, and others, who subsequently became Cadets). On receiving a copy of the *Credo* from his sister, A. I. Yelizarova, Lenin wrote a sharp protest in which he exposed the real nature of the declaration.

The Protest was discussed and unanimously endorsed by a meeting of 17 exiled Marxists convened by Lenin in the village of Yermakovskoye, Minusinsk District (Siberia). Exiles in Turukhansk District (Siberia) and Orlovo (Vyatka Gubernia) subsequently associated themselves with the Protest.

Lenin forwarded a copy of the Protest abroad to the Emancipation of Labour group; Plekhanov published it in his *Vademecum (Handbook—Ed.) for the Editors of Rabocheye Dyelo*.

30. *Byloye (The Past)*—a monthly journal on historical problems published in St. Petersburg in 1906–07; in 1908 it changed its name to *Minuvshiye Coda (Years Past)*. It was banned by the tsarist government in 1908, but resumed publication in Petrograd in July 1917 and continued in existence until 1926.
31. *Profession de foi*—a manifesto setting forth the opportunist views of the Kiev Committee, issued at the end of 1899. It was identical with the “Economist” *Credo* on many points. Lenin criticised the document in his article “Apropos of the *Profession de foi*” (see present edition, Vol. 4, pp. 286–96).

II

The Spontaneity of the Masses and the Consciousness of the Social-Democrats

We have said that our movement, much more extensive and deep than the movement of the seventies, must be inspired with the same devoted determination and energy that inspired the movement at that time. Indeed, no one, we think, has until now doubted that the strength of the present-day movement lies in the awakening of the masses (principally, the industrial proletariat) and that its weakness lies in the lack of consciousness and initiative among the revolutionary leaders.

However, of late a staggering discovery has been made, which threatens to disestablish all hitherto prevailing views on this question. This discovery was made by *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which in its polemic with *Iskra* and *Zarya* did not confine itself to making objections on separate points, but tried to ascribe “general disagreements” to a more profound cause—to the “different appraisals of the *relative* importance of the spontaneous and consciously ‘methodical’ element.” *Rabocheye Dyelo* formulated its indictment as a “*belittling of the significance of the objective or the spontaneous element of development.*”¹ To this we say: Had the polemics with *Iskra* and *Zarya* resulted in nothing more than causing *Rabocheye Dyelo* to hit upon these “general disagreements,” that alone would give us considerable satisfaction, so significant is this thesis and so clear is the light it sheds on the quintessence of the present-day theoretical and political differences that exist among Russian Social-Democrats.

For this reason the question of the relation between consciousness and spontaneity is of such enormous general interest, and for this reason the question must be dealt with in great detail.

A. *The Beginning of the Spontaneous Upsurge*

In the previous chapter we pointed out how *universally* absorbed the educated youth of Russia was in the theories of Marxism in the middle of the nineties. In the same period the strikes that followed the famous St. Petersburg industrial war of 1896 assumed a similar general character. Their spread over the whole of Russia clearly showed the depth of the newly awakening popular movement, and if we are to speak of the “spontaneous element” then, of course, it is this strike movement which, first and foremost, must be regarded as spontaneous. But there is spontaneity and spontaneity. Strikes occurred in Russia in the seventies and sixties (and even in the first half of the nineteenth century), and they were accompanied

by the “spontaneous” destruction of machinery, etc. Compared with these “revolts,” the strikes of the nineties might even be described as “conscious,” to such an extent do they mark the progress which the working-class movement made in that period. This shows that the “spontaneous element,” in essence, represents nothing more nor less than consciousness in an *embryonic form*. Even the primitive revolts expressed the awakening of consciousness to a certain extent. The workers were losing their age-long faith in the permanence of the system which oppressed them and began . . . I shall not say to understand, but to sense the necessity for collective resistance, definitely abandoning their slavish submission to the authorities. But this was, nevertheless, more in the nature of outbursts of desperation and vengeance than of *struggle*. The strikes of the nineties revealed far greater flashes of consciousness; definite demands were advanced, the strike was carefully timed, known cases and instances in other places were discussed, etc. The revolts were simply the resistance of the oppressed, whereas the systematic strikes represented the class struggle in embryo, but only in embryo. Taken by themselves, these strikes were simply trade union struggles, not yet Social Democratic struggles. They marked the awakening antagonisms between workers and employers; but the workers, were not, and could not be, conscious of the irreconcilable antagonism of their interests to the whole of the modern political and social system, i.e., theirs was not yet Social-Democratic consciousness. In this sense, the strikes of the nineties, despite the enormous progress they represented as compared with the “revolts,” remained a purely spontaneous movement.

We have said that *there could not have been* Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc.² The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. By their social status the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia. In the very same way, in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of Social-Democracy arose altogether independently of the spontaneous growth of the working-class movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of thought among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia. In the period under discussion, the middle nineties, this doctrine not only represented the completely formulated programme

of the Emancipation of Labour group, but had already won over to its side the majority of the revolutionary youth in Russia.

Hence, we had both the spontaneous awakening of the working masses, their awakening to conscious life and conscious struggle, and a revolutionary youth, armed with Social-Democratic theory and straining towards the workers. In this connection it is particularly important to state the oft-forgotten (and comparatively little-known) fact that, although the *early* Social-Democrats of that period *zealously carried on economic agitation* (being guided in this activity by the truly useful indications contained in the pamphlet *On Agitation*,²⁷ then still in manuscript), they did not regard this as their sole task. On the contrary, *from the very beginning* they set for Russian Social-Democracy the most far-reaching historical tasks, in general, and the task of overthrowing the autocracy, in particular. Thus, towards the end of 1895, the St. Petersburg group of Social-Democrats, which founded the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, prepared the first issue of a newspaper called *Rabocheye Dyelo*. This issue was ready to go to press when it was seized by the gendarmes, on the night of December 8, 1895, in a raid on the house of one of the members of the group, Anatoly Alexeyevich Vaneyey,³ so that the first edition of *Rabocheye Dyelo* was not destined to see the light of day. The leading article in this issue (which perhaps thirty years hence some *Russkaya Starina*²⁸ will unearth in the archives of the Department of Police) outlined the historical tasks of the working class in Russia and placed the achievement of political liberty at their head. The issue also contained an article entitled "What Are Our Ministers Thinking About?"⁴ which dealt with the crushing of the elementary education committees by the police. In addition, there was some correspondence from St. Petersburg, and from other parts of Russia (e.g., a letter on the massacre of the workers in Yaroslavl Gubernia). This, "first effort," if we are not mistaken, of the Russian Social-Democrats of the nineties was not a purely local, or less still, "Economic," newspaper, but one that aimed to unite the strike movement with the revolutionary movement against the autocracy, and to win over to the side of Social-Democracy all who were oppressed by the policy of reactionary obscurantism. No one in the slightest degree acquainted with the state of the movement at that period could doubt that such a paper would have met with warm response among the workers of the capital and the revolutionary intelligentsia and would have had a wide circulation. The failure of the enterprise merely showed that the Social-Democrats of that period were unable to meet the immediate requirements of the time owing to their lack of revolutionary experience and practical training. This must be said, too, with regard to the *S. Petersburgsky Rabochy Listok*²⁹ and particularly with regard to *Rabochaya Gazeta*

and the *Manifesto* of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, founded in the spring of 1898. Of course, we would not dream of blaming the Social Democrats of that time for this unpreparedness. But in order to profit from the experience of that movement, and to draw practical lessons from it, we must thoroughly understand the causes and significance of this or that shortcoming. It is therefore highly important to establish the fact that a part (perhaps even a majority) of the Social-Democrats, active in the period of 1895–98, justly considered it possible even then, at the very beginning of the “spontaneous” movement, to come forward with a most extensive programme and a militant tactical line.⁵ Lack of training of the majority of the revolutionaries, an entirely natural phenomenon, could not have roused any particular fears. Once the tasks were correctly defined, once the energy existed for repeated attempts to fulfil them, temporary failures represented only part misfortune. Revolutionary experience and organisational skill are things that can be acquired, provided the desire is there to acquire them, provided the shortcomings are recognised, which in revolutionary activity is more than half-way towards their removal.

But what was only part misfortune became full misfortune when this consciousness began to grow dim (it was very much alive among the members of the groups mentioned), when there appeared people—and even Social-Democratic organs—that were prepared to regard shortcomings as virtues, that even tried to invent a *theoretical* basis for their *slavish cringing before spontaneity*. It is time to draw conclusions from this trend, the content of which is incorrectly and too narrowly characterised as Economism.

B. Bowing to Spontaneity. Rabochaya Mysl

Before dealing with the literary manifestation of this subservience to spontaneity, we should like to note the following characteristic fact (communicated to us from the above-mentioned source), which throws light on the conditions in which the two future conflicting trends in Russian Social-Democracy arose and grew among the comrades working in St. Petersburg. In the beginning of 1897, just prior to their banishment, A. A. Vaneyev and several of his comrades attended a private meeting³⁰ at which “old” and “young” members of the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class gathered. The conversation centred chiefly about the question of organisation, particularly about the “rules for the workers’ mutual benefit fund,” which, in their final form, were published in “*Listok*” *Rabotnika*,³¹ No. 9–10, p. 46. Sharp differences immediately showed themselves between the “old” members (“Decembrists,” as the St. Petersburg Social Democrats jestingly called them) and several the “young” members

(who subsequently took an active part in the work of *Rabochaya Mysl*), with a heated discussion ensuing. The “young” members defended the main principles of the rules in the form in which they were published. The “old” members contended that the prime necessity was not this, but the consolidation of the League of Struggle into an organisation of revolutionaries to which all the various workers’ mutual benefit funds, students’ propaganda circles, etc., should be subordinated. It goes without saying that the disputing sides far from realised at the time that these disagreements were the beginning of a cleavage; on the contrary, they regarded them as something isolated and casual. But this fact shows that in Russia, too, Economism did not arise and spread without a struggle against the “old” Social-Democrats (which the Economists of today are apt to forget). And if, in the main, this struggle has not left “documentary” traces behind it, it is *solely* because the membership of the circles then functioning underwent such constant change that no continuity was established and, consequently, differences in point of view were not recorded in any documents.

The founding of *Rabochaya Mysl* brought Economism to the light of day, but not at one stroke. We must picture to ourselves concretely the conditions for activity and the short-lived character of the majority of the Russian study circles (a thing that is possible only for those who have themselves experienced it) in order to understand how much there was of the fortuitous in the successes and failures of the new trend in various towns, and the length of time during which neither the advocates nor the opponents of the “new” could make up their minds—and literally had no opportunity of so doing—as to whether this really expressed a distinct trend or merely the lack of training of certain individuals. For example, the first mimeographed copies of *Rabochaya Mysl* never reached the great majority of Social-Democrats, and if we are able to refer to the leading article in the first number, it is only because it was reproduced in an article by V. I.³² (“*Lis-tok*” *Rabotnika*, No. 9–10, p. 47, et seq.), who, of course, did not fail to extol with more zeal than reason the new paper, which was so different from the papers and projects for papers mentioned above.⁶ It is well worth dwelling on this leading article because it brings out in bold relief *the entire spirit of Rabochaya Mysl* and Economism generally.

After stating that the arm of the “blue-coats”⁷ could never halt the progress of the working-class movement, the leading article goes on to say: “. . . The virility of the working-class movement is due to the fact that the workers themselves are at last taking their fate into their own hands, and out of the hands of the leaders”; this fundamental thesis is then developed in greater detail. Actually, the leaders (i.e., the Social-Democrats, the organisers of the League of Struggle) were, one might say, torn out of the

hands of the workers⁸ by the police; yet it is made to appear that the workers were fighting against the leaders and liberated themselves from their yoke! Instead of sounding the call to go forward towards the consolidation of the revolutionary organisation and the expansion of political activity, the call was issued for a *retreat* to the purely trade union struggle. It was announced that “the economic basis of the movement is eclipsed by the effort never to forget the political ideal,” and that the watchword for the working-class movement was “Struggle for economic conditions” (!) or, better still, “The workers for the workers.” It was declared that strike funds “are more valuable to the movement than a hundred other Organisations” (compare this statement made in October 1897, with the polemic between the “Decembrists” and the young members in the beginning of 1897), etc. Catchwords like “We must concentrate, not on the ‘cream’ of the workers, but on the ‘average’, mass worker”; “Politics always obediently follows economics,”⁹ etc., etc., became the fashion, exercising an irresistible influence upon the masses of the youth who were attracted to the movement but who, in the majority of cases, were acquainted only with such fragments of Marxism as were expounded in legally appearing publications.

Political consciousness was completely overwhelmed by spontaneity—the spontaneity of the “Social-Democrats” who repeated Mr. V. V.’s “ideas,” the spontaneity of those workers who were carried away by the arguments that a kopek added to a ruble was worth more than any socialism or politics, and that they must “fight, knowing that they are fighting, not for the sake of some future generation, but for themselves and their children” (leader in *Rabochaya Mysl*, No. 1). Phrases like these have always been a favourite weapon of the West-European bourgeois, who, in their hatred for socialism, strove (like the German “*Sozial-Politiker*” Hirsch) to transplant English trade-unionism to their native soil and to preach to the workers that by engaging in the purely trade union struggle¹⁰ they would be fighting for themselves and for their children, and not for some future generations with some future socialism. And now the “V. V.s of Russian Social-Democracy” have set about repeating these bourgeois phrases. It is important at this point to note three circumstances that will be useful to our further analysis of *contemporary* differences.¹¹

In the first place, the overwhelming of political consciousness by spontaneity, to which we referred above, also took place *spontaneously*. This may sound like a pun, but, alas, it is the bitter truth. It did not take place as a result of an open struggle between two diametrically opposed points of view, in which one triumphed over the other; it occurred because of the fact that an increasing number of “old” revolutionaries were “torn away” by the gendarmes and increasing numbers of “young” “V. V.s of Russian Social Democracy”

appeared on the scene. Everyone, who has, I shall not say participated in, but at least breathed the atmosphere of, the *present-day* Russian movement, knows perfectly well that this is precisely the case. And if, nevertheless, we insist strongly that the reader be fully clear on this generally known fact, if we cite, for explicitness, as it were, the facts of the first edition of *Rabocheye Dyelo* and of the polemic between the “old” and the “young” at the beginning of 1897, we do this because the people who vaunt their “democracy” speculate on the ignorance of these facts on the part of the broad public (or of the very young generation). We shall return to this point further on.

Secondly, in the very first literary expression of Economism we observe the exceedingly curious phenomenon—highly characteristic for an understanding of all the differences prevailing among present day Social Democrats—that the adherents of the “labour movement pure and simple,” worshippers of the closest “organic” contacts (*Rabocheye Dyelo’s* term) with the proletarian struggle, opponents of any non-worker intelligentsia (even a socialist intelligentsia), are compelled, in order to defend their positions, to resort to the arguments of the *bourgeois* “pure trade-unionists.” This shows that from the very outset *Rabochaya Mysl* began—unconsciously—to implement the programme of the *Credo*. This shows (something *Rabocheye Dyelo* cannot grasp) that *all* worship of the spontaneity of the working class movement, all belittling of the role of “the conscious element,” of the role of Social-Democracy, *means, quite independently of whether he who belittles that role desires it or not, a strengthening of the influence of bourgeois ideology upon the workers*. All those who talk about “overrating the importance of ideology,”¹² about exaggerating the role of the conscious element,¹³ etc., imagine that the labour movement pure and simple can elaborate, and will elaborate, an independent ideology for itself, if only the workers “wrest their fate from the hands of the leaders.” But this is a profound mistake. To supplement what has been said above, we shall quote the following profoundly true and important words of Karl. Kautsky on the new draft programme of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party:¹⁴

“Many of our revisionist critics believe that Marx asserted that economic development and the class struggle create, not only the conditions for socialist production, but also, and directly, the *consciousness* [K. K.’s italics] of its necessity. And these critics assert that England, the country most highly developed capitalistically, is more remote than any other from this consciousness. Judging by the draft, one might assume that this allegedly orthodox Marxist view, which is thus refuted, was shared by the committee that drafted the Austrian programme. In the draft programme it is stated: ‘The more capitalist development increases the numbers of the proletariat, the more the proletariat is compelled and becomes fit to fight against capitalism. The proletariat becomes conscious of the possibility and of the necessity for so-

cialism.’ In this connection socialist consciousness appears to be a necessary and direct result of the proletarian class struggle. But this is absolutely untrue. Of course, socialism, as a doctrine, has its roots in modern economic relationships just as the class struggle of the proletariat has, and, like the latter, emerges from the struggle against the capitalist-created poverty and misery of the masses. But socialism and the class struggle arise side by side and not one out of the other; each arises under different conditions. Modern socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge. Indeed, modern economic science is as much a condition for socialist production as, say, modern technology, and the proletariat can create neither the one nor the other, no matter how much it may desire to do so; both arise out of the modern social process. The vehicle of science is not the proletariat, but the *bourgeois intelligentsia* [K. K.’s italics]: it was in the minds of individual members of this stratum that modern socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectually developed proletarians who, in their turn, introduce it into the proletarian class struggle where conditions allow that to be done. Thus, socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without [*von Aussen Hineingetragenes*] and not something that arose within it spontaneously [*urwüchsig*]. Accordingly, the old Hainfeld programme quite rightly stated that the task of Social-Democracy is to imbue the proletariat (literally: saturate the proletariat) with the *consciousness* of its position and the consciousness of its task. There would be no need for this if consciousness arose of itself from the class struggle. The new draft copied this proposition from the old programme, and attached it to the proposition mentioned above. But this completely broke the line of thought . . .”

Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement,¹⁵ the only choice is—either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for mankind has not created a “third” ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or an above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology *in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree* means to strengthen bourgeois ideology. There is much talk of spontaneity. But the *spontaneous* development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology, *to its development along the lines of the Credo programme*; for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade-unionism, is *Nur-Gewerkschaftlerei*, and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of Social-Democracy, is *to combat spontaneity, to divert* the working-class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social Democracy. The sentence employed by the authors of the Economist letter published in *Iskra*, No. 12, that the efforts of the most inspired ideologists fail to divert the working-class

movement from the path that is determined by the interaction of the material elements and the material environment is therefore *tantamount to renouncing socialism*. If these authors were capable of fearlessly, consistently, and thoroughly considering what they say, as everyone who enters the arena of literary and public activity should be, there would be nothing left for them but to “fold their useless arms over their empty breasts” and surrender the field of action to the Struves and Prokopoviches, who are dragging the working-class movement “along the line of least resistance,” i.e., along the line of bourgeois trade-unionism, or to the Zubatovs, who are dragging it along the line of clerical and gendarme “ideology.”

Let us recall the example of Germany. What was the historic service Lassalle rendered to the German working-class movement? It was that he *diverted* that movement from the path of progressionist trade-unionism and co-operativism towards which it had been spontaneously moving (*with the benign assistance of Schulze-Delitzsch and his like*). To fulfil such a task it was necessary to do something quite different from talking of underrating the spontaneous element, of tactics-as-process, of the interaction between elements and environment, etc. *A fierce struggle against spontaneity* was necessary, and only after such a struggle, extending over many years, was it possible, for instance, to convert the working population of Berlin from a bulwark of the progressionist party into one of the finest strongholds of Social-Democracy. This struggle is by no means over even today (as might seem to those who learn the history of the German movement from Prokopovich, and its philosophy from Struve). Even now the German working class is, so to speak, split up among a number of ideologies. A section of the workers is organised in Catholic and monarchist trade unions; another section is organised in the Hirsch-Duncker³³ unions, founded by the bourgeois worshippers of English trade-unionism; the third is organised in Social-Democratic trade unions. The last-named group is immeasurably more numerous than the rest, but the Social-Democratic ideology was able to achieve this superiority, and will be able to maintain it, only in an unswerving struggle against all other ideologies.

But why, the reader will ask, does the spontaneous movement, the movement along the line of least resistance, lead to the domination of bourgeois ideology? For the simple reason that bourgeois ideology is far older in origin than socialist ideology, that it is more fully developed, and that it has at its disposal *immeasurably* more means of dissemination.¹⁶ And the younger the socialist movement in any given country, the more vigorously it must struggle against all attempts to entrench non-socialist ideology, and the more resolutely the workers must be warned against the bad counselors who shout against “overrating the conscious element,” etc. The authors

of the Economist letter, in unison with *Rabocheye Dyelo*, inveigh against the intolerance that is characteristic of the infancy of the movement. To this we reply: Yes, our movement is indeed in its infancy, and in order that it may grow up faster, it must become imbued with intolerance against those who retard its growth by their subservience to spontaneity. Nothing is so ridiculous and harmful as pretending that we are “old hands” who have long ago experienced all the decisive stages of the struggle.

Thirdly, the first issue of *Rabochaya Mysl* shows that the term “Economism” (which, of course, we do not propose to abandon, since, in one way or another, this designation has already established itself) does not adequately convey the real character of the new trend. *Rabochaya Mysl* does not altogether repudiate the political struggle; the rules for a workers’ mutual benefit fund published in its first issue contain a reference to combating the government. *Rabochaya Mysl* believes, however, that “politics always obediently follows economics” (*Rabocheye Dyelo* varies this thesis when it asserts in its programme that “in Russia more than in any other country, the economic struggle is *inseparable* from the political struggle”). *If by politics is meant Social-Democratic politics*, then the theses of *Rabochaya Mysl* and *Rabocheye Dyelo* are utterly incorrect. The economic struggle of the workers is very often connected (although not inseparably) with bourgeois politics, clerical politics, etc., as we have seen. *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s theses are correct, if by politics is meant trade union politics, viz., the common striving of all workers to secure from the government measures for alleviating the distress to which their condition gives rise, but which do not abolish that condition, i.e., which do not remove the subjection of labour to capital. That striving indeed is common to the English trade-unionists, who are hostile to socialism, to the Catholic workers, to the “Zubatov” workers, etc. There is politics and politics. Thus, we see that *Rabochaya Mysl* does not so much deny the political struggle, as it bows to its *spontaneity*, to its unconsciousness. While fully recognising the political struggle (better: the political desires and demands of the workers), which arises spontaneously from the working-class movement itself, it absolutely refuses *independently to work out* a specifically *Social-Democratic politics* corresponding to the general tasks of socialism and to present-day conditions in Russia. Further on we shall show that *Rabocheye Dyelo* commits the same error.

C. The Self-Emancipation Group³⁴ and Rabocheye Dyelo

We have dealt at such length with the little-known and now almost forgotten leading article in the first issue of *Rabochaya Mysl* because it was the first and most striking expression of that general stream of thought which

afterwards emerged into the light of day in innumerable streamlets. V. I. was perfectly right when, in praising the first issue and the leading article of *Rabochaya Mysl*, he said that the article had been written in a “sharp and fervent” manner (“*Listok*” *Rabotnika*, No. 9–10, p. 49). Every man with convictions who thinks he has something new to say writes “fervently” and in such a way as to make his views stand out in bold relief. Only those who are accustomed to sitting between two stools lack “fervour”; only such people are able to praise the fervour of *Rabochaya Mysl* one day and attack the “fervent polemics” of its opponents the next.

We shall not dwell on the “*Separate Supplement*” to *Rabochaya Mysl* (below we shall have occasion, on various points, to refer to this work, which expresses the ideas of the Economists more consistently than any other) but shall briefly mention the “Appeal of the Self-Emancipation of the Workers Group” (March 1899, reprinted in the London *Nakanune*,³⁵ No. 7, July 1899). The authors of the “Appeal” rightly say that “the workers of Russia are *only just awakening*, are just beginning to look about them, and are *instinctively clutching at the first available means of struggle*.” Yet they draw from this the same false conclusion as that drawn by *Rabochaya Mysl*, forgetting that the instinctive is the unconscious (the spontaneous) to the aid of which socialists must come; that the “first available means of struggle” will always be, in modern society, the trade union means of struggle, and the “first available” ideology the bourgeois (trade union) ideology. Similarly, these authors do not “repudiate” politics, they merely (merely!) echo Mr. V. V. that politics is the superstructure, and therefore, “political agitation must be the superstructure to the agitation carried on in favour of the economic struggle; it must arise on the basis of this struggle and follow in its wake.”

As for *Rabocheye Dyelo*, it began its activity with the “defence” of the Economists. It stated a *downright untruth* in its opening issue (No. 1, pp. 141–142) in claiming that it “does not know to which young comrades Axelrod referred” when he warned the Economists in his well-known pamphlet.¹⁷ In the polemic that flared up with Axelrod and Plekhanov over this untruth, *Rabocheye Dyelo* had to admit that “in form of perplexity, it sought to defend all the younger Social-Democrats abroad from this unjust accusation” (the charge of narrowness levelled by Axelrod at the Economists). In reality this accusation was completely justified, and *Rabocheye Dyelo* knew perfectly well that, among others, it applied also to V. I., a member of its Editorial Board. Let me note in passing that in this polemic Axelrod was entirely right and *Rabocheye Dyelo* entirely wrong in their respective interpretations of my pamphlet *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*.¹⁸ The pamphlet was written in 1897, before the appearance of *Rabochaya Mysl*, when I thought, rightly, that the *original tendency* of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, which

I characterised above, was dominant. And this tendency was dominant at least until the middle of 1898. Consequently, *Rabocheye Dyelo* had no right whatever, in its attempt to deny the existence and danger of Economism, to refer to a pamphlet that expressed views *forced out* by Economist views in St. Petersburg in 1897–98.¹⁹

But *Rabocheye Dyelo* not only “defended” the Economists, it itself constantly fell into their fundamental errors. The source of this confusion is to be found in the ambiguity of the interpretation given to the following thesis of the *Rabocheye Dyelo* programme: “We consider that the most important phenomenon of Russian life, the one that will mainly *determine the tasks* [our italics] and the character of the publication activity of the Union, is the *mass working-class movement* [*Rabocheye Dyelo’s* italics] which has arisen in recent years.” That the mass movement is a most important phenomenon is a fact not to be disputed. But the crux of the matter is, how is one to understand the statement that the mass working class movement will “determine the tasks”? It may be interpreted in one of two ways. *Either* it means bowing to the spontaneity of this movement, i.e., reducing the role of Social-Democracy to mere subservience to the working-class movement as such (the interpretation of *Rabochaya Mysl*, the Self-Emancipation Group, and other Economists), or it means that the mass movement places before us new theoretical, political, and organisational tasks, far more complicated than those that might have satisfied us in the period before the rise of the mass movement. *Rabocheye Dyelo* inclined and still inclines towards the first interpretation, for it has said nothing definite about any new tasks, but has argued constantly as though the “mass movement” *relieves* us of the necessity of clearly understanding and fulfilling the tasks it sets before us. We need only point out that *Rabocheye Dyelo* considered that it was impossible to set the overthrow of the autocracy as the *first* task of the mass working-class movement, and that it degraded this task (in the name of the mass movement) to that of a struggle for immediate political demands (Reply, p. 25).

We shall pass over the article by B. Krichevsky, editor of *Rabocheye Dyelo*, entitled “The Economic and the Political Struggle in the Russian Movement,” published in No. 7 of that paper, in which these very mistakes²⁰ are repeated, and proceed directly to *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10. We shall not, of course, enter in detail into the various objections raised by Krichevsky and Martynov against *Zarya* and *Iskra*. We are here interested solely in the basis of principles on which *Rabocheye Dyelo*, in its tenth issue, took its stand. Thus, we shall not examine the strange fact that *Rabocheye Dyelo* saw a “diametrical contradiction” between the proposition:

“Social-Democracy does not, tie its hands, it does not restrict its activities to some one preconceived plan or method of political struggle; it recognises all means of struggle as long as they correspond to the forces at-the disposal of the Party,” etc. (*Iskra*, No. 1).²¹

and the proposition:

“Without a strong organisation skilled in waging political struggle under all circumstances and at all times, there can be no question of that systematic plan of action, illumined by firm principles and steadfastly carried out, which alone is worthy of the name of tactics” (*Iskra*, No. 4).²²

To confound recognition, *in principle*, of all means of struggle, of all plans and methods, provided they are expedient, with the demand *at a given political moment* to be guided by a strictly observed plan is tantamount, if we are to talk of tactics, to confounding the recognition by medical science of various methods of treating diseases with the necessity for adopting a certain definite method of treatment for a given disease. The point is, however, that *Rabocheye Dyelo*, itself the victim of a disease which we have called bowing to spontaneity, refuses to recognise any “method of treatment” for that disease. Hence, it has made the remarkable discovery that “tactics-as-plan contradicts the fundamental spirit of Marxism” (No. 10, p. 18), that tactics are “*a process of growth of Party tasks, which grow together with the Party*” (p. 11, *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s italics). This remark has every chance of becoming a celebrated maxim, a permanent monument to the *Rabocheye Dyelo* “trend.” To the question, whither? the leading organ replies: Movement is a process of changing the distance between the starting-point and subsequent points of the movement. This matchless example of profundity is not merely a curiosity (were it that, it would not be worth dealing with at length), but *the programme of a whole trend*, the very programme which R. M. (in the “*Separate Supplement*” to *Rabochaya Mysl*) expressed in the words: That struggle is desirable which is possible, and the struggle which is possible is that which is going on at the given moment. This is precisely the trend of unbounded opportunism, which passively adapts itself to spontaneity.

“Tactics-as-plan contradicts the essence of Marxism!” But this is a slander of Marxism; it means turning Marxism into the caricature held up by the Narodniks in their struggle against us. It means belittling the initiative and energy of class-conscious fighters, whereas Marxism, on the contrary, gives a gigantic impetus to the initiative and energy of the Social-Democrat, opens up for him the widest perspectives, and (if one may so express it) places at his disposal the mighty force of many millions of workers “spontaneously” rising for the struggle. The entire history of international Social-Democracy

teems with plans advanced now by one, now by another political leader, some confirming the far-sightedness and the correct political and organisational views of their authors and others revealing their short-sightedness and their political errors. At the time when Germany was at one of the crucial turning-points in its history—the formation of the Empire, the opening of the Reichstag, and the granting of universal suffrage—Liebknecht had one plan for Social-Democratic politics and work in general, and Schweitzer had another. When the anti-socialist law came down on the heads of the German socialists, Most and Hasselmann had one plan—they were prepared then and there to call for violence and terror; Hochbert, Schramm, and (partly) Bernstein had another—they began to preach to the Social-Democrats that they themselves had provoked the enactment of the law by being unreasonably bitter and revolutionary, and must now earn forgiveness by their exemplary conduct. There was yet a third plan, proposed by those who prepared and carried out the publication of an illegal organ. It is easy, of course, with hindsight, many years after the struggle over the selection of the path to be followed, and after history has pronounced its verdict as to the expediency of the path selected, to utter profound maxims about the growth of Party tasks, which grow together with the Party. But at a time of confusion,²³ when the Russian “Critics” and Economists are degrading Social-Democracy to the level of trade-unionism, and when the terrorists are strongly advocating the adoption of “tactics-as-plan” that repeats the old mistakes, at such a time, to confine oneself to profundities of this kind, means simply to issue to oneself a “certificate of poverty.” At a time when many Russian Social-Democrats suffer from a lack of initiative and energy, from an inadequate “scope of political propaganda, agitation, and organisation,”²⁴ from a lack of “plans” for a broader organisation of revolutionary work, at such a time, to declare that “tactics-as-plan” contradicts the essence of Marxism means not only to vulgarise Marxism in the realm of theory, but *to drag the Party backward in practice.*

Rabocheye Dyelo goes on to sermonise:

“The task of the revolutionary Social-Democrat is only to accelerate objective development by his conscious work, not to obviate it or substitute his own subjective plans for this development. *Iskra* knows all this in theory; but the enormous importance which Marxism justly attaches to conscious revolutionary work causes it in practice, owing to its doctrinaire view of tactics, *to belittle the significance of the objective or the spontaneous element of development.*” (p. 18)

Another example of the extraordinary theoretical confusion worthy of Mr. V. V. and his fraternity. We would ask our philosopher: how may a

designer of subjective plans “belittle” objective development? Obviously by losing sight of the fact that this objective development creates or strengthens, destroys or weakens certain classes, strata, or groups, certain nations or groups of nations, etc., and in this way serves to determine a given international political alignment of forces, or the position adopted by revolutionary parties, etc. If the designer of plans did that, his guilt would not be that he belittled the spontaneous element, but, on the contrary, that he belittled the *conscious* element, for he would then show that he lacked the “consciousness” properly to understand objective development. Hence, the very talk of “estimating the *relative* significance” (*Rabocheye Dyelo’s* italics) of spontaneity and consciousness itself reveals a complete lack of “consciousness.” If certain “spontaneous elements of development” can be grasped at all by human understanding, then an incorrect estimation of them will be tantamount to “belittling the conscious element.” But if they cannot be grasped, then we do not know them, and therefore cannot speak of them. What then is Krichevsky discussing? If he thinks that *Iskra’s* “subjective plans” are erroneous (as he in fact declares them to be), he should have shown what objective facts they ignore, and only then charged *Iskra* with *lacking political consciousness* for ignoring them, with “belittling the conscious element,” to use his own words. If, however, displeased with subjective plans, he can bring forward no argument other than that of “belittling the spontaneous element” (!), he merely shows: (1) that, theoretically, he understands Marxism *a la* Kareyev and Mikhailovsky, who have been sufficiently ridiculed by Beltov;³⁶ and (2) that, practically, he is quite satisfied with the “spontaneous elements of development” that have drawn our legal Marxists towards Bernsteinism and our Social-Democrats towards Economism, and that he is “full of wrath” against those who have determined at all costs *to divert* Russian Social-Democracy from the path of “spontaneous” development.

Further, there follow things that are positively droll. “Just as human beings will reproduce in the old-fashioned way despite all the discoveries of natural science, so the birth of a new social order will come about, in the future too, *mainly* as a result of elemental outbursts, despite all the discoveries of social science and the increase in the number of conscious fighters” (p. 19). Just as our grandfathers in their old-fashioned wisdom used to say, Anyone can bring children into the world, so today the “modern socialists” (*a la* Nartsis Tuporylov)³⁷ say in their wisdom, Anyone can participate in the spontaneous birth of a new social order. We too hold that anyone can. All that is required for participation of that kind is *to yield* to Economism when Economism reigns and to terrorism when terrorism arises. Thus, in the spring of this year, when it was so important to utter a note of warning

against infatuation with terrorism, *Rabocheye Dyelo* stood in amazement, confronted by a problem that was “new” to it. And now, six months after, when the problem has become less topical, it presents us at one and the same time with the declaration: “We think that it is not and should not be the task of Social-Democracy to counteract the rise of terroristic sentiments” (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 23), and with the Conference resolution: “The Conference regards systematic and aggressive terror as being inopportune” (*Two Conferences*, p. 18). How beautifully clear and coherent this is! Not to counteract, but to declare inopportune, and to declare it in such a way that unsystematic and defensive terror does not come within the scope of the “resolution.” It must be admitted that such a resolution is extremely safe and is fully insured against error, just as a man who talks, but says nothing, insures himself against error. All that is needed to frame such a resolution is an ability to keep *at the tail end* of the movement. When *Iskra* ridiculed *Rabocheye Dyelo* for declaring the question of terror to be new,²⁵ the latter angrily accused *Iskra* of “having the incredible effrontery to impose upon the Party organisation solutions of tactical questions proposed by a group of emigrant writers more than fifteen years ago” (p. 24). Effrontery, indeed, and what an overestimation of the conscious element—first to resolve questions theoretically beforehand, and then to try to convince the organisation, the Party, and the masses of the correctness of this solution!²⁶ How much better it would be to repeat the elements and, without “imposing” anything upon anybody, swing with every “turn”—whether in the direction of Economism or in the direction of terrorism. *Rabocheye Dyelo* even generalises this great precept of worldly wisdom and accuses *Iskra* and *Zarya* of “setting up their programme against the movement, like a spirit hovering over the formless chaos” (p. 29). But what else is the function of Social-Democracy if not to be a “spirit” that not only hovers over the spontaneous movement, but also *raises* this movement *to the level of “its programme”*? Surely, it is not its function to drag at the *tail* of the movement. At best, this would be of no service to the movement; at worst, it would be exceedingly harmful. *Rabocheye Dyelo*, however, not only follows this “tactics-as-process,” but elevates it to a principle, so that it would be more correct to describe its tendency not as opportunism, but as *tail-ism* (from the word *tail*). And it must be admitted that those who are determined always to follow behind the movement and be its tail are absolutely and forever guaranteed against “belittling the spontaneous element of development.”

And so, we have become convinced that the fundamental error committed by the “new trend” in Russian Social-Democracy is its bowing to spontaneity and its failure to understand that the spontaneity of the masses demands a high degree of consciousness from us Social-Democrats. The greater the spontaneous upsurge of the masses and the more widespread the movement, the more rapid, incomparably so, the demand for greater consciousness in the theoretical, political and organisational work of Social-Democracy.

The spontaneous upsurge of the masses in Russia proceeded (and continues) with such rapidity that the young Social Democrats proved unprepared to meet these gigantic tasks. This unpreparedness is our common misfortune, the misfortune of *all* Russian Social-Democrats. The upsurge of the masses proceeded and spread with uninterrupted continuity; it not only continued in the places where it began, but spread to new localities and to new strata of the population (under the influence of the working class movement, there was a renewed ferment among the student youth, among the intellectuals generally, and even among the peasantry). Revolutionaries, however, *lagged behind* this upsurge, both in their “theories” and in their activity; they failed to establish a constant and continuous organisation capable of *leading* the whole movement.

In Chapter I, we established that *Rabocheye Dyelo* belittled our theoretical tasks and that it “spontaneously” repeated the fashionable catchword “freedom of criticism”; those who repeated this catchword lacked the “consciousness” to understand that the positions of the opportunist “Critics” and those of the revolutionaries in Germany and in Russia are diametrically opposed.

In the following chapters, we shall show how this bowing to spontaneity found expression in the sphere of the political tasks and in the organisational work of Social-Democracy.

Notes

1. *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, September 1901, pp. 17–18. *Rabocheye Dyelo's* italics. —*Lenin*
2. Trade-unionism does not exclude “politics” altogether, as some imagine. Trade unions have always conducted some political (but not Social-Democratic) agitation and struggle. We shall deal with the difference between trade union politics and Social-Democratic politics in the next chapter. —*Lenin*
3. A. A. Vaneyev died in Eastern Siberia in 1899 from consumption, which he contracted during solitary confinement in prison prior to his banishment. That is why we considered it possible to publish the above information, the authenticity of which we guarantee, for it comes from persons who were closely and directly acquainted with A. A. Vaneyev. —*Lenin*

4. See present edition, Vol. 2, pp. 87–92. —*Ed.*
5. “In adopting a hostile attitude towards the activities of the Social-Democrats of the late nineties, *Iskra* ignores the absence at that time of conditions for any work other than the struggle for petty demands,” declare the Economists in their “Letter to Russian Social-Democratic Organs” (*Iskra* No. 12). The facts given above show that the assertion about “absence of conditions” is *diametrically opposed to the truth*. Not only at the end, but even in the mid-nineties, all the conditions existed for other work, besides the struggle for petty demands—all the conditions except adequate training of leaders. Instead of frankly admitting that we, the ideologists, the leaders, lacked sufficient training—the Economists seek to shift the blame entirely upon the “absence of conditions,” upon the effect of material environment that determines the road from which no ideologist will be able to divert the movement. What is this but slavish cringing before spontaneity, what but the infatuation of the “ideologists” with their own shortcomings?—*Lenin*
6. It should be stated in passing that the praise of *Rabochaya Mysl* in November 1898, when Economism had become fully defined, especially abroad, emanated from the selfsame V. I, who very soon after became one of the editors of *Rabocheye Dyelo*. And yet *Rabocheye Dyelo* denied that there were two trends in Russian Social-Democracy, and continues to deny it to this day!—*Lenin*
7. The tsarist gendarmes wore blue uniforms. —*Tr.*
8. That this simile is a correct one is shown by the following characteristic fact. When, after the arrest of the “Decembrists,” the news spread among the workers of the Schlüsselburg Highway that the discovery and arrest were facilitated by an *agent provocateur*, N. N. Mikhailov, a dentist, who had been in contact with a group associated with the “Decembrists,” the workers were so enraged that they decided to kill him. —*Lenin*
9. These quotations are taken from the same leading article in the first number of *Rabochaya Mysl*. One can judge from this the degree of theoretical training possessed by these “V. V.s of Russian Social-Democracy,”³⁸ who kept repeating the crude vulgarisation of “economic materialism” at a time when the Marxists were carrying on a literary war against the real Mr. V. V., who had long ago been dubbed “a past master of reactionary deeds” for holding similar views on the relations between politics and economics!—*Lenin*
10. The Germans even have a special expression, *Nur-Gewerkschaftler*, which means an advocate of the “pure trade union” struggle. —*Lenin*
11. We emphasise the word *contemporary* for the benefit of those who may pharisaically shrug their shoulders and say: It is easy enough to attack *Rabochaya Mysl* now, but is not all this ancient history? *Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur* (change the name and the tale is about you—*Ed.*) is our answer to such contemporary Pharisees, whose complete subjection to the ideas of *Rabochaya Mysl* will be *proved* further on. —*Lenin*
12. Letter of the Economists, in *Iskra*, No. 12. —*Lenin*
13. *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10. —*Lenin*
14. *Neue Zeit*, 1901–02, XX, I, No. 3, p. 79. The committee’s draft to which Kautsky refers was adopted by the Vienna Congress (at the end of last year) in a slightly amended form. —*Lenin*

15. This does not mean, of course, that the workers have no part in creating such an ideology. They take part, however, not as workers, but as socialist theoreticians, as Proudhons and Weitlings; in other words, they take part only when they are able, and to the extent that they are able, more or less, to acquire the knowledge of their age and develop that knowledge. But in order that working men *may succeed in this more often*, every effort must be made to raise the level of the consciousness of the workers in general; it is necessary that the workers do not confine themselves to the artificially restricted limits of “*literature for workers*” but that they learn to an increasing degree to master *general literature*. It would be even truer to say “are not confined,” instead of “do not confine themselves,” because the workers themselves wish to read and do read all that is written for the intelligentsia, and only a few (bad) intellectuals believe that it is enough “for workers” to be told a few things about factory conditions and to have repeated to them over and over again what has long been known. —*Lenin*
16. It is often said that the working class *spontaneously* gravitates towards socialism. This is perfectly true in the sense that socialist theory reveals the causes of the misery of the working class more profoundly and more correctly than any other theory, and for that reason the workers are able to assimilate it so easily, *provided*, however, this theory does not itself yield to spontaneity, *provided* it subordinates spontaneity to itself. Usually this is taken for granted, but it is precisely this which *Rabocheye Dyelo* forgets or distorts. The working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism; nevertheless, most widespread (and continuously and diversely revived) bourgeois ideology spontaneously imposes itself upon the working class to a still greater degree. —*Lenin*
17. *Present Tasks and Tactics of the Russian Social-Democracy*, Geneva, 1898. Two letters to *Rabochaya Gazeta*, written in 1897. —*Lenin*
18. See present edition, Vol. 2, pp. 323—51. —*Ed.*
19. In defending its first untruth (“we do not know to which young comrades Axelrod referred”), *Rabocheye Dyelo* added a second, when it wrote in its *Reply*: “Since the review of *The Tasks* was published, tendencies have arisen, or become more or less clearly defined, among certain Russian Social-Democrats, towards economic one-sidedness, which represent a step backwards from the state of our movement as described in *The Tasks*” (p. 9). This, in the *Reply*, published in 1900. But the first issue of *Rabocheye Dyelo* (containing the review) appeared in April 1899. Did Economism really arise only in 1899? No. The year 1899 saw the first protest of the Russian Social-Democrats against Economism (the protest against the *Credo*). Economism arose in 1897, as *Rabocheye Dyelo* very well knows, for already in November 1898, V. I. was praising *Rabochaya Mysl* (see “*Listok*” *Rabotnika*, No. 9–10). —*Lenin*
20. The “stages theory,” or the theory of “timid zigzags,” in the political struggle is expressed, for example, in this article, in the following way: “Political demands, which in their character are common to the whole of Russia, should, however, at first (this was written in August 1900!) correspond to the experience gained by the given stratum (*sic!*) of workers in the economic struggle. Only [!] on the basis of this experience can and should political agitation be taken up,” etc. (p. 11). On page 4, the author, protesting against what he regards as the absolutely unfounded charge of Economist heresy, pathetically

exclaims: “What Social-Democrat does not know that according to the theories of Marx and Engels the economic interests of certain classes play a decisive role in history, and, *consequently*, that particularly the proletariat’s struggle for its economic interests must be of paramount importance in its class development and struggle for emancipation?” (Our italics.) The word “consequently” is completely irrelevant. The fact that economic interests play a decisive role *does not in the least imply* that the economic (i.e., trade union) struggle is of prime importance; for the most essential, the “decisive” interests of classes can be satisfied *only by radical political* changes in general. In particular the fundamental economic interests of the proletariat can be satisfied only by a political revolution that will replace the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by the dictatorship of the proletariat. Krichevsky repeats the arguments of the “V. V.’s of Russian Social-Democracy” (viz., that politics follows economics, etc.) and of the Bernsteinians of German Social-Democracy (e.g., by similar arguments Woltmann sought to prove that the workers must first of all acquire “economic power” before they can think about political revolution). —*Lenin*

21. See present edition, Vol. 4, pp. 370—71. —*Ed.*
22. See present edition, Vol. 5, p. 18. —*Ed.*
23. “*Ein Jahr der Verwirrung*” (“A Year of Confusion”) is the title Mehring gave to the chapter of his *History of German Social-Democracy* in which he describes the hesitancy and lack of determination displayed at first by the socialists in selecting the “tactics-as-plan” for the new situation. —*Lenin*
24. Leading article in *Iskra*, No. 1. (See *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 369 —*Ed.*)—*Lenin*
25. See *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 18–20. —*Ed.*
26. Nor must it be forgotten that in solving “theoretically” the problem of terror, the Emancipation of Labour group *generalised* the experience of the antecedent revolutionary movement. —*Lenin*
27. The pamphlet *On Agitation* was written by A. Kremer (later an organiser of the Bund) and edited by Y. O. Tserderbaum (Martov) in Vilno in 1894; it was at first circulated in handwritten and hectographed copies, but at the end of 1897 it was printed in Geneva and supplied with a preface and a concluding piece by P. B. Axelrod. The pamphlet summarised the experiences gained in Social-Democratic work in Vilno and exerted a great influence on Russian Social-Democrats, since it called on them to reject narrow study-circle propaganda and to go over to mass agitation among the workers on issues of their everyday needs and demands. It exaggerated the role of the purely economic struggle, however, to the detriment of political agitation on issues of general democratic demands, and was the embryo of the future “Economism.” P. B. Axelrod noted the one-sidedness of the “Vilno Economism” in his concluding piece to the Geneva edition; G. V. Plekhanov made a critical analysis of the pamphlet *On Agitation* in his *Once More on Socialism and the Political Struggle*.
28. *Russkaya Starina* (*The Russian Antiquary*)—a monthly magazine dealing with historical problems published in St. Petersburg from 1870 to 1918.
29. *S. Peterburgsky Rabochy Listok* (*St. Petersburg Workers’ Paper*)—an illegal newspaper, organ of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. Two issues appeared: No. 1 in February 1897 (dated Janu-

- ary and mimeographed in Russia in an edition of 300—400 copies) and No. 2 in September 1897 in Geneva.
30. A *private meeting* referred to here was held in St. Petersburg between February 14 and 17 (February 26 and March 1), 1897. It was attended by V. I. Lenin, A. A. Vaneyev, G. M. Krzhizhanovsky, and other members of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, that is, by the “veterans” who had been released from prison for three days before being sent into exile to Siberia, as well as by the “young” leaders of the League of Struggle who had taken over the leadership of the League after Lenin’s arrest in December 1895.
 31. “*Listok*” *Rabotnika* (*The Workingman’s Paper*)—published in Geneva by the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad from 1896 to 1899; altogether there appeared 10 issues. Issues 1—8 were edited by the Emancipation of Labour group. But after the majority of the Union Abroad went over to “Economism,” the Emancipation of Labour group refused to continue editing the paper. Nos. 9 and 10 were issued by a new editorial board set up by the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad.
 32. The “*article by V. I.*”—an article by V. P. Ivanshin.
 33. *The Hirsch-Duncker Unions* were established in Germany in 1868 by Hirsch and Duncker, two bourgeois liberals. They preached the “harmony of class interests,” drew the workers away from the revolutionary class struggle against the bourgeoisie, and restricted the role of the trade unions to that of mutual benefit societies and educational bodies.
 34. *The Self-Emancipation of the Workers Group*—a small group of “Economists” formed in St. Petersburg in the autumn of 1898; it existed for only a few months and published a manifesto setting forth its aims [published in *Nakanune* (*On the Eve*) in London], a set of rules and several leaflets addressed to the workers.
 35. *Nakanune* (*On the Eve*)—a journal expressing Narodnik views. It was published in Russian in London from January 1899 to February 1902—altogether 37 issues. The journal was a rallying point for representatives of various petty-bourgeois parties.
 36. G. V. Plekhanov published his well-known work *The Development of the Monist View of History* legally in St. Petersburg in 1895 under the pseudonym of *N. Beltov*.
 37. *Nartsis Tuporylov* (*Narcissus Blunt-Snout*) was the pseudonym under which Y. O. Martov published his satirical poem “Hymn of the Contemporary Russian Socialist” in *Zarya*, No. 1, April 1901. The “Hymn” ridiculed the “Economists” and their adaptations to spontaneous events.
 38. *V. V.*—pseudonym of V. P. Vorontsov, an ideologist of liberal Narodism in the eighties and nineties of the nineteenth century. By the “*V. V.’s of Russian Social-Democracy*” Lenin understands the “Economists” who represented the opportunist trend in the Russian Social-Democratic movement.

 III

Trade-Unionist Politics And Social-Democratic Politics

We shall again begin by praising *Rabocheye Dyelo*. “Literature of Exposure and the Proletarian Struggle” is the title Martynov gave the article on his differences with *Iskra* published in *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10. He formulated the substance of the differences as follows: “We cannot confine ourselves solely to exposing the system that stands in its (the working-class party’s) path of development. We must also react to the immediate and current interests of the proletariat. . . . *Iskra*. . . is in fact an organ of revolutionary opposition that exposes the state of affairs in our country, particularly the political state of affairs. . . . We, however, work and shall continue to work for the cause of the working class in close organic contact with the proletarian struggle” (p. 63). One cannot help being grateful to Martynov for this formula. It is of outstanding general interest, because substantially it embraces not only our disagreements with *Rabocheye Dyelo*, but the general disagreement between ourselves and the Economists on the political struggle. We have shown that the Economists do not altogether repudiate “politics,” but that they are constantly straying from the Social-Democratic to the trade-unionist conception of politics. Martynov strays in precisely this way, and we shall therefore take his views as a *model* of Economist error on this question. As we shall endeavour to prove, neither the authors of the “*Separate Supplement*” to *Rabochaya Mysl* nor the authors of the manifesto issued by the Self-Emancipation Group, nor the authors of the Economist letter published in *Iskra*, No. 12, will have any right to complain against this choice.

A. Political Agitation and Its Restriction by the Economists

Everyone knows that the economic¹ struggle of the Russian workers underwent widespread development and consolidation simultaneously with the production of “literature” exposing economic (factory and occupational) conditions. The “leaflets” were devoted mainly to the exposure of the factory system, and very soon a veritable passion for exposures was roused among the workers. As soon as the workers realised that the Social-Democratic study circles desired to, and could, supply them with a new kind of leaflet that told the whole truth about their miserable existence, about their unbearably hard toil, and their lack of rights, they began to send in, actually flood us with, correspondence from the factories and workshops. This “exposure literature” created a tremendous sensation, not only in the particular factory exposed in the given leaflet, but in all the factories to which news of the, revealed facts spread. And since the poverty and want

among the workers in the various enterprises and in the various trades are much the same, the “truth about the life of the workers” stirred everyone. Even among the most backward workers, a veritable passion arose to “get into print”—a noble passion for this rudimentary form of war against the whole of the present social system which is based upon robbery and oppression. And in the overwhelming majority of cases these “leaflets” were in truth a declaration of war, because the exposures served greatly to agitate the workers; they evoked among them common demands for the removal of the most glaring outrages and roused in them a readiness to support the demands with strikes. Finally, the employers themselves were compelled to recognise the significance of these leaflets as a declaration of war, so much so that in a large number of cases they did not even wait for the outbreak of hostilities. As is always the case, the mere publication of these exposures made them effective, and they acquired the significance of a strong moral influence. On more than one occasion, the mere appearance of a leaflet proved sufficient to secure the satisfaction of all or part of the demands put forward. In a word, economic (factory) exposures were and remain an important lever in the economic struggle. And they will continue to retain this significance as long as there is capitalism, which makes it necessary for the workers to defend themselves. Even in the most advanced countries of Europe it can still be seen that the exposure of abuses in some backward trade, or in some forgotten branch of domestic industry, serves as a starting-point for the awakening of class-consciousness, for the beginning of a trade union struggle, and for the spread of socialism.²

The overwhelming majority of Russian Social-Democrats have of late been almost entirely absorbed by this work of organising the exposure of factory conditions. Suffice it to recall Rabochaya Mysl to see the extent to which they have been absorbed by it—so much so, indeed, that they have lost sight of the fact that this, *taken by itself*, is in essence still not Social-Democratic work, but merely trade union work. As a matter of fact, the exposures merely dealt with the relations between the workers *in a given trade* and their employers, and all they achieved was that the sellers of labour power learned to sell their “commodity” on better terms and to fight the purchasers over a purely commercial deal. These exposures could have served (if properly utilised by an organisation of revolutionaries) as a beginning and a component part of Social-Democratic activity; but they could also have led (and, given a worshipful attitude towards spontaneity, were bound to lead) to a “purely trade union” struggle and to a non-Social-Democratic working-class movement. Social-Democracy leads the struggle of the working class, not only for better terms for the sale of labour-power, but for the abolition of the social system that compels the propertyless to

sell themselves to the rich. Social-Democracy represents the working class, not in its relation to a given group of employers alone, but in its relation to all classes of modern society and to the state as an organised political force. Hence, it follows that not only must Social-Democrats not confine themselves exclusively to the economic struggle, but that they must not allow the organisation of economic exposures to become the predominant part of their activities. We must take up actively the political education of the working class and the development of its political consciousness. *Now that Zarya and Iskra have made the first attack upon Economism, "all are agreed" on this (although some agree only in words, as we shall soon see).*

The question arises, what should political education consist in? Can it be confined to the propaganda of working-class hostility to the autocracy? Of course not. It is not enough *to explain* to the workers that they are politically oppressed (any more than it is *to explain* to them that their interests are antagonistic to the interests of the employers). Agitation must be conducted with regard to every concrete example of *this* oppression (as we have begun to carry on agitation round concrete examples of economic oppression). Inasmuch as this oppression affects the most diverse classes of society, inasmuch as it manifests itself in the most varied spheres of life and activity—vocational, civic, personal, family, religious, scientific, etc., etc.—is it not evident that *we shall not be fulfilling our task* of developing the political consciousness of the workers if we do not *undertake* the organisation of the *political exposure* of the autocracy in *all its aspects*? In order to carry on agitation round concrete instances of oppression, these instances must be exposed (as it is necessary to expose factory abuses in order to carry on economic agitation).

One might think this to be clear enough. It turns out, however, that it is only in words that "all" are agreed on the need to develop political consciousness, *in all its aspects*. It turns out that *Rabocheye Dyelo*, for example, far from tackling the task of organising (or making a start in organising) comprehensive political exposure, is even trying *to drag Iskra*, which has undertaken this task, *away from it*. Listen to the following: "The political struggle of the working class is merely [it is certainly not 'merely'] the most developed, wide, and effective form of economic struggle" (programme of *Rabocheye Dyelo*, published in issue No. 1, p. 3). "The Social-Democrats are now confronted with the task of lending the economic struggle itself, as far as possible, a political character" (Martynov, *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 42). "The economic struggle is the most widely applicable means of drawing the masses into active political struggle" (resolution adopted by the Conference of the Union Abroad and "amendments" thereto, *Two Conferences*, pp. 11 and 17). As the reader will observe, all these theses permeate

Rabocheye Dyelo from its very first number to the latest “Instructions to the Editors,” and all of them evidently express a single view regarding political agitation and struggle. Let us examine this view from the standpoint of the opinion prevailing among all Economists, that political agitation must *follow* economic agitation. Is it true that, in general,³ the economic struggle “is the most widely applicable means” of drawing the masses into the political struggle? It is entirely untrue. *Any and every* manifestation of police tyranny and autocratic outrage, not only in connection with the economic struggle, is not one whit less “widely applicable” as a means of “drawing in” the masses. The rural superintendents and the flogging of peasants, the corruption of the officials and the police treatment of the “common people” in the cities, the fight against the famine-stricken and the suppression of the popular striving towards enlightenment and knowledge, the extortion of taxes and the persecution of the religious sects, the humiliating treatment of soldiers and the barrack methods in the treatment of the students and liberal intellectuals—do all these and a thousand other similar manifestations of tyranny, though not directly connected with the “economic” struggle, represent, in general, *less* “widely applicable” means and occasions for political agitation and for drawing the masses into the political struggle? The very opposite is true. Of the sum total of cases in which the workers suffer (either on their own account or on account of those closely connected with them) from tyranny, violence, and the lack of rights, undoubtedly only a small minority represent cases of police tyranny in the trade union struggle as such. Why then should we, beforehand, *restrict* the scope of political agitation by declaring only *one* of the means to be “the most widely applicable,” when Social-Democrats must have, in addition, other, generally speaking, no less “widely applicable” means?

In the dim and distant past (a full year ago! *Rabocheye Dyelo* wrote: “The masses begin to understand immediate political demands after one strike, or at all events, after several,” “as soon as the government sets the police and gendarmerie against them” [*August* (No. 7) 1900, p. 15]. This opportunist theory of stages has now been rejected by the Union Abroad, which makes a concession to us by declaring: “There is no need whatever to conduct political agitation right from the beginning, exclusively on an economic basis” (*Two Conferences*, p. 11). The Union’s repudiation of part of its former errors will show the future historian of Russian Social-Democracy better than any number of lengthy arguments the depths to which our Economists have degraded socialism! But the Union Abroad must be very naive indeed to imagine that the abandonment of one form of restricting politics will induce us to agree to another form. Would it not be more logical to say, in this case too, that the economic struggle should be conducted

on the widest possible basis, that it should always be utilised for political agitation, but that “there is no need whatever” to regard the economic struggle as the *most* widely applicable means of drawing the masses into active political struggle?

The Union Abroad attaches significance to the fact that it has substituted the phrase “most widely applicable means” for the phrase “the best means” contained in one of the resolutions of the Fourth Congress of the Jewish Workers’ Union (Bund). We confess that we find it difficult to say which of these resolutions is the better one. In our opinion they are *both worse*. Both the Union Abroad and the Bund fall into the error (partly, perhaps unconsciously, under the influence of tradition) of giving an Economist, trade-unionist interpretation to politics. Whether this is done by employing the word “best” or the words “most widely applicable” makes no essential difference whatever. Had the Union Abroad said that “political agitation on an economic basis” is the most widely applied (not “applicable”) means, it would have been right in regard to a certain period in the development of our Social-Democratic movement. It would have been right in regard to the *Economists* and to many (if not the majority) of the practical workers of 1898–1901; for these practical Economists *applied* political agitation (to the extent that they applied it at all) *almost exclusively on an economic basis*. Political agitation on such lines was recognised and, as we have seen, even recommended by Rabochaya Mysl and the Self-Emancipation Group. *Rabocheye Dyelo* should have *strongly condemned* the fact that the useful work of economic agitation was accompanied by the harmful restriction of the political struggle; instead, it declares the means most widely *applied* (by the *Economists*) to be the most widely *applicable*! It is not surprising that when we call these people Economists, they can do nothing but pour every manner of abuse upon us; call us “mystifiers,” “disrupters,” “papal nuncios,” and “slanderers”⁴ go complaining to the whole world that we have mortally offended them; and declare almost on oath that “not a single Social-Democratic organisation is now tinged with Economism.”⁵ Oh, those evil, slanderous politicians! They must have deliberately invented this Economism, out of sheer hatred of mankind, in order mortally to offend other people.

What concrete, real meaning attaches to Martynov’s words when he sets before Social-Democracy the task of “lending the economic struggle itself a political character”? The economic struggle is the collective struggle of the workers against their employers for better terms *in the sale of their labour-power*, for better living and working conditions. This struggle is necessarily a trade union struggle, because working conditions differ greatly in different trades, and, consequently, the struggle *to improve* them can only be conducted on the basis of trade organisations (in the Western countries,

through trade unions; in Russia, through temporary trade associations and through leaflets, etc.). Lending “the economic struggle itself a political character” means, therefore, striving to secure satisfaction of these trade demands, the improvement of working conditions in each separate trade by means of “legislative and administrative measures” (as Martynov puts it on the ensuing page of his article, p. 43). This is precisely what all workers’ trade unions do and always have done. Read the works of the soundly scientific (and “soundly” opportunist) Mr. and Mrs. Webb and you will see that the British trade unions long ago recognised, and have long been carrying out, the task of “lending the economic struggle itself a political character”; they have long been fighting for the right to strike, for the removal of all legal hindrances to the co-operative and trade union movements, for laws to protect women and children, for the improvement of labour conditions by means of health and factory legislation, etc.

Thus, the pompous phrase about “lending the economic struggle *itself* a political character,” which sounds so “terrifically” profound and revolutionary, serves as a screen to conceal what is in fact the traditional striving *to degrade* Social-Democratic politics to the level of trade union politics. Under the guise of rectifying the one-sidedness of *Iskra*, which, it is alleged, places “the revolutionising of dogma higher than the revolutionising of life,”⁶ we are presented with the *struggle for economic reforms* as if it were something entirely new. In point of fact, the phrase “lending the economic struggle itself a political character” means nothing more than the struggle for economic reforms. Martynov himself might have come to this simple conclusion, had he pondered over the significance of his own words. “Our Party,” he says, training his heaviest guns on *Iskra*, “could and should have presented concrete demands to the government for legislative and administrative measures against economic exploitation, unemployment, famine, etc.” (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, pp. 42–43). Concrete demands for measures—does not this mean demands for social reforms? Again we ask the impartial reader: Are we slandering the *Rabocheye Dyelo*-ites (may I be forgiven for this awkward, currently used designation!) by calling them concealed Bernsteinians when, as their point of *disagreement with Iskra*, they advance their thesis on the necessity of struggling for economic reforms?

Revolutionary Social-Democracy has always included the struggle for reforms as part of its activities. But it utilises “economic” agitation for the purpose of presenting to the government, not only demands for all sorts of measures, but also (and primarily) the demand that it cease to be an autocratic government. Moreover, it considers it its duty to present this demand to the government on the basis, not of the economic struggle *alone*, but of all manifestations in general of public and political life. In a word, it

subordinates the struggle for reforms, as the part to the whole, to the revolutionary struggle for freedom and for socialism. Martynov, however, resuscitates the theory of stages in a new form and strives to prescribe, as it were, an exclusively economic path of development for the political struggle. By advancing at this moment, when the revolutionary movement is on the upgrade, an alleged special “task” of struggling for reforms, he is dragging the Party backwards and is playing into the hands of both “Economist” and liberal opportunism.

To proceed. Shamefacedly hiding the struggle for reforms behind the pompous thesis of “lending the economic struggle itself a political character,” Martynov advanced, as if it were a special point, *exclusively economic* (indeed, exclusively factory) *reforms*. As to the reason for his doing that, we do not know it. Carelessness, perhaps? Yet if he had in mind something else besides “factory” reforms, then the whole of his thesis, which we have cited, loses all sense. Perhaps he did it because he considers it possible and probable that the government will make “concessions” only in the economic sphere?⁷ If so, then it is a strange delusion. Concessions are also possible and are made in the sphere of legislation concerning flogging, passports, land redemption payments, religious sects, the censorship, etc., etc. “Economic” concessions (or pseudo-concessions) are, of course, the cheapest and most advantageous from the government’s point of view, because by these means it hopes to win the confidence of the working masses. For this very reason, we Social-Democrats *must not* under any circumstances or in any way whatever create grounds for the belief (or the misunderstanding) that we attach greater value to economic reforms, or that we regard them as being particularly important, etc. “Such demands,” writes Martynov, speaking of the concrete demands for legislative and administrative measures referred to above, “would not be merely a hollow sound, because, promising certain palpable results, they might be actively supported by the working masses. . . .” We are not Economists, oh no! We only cringe as slavishly before the “palpableness” of concrete results as do the Bernsteins, the Prokopoviches, the Struves, the R.M.s, and *tutti quanti!* We only wish to make it understood (together with Nartsis Tuporylov) that all which “does not promise palpable results” is merely a “hollow sound”! We are only trying to argue as if the working masses were incapable (and had not already proved their capabilities, notwithstanding those who ascribe their own philistinism to them) of actively supporting *every* protest against the autocracy, even if it *promises absolutely no palpable results whatever!*

Let us take, for example, the very “measures” for the relief of unemployment and the famine that Martynov himself advances. *Rabocheye Dyelo* is engaged, judging by what it has promised, in drawing up and elaborating a

programme of “concrete [in the form of bills?] demands for legislative and administrative measures,” “promising palpable results,” while *Iskra*, which “constantly places the revolutionising of dogma higher than the revolutionising of life,” has tried to explain the inseparable connection between unemployment and the whole capitalist system, has given warning that “famine is coming,” has exposed the police “fight against the famine-stricken,” and the outrageous “provisional penal servitude regulations”; and *Zarya* has published a special reprint, in the form of an agitational pamphlet, of a section of its “Review of Home Affairs,” dealing with the famine.⁸ But good God! How “one-sided” were these incorrigibly narrow and orthodox doctrinaires, how deaf to the calls of “life itself”! Their articles contained—oh horror!—*not a single*, can you imagine it? not a single “concrete demand” “promising palpable results”! Poor doctrinaires! They ought to be sent to Krichevsky and Martynov to be taught that tactics are a process of growth, of that which grows, etc., and that the economic struggle *itself* should be given a political character!

“In addition to its immediate revolutionary significance, the economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government [“*economic* struggle against the government”!] has also this significance: it constantly brings home to the workers the fact that they have no political rights” (Martynov, p. 44). We quote this passage, not in order to repeat for the hundredth and thousandth time what has been said above, but in order to express particular thanks to Martynov for this excellent new formula: “the economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government.” What a gem! With what inimitable skill and mastery in eliminating all partial disagreements and shades of differences among Economists this clear and concise proposition expresses the *quintessence* of Economism, from summoning the workers “to the political struggle, which they carry on in the general interest, for the improvement of the conditions of all the workers,”⁹ continuing through the theory of stages, and ending in the resolution of the Conference on the “most widely applicable,” etc. “Economic struggle against the government” is precisely trade-unionist politics, which is still very far from being Social-Democratic politics.

B. How Martynov Rendered Plekhanov More Profound

“What a large number of Social-Democratic Lomonosovs have appeared among us lately!” observed a comrade one day, having in mind the astonishing propensity of many who are inclined toward Economism to, arrive, “necessarily, by their own understanding,” at great truths (e.g., that the economic struggle stimulates the workers to ponder over their lack

of rights) and in doing so to ignore, with the supreme contempt of born geniuses, all that has been produced by the antecedent development of revolutionary thought and of the revolutionary movement. Lomonosov-Martynov is precisely such a born genius. We need but glance at his article “Urgent Questions” to see how by “his own understanding” he *arrives at* what was long ago said by Axelrod (of whom our Lomonosov, naturally, says not a word); how, for instance, he is *beginning* to understand that we cannot ignore the opposition of such or such strata of the bourgeoisie (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 9, pp. 61, 62, 71; compare this with *Rabocheye Dyelo’s* Reply to Axelrod, pp. 22, 23–24), etc. But alas, he is only “arriving” and is only “beginning,” not more than that, for so little has he understood Axelrod’s ideas, that he talks about “the economic struggle against the employers and the government.” For three years (1898–1901) *Rabocheye Dyelo* has tried hard to understand Axelrod, but has so far not understood him! Can one of the reasons be that Social-Democracy, “like mankind,” always sets itself only tasks that can be achieved?

But the Lomonosovs are distinguished not only by their ignorance of many things (that would be but half misfortune!), but also by their unawareness of their own ignorance. Now this is a real misfortune; and it is this misfortune that prompts them without further ado to attempt to render Plekhanov “more profound.”

“Much water,” Lomonosov-Martynov says, “has flowed under the bridge since Plekhanov wrote his book (*Tasks of the Socialists in the Fight Against the Famine in Russia*). The Social-Democrats who for a decade led the economic struggle of the working class . . . have failed as yet to lay down a broad theoretical basis for Party tactics. This question has now come to a head, and if we should wish to lay down such a theoretical basis, we should certainly have to deepen considerably the principles of tactics developed at one time by Plekhanov. . . . Our present definition of the distinction between propaganda and agitation would have to be different from Plekhanov’s (Martynov has just quoted Plekhanov’s words: “A propagandist presents many ideas to one or a few persons; an agitator presents only one or a few ideas, but he presents them to a mass of people.”) By propaganda we would understand the revolutionary explanation of the present social system, entire or in its partial manifestations, whether that be done in a form intelligible to individuals or to broad masses. By agitation, in the strict sense of the word (*sic!*), we would understand the call upon the masses to undertake definite, concrete actions and the promotion of the direct revolutionary intervention of the proletariat in social life.”

We congratulate Russian-and international-Social-Democracy on having found, thanks to Martynov, a new terminology, more strict and more

profound. Hitherto we thought (with Plekhanov, and with all the leaders of the international working class movement) that the propagandist, dealing with, say, the question of unemployment, must explain the capitalistic nature of crises, the cause of their inevitability in modern society, the necessity for the transformation of this society into a socialist society, etc. In a word, he must present “many ideas,” so many, indeed, that they will be understood as an integral whole only by a (comparatively) few persons. The agitator, however, speaking on the same subject, will take as an illustration a fact that is most glaring and most widely known to his audience, say, the death of an unemployed worker’s family from starvation, the growing impoverishment, etc., and, utilising this fact, known to all, will direct his efforts to presenting a *single idea* to the “masses,” e.g., the senselessness of the contradiction between the increase of wealth and the increase of poverty; he will strive *to rouse* discontent and indignation among the masses against this crying injustice, leaving a more complete explanation of this contradiction to the propagandist. Consequently, the propagandist operates chiefly by means of the *printed* word; the agitator by means of the *spoken* word. The propagandist requires qualities different from those of the agitator. Kautsky and Lafargue, for example, we term propagandists; Bebel and Guesde we term agitators. To single out a third sphere, or third function, of practical activity, and to include in this function “the call upon the masses to undertake definite concrete actions,” is sheer nonsense, because the “call,” as a single act, either naturally and inevitably supplements the theoretical treatise, propagandist pamphlet, and agitational speech, or represents a purely executive function. Let us take, for example, the struggle the German Social-Democrats are now waging against the corn duties. The theoreticians write research works on tariff policy, with the “call,” say, to struggle for commercial treaties and for Free Trade. The propagandist does the same thing in the periodical press, and the agitator in public speeches. At the present time, the “concrete action” of the masses takes the form of signing petitions to the Reichstag against raising the corn duties. The call for this action comes indirectly from the theoreticians, the propagandists, and the agitators, and, directly, from the workers who take the petition lists to the factories and to private homes for the gathering of signatures. According to the “Martynov terminology,” Kautsky and Bebel are both propagandists, while those who solicit the signatures are agitators. Isn’t it clear?

The German example recalled to my mind the German word which, literally translated, means “Ballhorning.” Johann Ballhorn, a Leipzig publisher of the sixteenth century, published a child’s reader in which, as was the custom, he introduced a drawing of a cock, but a cock without spurs and with a couple of eggs lying near it. On the cover he printed the legend,

“*Revised* edition by Johann Ballhorn.” Ever since then, the Germans describe any “revision” that is really a worsening as “ballhorning.” And one cannot help recalling Ballhorn upon seeing how the Martynovs try to render Plekhanov “more profound.”

Why did our Lomonosov “invent” this confusion? In order to illustrate how *Iskra* “devotes attention only to one side of the case, just as Plekhanov did a decade and a half ago” (39). “With *Iskra*, propagandist tasks force agitational tasks into the background, at least for the present” (52). If we translate this last proposition from the language of Martynov into ordinary human language (because mankind has not yet managed to learn the newly-invented terminology), we shall get the following: with *Iskra*, the tasks of political propaganda and political agitation force into the background the task of “presenting to the government concrete demands for legislative and administrative measures” that “promise certain palpable results” (or demands for social reforms, that is, if we are permitted once again to employ the old terminology of the old mankind not yet grown to Martynov’s level). We suggest that the reader compare this thesis with the following tirade:

“What also astonishes us in these programmes [the programmes advanced by revolutionary Social-Democrats] is their constant stress upon the benefits of workers’ activity in parliament (non-existent in Russia), though they completely ignore (thanks to their revolutionary nihilism) the importance of workers’ participation in the legislative manufacturers’ assemblies on factory affairs [which do exist in Russia] . . . or at least the importance of workers’ participation in municipal bodies. . .”

The author of this tirade expresses in a somewhat more forthright and clearer manner the very idea which Lomonosov-Martynov discovered by his own understanding. The author is R. M., in the “*Separate Supplement*” to *Rabochaya Mysl* (p. 15).

C. Political Exposures and “Training in Revolutionary Activity”

In advancing against *Iskra* his theory of “raising the activity of the working masses,” Martynov actually betrayed an urge to *belittle* that activity, for he declared the very economic struggle before which all economists grovel to be the preferable, particularly important, and “most widely applicable” means of rousing this activity and its broadest field. This error is characteristic, precisely in that it is by no means peculiar to Martynov. In reality, it is possible to “raise the activity of the working masses” *only* when this activity *is not restricted* to “political agitation on an economic basis.” A basic condition for the necessary expansion of political agitation is the organisation of

comprehensive political exposure. *In no way* except by means of such exposures *can* the masses be trained in political consciousness and revolutionary activity. Hence, activity of this kind is one of the most important functions of international Social-Democracy as a whole, for even political freedom does not in any way eliminate exposures; it merely shifts somewhat their sphere of direction. Thus, the German party is especially strengthening its positions and spreading its influence, thanks particularly to the untiring energy with which it is conducting its campaign of political exposure. Working-class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to *all* cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter *what class* is affected—unless they are trained, moreover, to respond from a Social-Democratic point of view and no other. The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class-consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe *every* other social class in *all* the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical, and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of *all* aspects of the life and activity of *all* classes, strata, and groups of the population. Those who concentrate the attention, observation, and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone are not Social-Democrats; for the self-knowledge of the working class is indissolubly bound up, not solely with a fully clear theoretical understanding—or rather, not so much with the theoretical, as with the practical, understanding—of the relationships between *all* the various classes of modern society, acquired through the experience of political life. For this reason the conception of the economic struggle as the most widely applicable means of drawing the masses into the political movement, which our Economists preach, is so extremely harmful and reactionary in its practical significance. In order to become a Social-Democrat, the worker must have a clear picture in his mind of the economic nature and the social and political features of the landlord and the priest, the high state official and the peasant, the student and the vagabond; he must know their strong and weak points; he must grasp the meaning of all the catchwords and sophisms by which each class and each stratum *camouflages* its selfish strivings and its real “inner workings”; he must understand what interests are reflected by certain institutions and certain laws and how they are reflected. But this “clear picture” cannot be obtained from any book. It can be obtained only from living examples and from exposures that follow close upon what is going on about us at a given moment; upon what is being discussed, in whispers perhaps, by each one in his own way; upon what finds expression in such and such events, in such and such statistics, in such and such court sentences, etc., etc. These comprehensive political

exposures are an essential and *fundamental* condition for training the masses in revolutionary activity.

Why do the Russian workers still manifest little revolutionary activity in response to the brutal treatment of the people by the police, the persecution of religious sects, the flogging of peasants, the outrageous censorship, the torture of soldiers, the persecution of the most innocent cultural undertakings, etc.? Is it because the “economic struggle” does not “stimulate” them to this, because such activity does not “promise palpable results,” because it produces little that is “positive”? To adopt such an opinion, we repeat, is merely to direct the charge where it does not belong, to blame the working masses for one’s own philistinism (or Bernsteinism). We must blame ourselves, our lagging behind the mass movement, for still being unable to organise sufficiently wide, striking, and rapid exposures of all the shameful outrages. When we do that (and we must and can do it), the most backward worker will understand, *or will feel*, that the students and religious sects, the peasants and the authors are being abused and outraged by those same dark forces that are oppressing and crushing him at every step of his life. Feeling that, he himself will be filled with an irresistible desire to react, and he will know how to hoot the censors one day, on another day to demonstrate outside the house of a governor who has brutally suppressed a peasant uprising, on still another day to teach a lesson to the gendarmes in surplices who are doing the work of the Holy Inquisition, etc. As yet we have done very little, almost nothing, *to bring* before the working masses prompt exposures on all possible issues. Many of us as yet do not recognise this as our *bounden duty* but trail spontaneously in the wake of the “drab everyday struggle,” in the narrow confines of factory life. Under such circumstances to say that “*Iskra* displays a tendency to minimise the significance of the forward march of the drab everyday struggle in comparison with the propaganda of brilliant and complete ideas” (Martynov, *op. cit.*, p. 61), means to drag the Party back, to defend and glorify our unpreparedness and backwardness.

As for calling the masses to action, that will come of itself as soon as energetic political agitation, live and striking exposures come into play. To catch some criminal red-handed and immediately to brand him publicly in all places is of itself far more effective than any number of “calls”; the effect very often is such as will make it impossible to tell exactly who it was that “called” upon the masses and who suggested this or that plan of demonstration, etc. Calls for action, not in the general, but in the concrete, sense of the term can be made only at the place of action; only those who themselves go into action, and do so immediately, can sound such calls. Our business

as Social-Democratic publicists is to deepen, expand, and intensify political exposures and political agitation.

A word in passing about “calls to action.” The *only newspaper* which *prior* to the spring events *called upon* the workers to intervene actively in a matter that certainly did not *promise any palpable results* whatever for the workers, i.e., the drafting of the students into the army, was *Iskra*. Immediately after the publication of the order of January 11, on “drafting the 183 students into the army,” *Iskra* published an article on the matter (in its February issue, No. 2),¹⁰ and, *before* any demonstration was begun, forthwith *called upon* “the workers to go to the aid of the students,” called upon the “people” openly to take up the government’s arrogant challenge. We ask: how is the remarkable fact to be explained that although Martynov talks so much about “calls to action,” and even suggests “calls to action” as a special form of activity, he said not a word about *this* call? After this, was it not sheer philistinism on Martynov’s part to allege that *Iskra* was *one-sided* because it did not issue sufficient “calls” to struggle for demands “promising palpable results”?

Our Economists, including *Rabocheye Dyelo*, were successful because they adapted themselves to the backward workers. But the Social-Democratic worker, the revolutionary worker (and the number of such workers is growing) will indignantly reject all this talk about struggle for demands “promising palpable results,” etc., because he will understand that this is only a variation of the old song about adding a kopek to the rouble. Such a worker will say to his counsellors from *Rabochaya Mysl* and *Rabocheye Dyelo*: you are busying yourselves in vain, gentlemen, and shirking your proper duties, by meddling with such excessive zeal in a job that we can very well manage ourselves. There is nothing clever in your assertion that the Social-Democrats’ task is to lend the economic struggle itself a political character; that is only the beginning, it is not the main task of the Social-Democrats. For all over the world, including Russia, *the police themselves often take the initiative in lending* the economic struggle a political character, and the workers themselves learn to understand whom the government supports.¹¹ The “economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government,” about which you make as much fuss as if you had discovered a new America, is being waged in all parts of Russia, even the most remote, by the workers themselves who have heard about strikes, but who have heard almost nothing about socialism. The “activity” you want to stimulate among us workers, by advancing concrete demands that promise palpable results, we are already displaying and in our everyday, limited trade union work we put forward these concrete demands, very often without any assistance whatever from the intellectuals. But *such* activity is not enough for us; we are not children to be fed on the thin gruel of “economic” politics alone;

we want to know everything that others know, we want to learn the details of *all* aspects of political life and to take part *actively* in every single political event. In order that we may do this, the intellectuals must talk to us less of what we already know.¹² and tell us more about what we do not yet know and what we can never learn from our factory and “economic” experience, namely, political knowledge. You intellectuals can acquire this knowledge, and it is your *duty* to bring it to us in a hundred- and a thousand-fold greater measure than you have done up to now; and you must bring it to us, not only in the form of discussions, pamphlets, and articles (which very often—pardon our frankness—are rather dull), but precisely in the form of vivid *exposures* of what our government and our governing classes are doing at this very moment in all spheres of life. Devote more zeal to carrying out this duty and talk less about “*raising the activity of the working masses.*” We are far more active than you think, and we are quite able to support, by open street fighting, even demands that do not promise any “palpable results” whatever. It is not for you to “raise” our activity, because *activity is precisely the thing you yourselves lack.* Bow less in subservience to spontaneity, and think more about raising your own activity, gentlemen!

D. What Is There in Common Between Economism and Terrorism?

In the last footnote we cited the opinion of an Economist and of a non-Social-Democratic terrorist, who showed themselves to be accidentally in agreement. Speaking generally, however, there is not an accidental, but a necessary, inherent connection between the two, of which we shall have need to speak later, and which must be mentioned here in connection with the question of education for revolutionary activity. The Economists and the root, namely, *subservience to spontaneity*, with which we dealt in the preceding chapter as a general phenomenon and which we shall now examine in relation to its effect upon political activity and the political struggle. At first sight, our assertion may appear paradoxical, so great is the difference between those who stress the “drab everyday struggle” and those who call for the most self sacrificing struggle of individuals. But this is no paradox. The Economists and the terrorists merely bow to different poles of spontaneity; the Economists bow to the spontaneity of “the labour movement pure and simple,” while the terrorists bow to the spontaneity of the passionate indignation of intellectuals, who lack the ability or opportunity to connect the revolutionary struggle and the working-class movement into an integral whole. It is difficult indeed for those who have lost their belief, or who have never believed, that this is possible, to find some outlet for their indignation and revolutionary energy other than terror. Thus, both forms

of subservience to spontaneity we have mentioned are nothing but *the beginning of the implementation* of the notorious *Credo* programme: Let the workers wage their “economic struggle against the employers and the government” (we apologise to the author of the *Credo* for expressing her views in Martynov’s words. We think we have a right to do so since the *Credo*, too, says that in the economic struggle the workers “come up against the political regime and let the intellectuals conduct the political struggle by their own efforts—with the aid of terror, of course! This is an absolutely logical and inevitable *conclusion* which must be insisted on — *even though those* who are beginning to carry out this programme *do not themselves realise* that it is inevitable. Political activity has its logic quite apart from the consciousness of those who, with the best intentions, call either for terror or for lending the economic struggle itself a political character. The road to hell is paved with good intentions, and, in this case, good intentions cannot save one from being spontaneously drawn “along the line of least resistance,” along the line of the *purely bourgeois Credo* programme. Surely it is no accident either that many Russian liberals—avowed liberals and liberals that wear the mask of Marxism—whole-heartedly sympathise with terror and try to foster the terrorist moods that have surged up in the present time.

The formation of the Revolutionary-Socialist *Svoboda* Group which set itself the aim of helping the working-class movement in every possible way, but which included in its *programme* terror, and emancipation, so to speak, from Social-Democracy—once again confirmed the remarkable perspicacity of P. B. Axelrod, who *literally foretold* these results of Social-Democratic waverings *as far back as the end of 1897* (*Present Tasks and Tactics*), when he outlined his famous “two perspectives.” All the subsequent disputes and disagreements among Russian Social-Democrats are contained, like a plant in the seed, in these two perspectives.¹³

From this point of view it also becomes clear why *Rabocheye Dyelo*, unable to withstand the spontaneity of Economism, has likewise been unable to withstand the spontaneity of terrorism. It is highly interesting to note here the specific arguments that *Svoboda* has advanced in defence of terrorism. It “completely denies” the deterrent role of terrorism (*The Regeneration of Revolutionism*, p. 64), but instead stresses its “excitative significance.” This is characteristic, first, as representing one of the stages of the breakup and decline of the traditional (pre-Social-Democratic) cycle of ideas which insisted upon terrorism. The admission that the government cannot now be “terrified” and hence disrupted, by terror, is tantamount to a complete condemnation of terror as a system of struggle, as a sphere of activity sanctioned by the programme. Secondly, it is still more characteristic as an example of the failure to understand our immediate tasks in regard to “education for

revolutionary activity.” *Svoboda* advocates terror as a means of “exciting” the working-class movement and of giving it a “strong impetus.” It is difficult to imagine an argument that more thoroughly disproves itself. Are there not enough outrages committed in Russian life without special “excitants” having to be invented? On the other hand, is it not obvious that those who are not, and cannot be, roused to excitement even by Russian tyranny will stand by “twiddling their thumbs” and watch a handful of terrorists engaged in single combat with the government? The fact is that the working masses are roused to a high pitch of excitement by the social evils in Russian life, but we are unable to gather, if one may so put it, and concentrate all these drops and streamlets of popular resentment that are brought forth to a far larger extent than we imagine by the conditions of Russian life, and that must be combined into a single gigantic torrent. That this can be accomplished is irrefutably proved by the enormous growth of the working-class movement and the eagerness, noted above, with which the workers clamour for political literature. On the other hand, calls for terror and calls to lend the economic struggle itself a political character are merely two different forms of *evading* the most pressing duty now resting upon Russian revolutionaries, namely, the organisation of comprehensive political agitation. *Svoboda* desires to *substitute* terror for agitation, openly admitting that “as soon as intensified and strenuous agitation is begun among the masses the excitative function of terror will be ended” (*The Regeneration of Revolutionism*, p. 68). This proves precisely that both the terrorists and the Economists *underestimate* the revolutionary activity of the masses, despite the striking evidence of the events that took place in the spring,¹⁴ and whereas the one group goes out in search of artificial “excitants,” the other talks about “concrete demands.” But both fail to devote sufficient attention to the development of *their own activity* in political agitation and in the organisation of political exposures. And no other work can serve as a *substitute* for this task either at the present time or at any other.

E. The Working Class As Vanguard Fighter for Democracy

We have seen that the conduct of the broadest political agitation and, consequently, of all-sided political exposures is an absolutely necessary and a *paramount* task of our activity, if this activity is to be truly Social-Democratic. However, we arrived at this conclusion solely on the grounds of the pressing needs of the working class for political knowledge and political training. But such a presentation of the question is too narrow, for it ignores the general democratic tasks of Social-Democracy, in particular of present-day Russian Social-Democracy. In order to explain the point more

concretely we shall approach the subject from an aspect that is “nearest” to the Economist, namely, from the practical aspect. “Everyone agrees” that it is necessary to develop the political consciousness of the working class. The question is, *how* that is to be done and what is required to do it. The economic struggle merely “impels” the workers to realise the government’s attitude towards the working class. Consequently, *however much we may try* to “lend the economic, struggle itself a political character,” *we shall never be able* to develop the political consciousness of the workers (to the level of Social-Democratic political consciousness) by keeping within the framework of the economic struggle, for *that framework is too narrow*. The Martynov formula has some value for us, not because it illustrates Martynov’s aptitude for confusing things, but because it pointedly expresses the basic error that all the Economists commit, namely, their conviction that it is possible to develop the class political consciousness of the workers *from within*, so to speak, from their economic struggle, i.e., by making this struggle the exclusive (or, at least, the main) starting-point, by making it the exclusive (or, at least, the main) basis. Such a view is radically wrong. Piqued by our polemics against them, the Economists refuse to ponder deeply over the origins of these disagreements, with the result that we simply cannot understand one another. It is as if we spoke in different tongues.

Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers *only from without*, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of *all* classes and strata to the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between *all* classes. For that reason, the reply to the question as to what must be done to bring political knowledge to the workers cannot be merely the answer with which, in the majority of cases, the practical workers, especially those inclined towards Economism, mostly content themselves, namely: “To go among the workers.” To bring political knowledge to the *workers* the Social Democrats must *go among all classes of the population*; they must dispatch units of their army *in all directions*.

We deliberately select this blunt formula, we deliberately express ourselves in this sharply simplified manner, not because we desire to indulge in paradoxes, but in order to “impel” the Economists to a realisation of their tasks which they unpardonably ignore, to suggest to them strongly the difference between trade-unionist and Social-Democratic politics, which they refuse to understand. We therefore beg the reader not to get wrought up, but to hear us patiently to the end.

Let us take the type of Social-Democratic study circle that has become most widespread in the past few years and examine its work. It has “contacts

with the workers” and rests content with this, issuing leaflets in which abuses in the factories, the government’s partiality towards the capitalists, and the tyranny of the police are strongly condemned. At workers’ meetings the discussions never, or rarely ever, go beyond the limits of these subjects. Extremely rare are the lectures and discussions held on the history of the revolutionary movement, on questions of the government’s home and foreign policy, on questions of the economic evolution of Russia and of Europe, on the position of the various classes in modern society, etc. As to systematically acquiring and extending contact with other classes of society, no one even dreams of that. In fact, the ideal leader, as the majority of the members of such circles picture him, is something far more in the nature of a trade union secretary than a socialist political leader. For the secretary of any, say English, trade union always helps the workers to carry on the economic struggle, he helps them to expose factory abuses, explains the injustice of the laws and of measures that hamper the freedom to strike and to picket (i. e., to warn all and sundry that a strike is proceeding at a certain factory), explains the partiality of arbitration court judges who belong to the bourgeois classes, etc., etc. In a word, every trade union secretary conducts and helps to conduct “the economic struggle against the employers and the government.” It cannot be too strongly maintained that *this is still not* Social-Democracy, that the Social-Democrat’s ideal should not be the trade union secretary, but *the tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth *before all* his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for *all* and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat. Compare, for example, a leader like Robert Knight (the well-known secretary and leader of the Boiler-Makers’ Society, one of the most powerful trade unions in England), with Wilhelm Liebknecht, and try to apply to them the contrasts that Martynov draws in his controversy with *Iskra*. You will see—I am running through Martynov’s article—that Robert Knight engaged more in “calling the masses to certain concrete actions” (Martynov, op. cit., p. 39), while Willielin Liebknecht engaged more in “the revolutionary elucidation of the whole of the present system or partial manifestations of it” (38–39); that Robert Knight “formulated the immediate demands of the proletariat and indicated the means by which they can be achieved” (41), whereas Wilhelm Liebknecht, while doing this, did not hold back from “simultaneously guiding the activities of various opposition strata,” “dictating a positive

programme of action for them”¹⁵ (41); that Robert Knight strove “as far as possible to lend the economic struggle itself a political character” (42) and was excellently able “to submit to the government concrete demands promising certain palpable results” (43), whereas Liebknecht engaged to a much greater degree in “one-sided” “exposures” (40); that Robert Knight attached more significance to the “forward march of the drab everyday struggle” (61), whereas Liebknecht attached more significance to the “propaganda of brilliant and completed ideas” (61); that Liebknecht converted the paper he was directing into “an organ of revolutionary opposition that exposed the state of affairs in our country, particularly the political state of affairs, insofar as it affected the interests of the most varied strata of the population” (63), whereas Robert Knight “worked for the cause of the working class in close organic connection with the proletarian struggle” (63)—if by “close and organic connection” is meant the subservience to spontaneity which we examined above, by taking the examples of Krichevsky and Martynov—and “restricted the sphere of his influence,” convinced, of course, as is Martynov, that “by doing so he deepened that influence” (63). In a word, you will see that *de facto* Martynov reduces Social-Democracy to the level of trade-unionism, though he does so, of course, not because he does not desire the good of Social-Democracy, but simply because he is a little too much in a hurry to render Plekhanov more profound, instead of taking the trouble to understand him.

Let us return, however, to our theses. We said that a Social Democrat, if he really believes it necessary to develop comprehensively the political consciousness of the proletariat, must “go among all classes of the population.” This gives rise to the questions: how is this to be done? have we enough forces to do this? is there a basis for such work among all the other classes? will this not mean a retreat, or lead to a retreat, from the class point of view? Let us deal with these questions.

We must “go among all classes of the population” as theoreticians, as propagandists, as agitators, and as organisers. No one doubts that the theoretical work of Social-Democrats should aim at studying all the specific features of the social and political condition of the various classes. But extremely little is done in this direction as compared with the work that is done in studying the specific features of factory life. In the committees and study circles, one can meet people who are immersed in the study even of some special branch of the metal industry; but one can hardly ever find members of organisations (obliged, as often happens, for some reason or other to give up practical work) who are especially engaged in gathering material on some pressing question of social and political life in our country which could serve as a means for conducting Social-Democratic work among other

strata of the population. In dwelling upon the fact that the majority of the present-day leaders of the working-class movement lack training, we cannot refrain from mentioning training in this respect also, for it too is bound up with the Economist conception of “close organic connection with the proletarian struggle.” The principal thing, of course, is *propaganda* and *agitation* among all strata of the people. The work of the West European Social-Democrat is in this respect facilitated by the public meetings and rallies which *all* are free to attend, and by the fact that in parliament he addresses the representatives of *all* classes. We have neither a parliament nor freedom of assembly; nevertheless, we are able to arrange meetings of workers who desire to listen to *a Social-Democrat*. We must also find ways and means of calling meetings of representatives of all social classes that desire to listen to *a democrat*; for he is no Social-Democrat who forgets in practice that “the Communists support every revolutionary movement,” that we are obliged for that reason to expound and emphasise *general democratic tasks before the whole people*, without for a moment concealing our socialist convictions. He is no Social-Democrat who forgets in practice his obligation to be *ahead of all* in raising, accentuating, and solving *every* general democratic question.

“But everyone agrees with this!” the impatient reader will exclaim, and the new instructions adopted by the last conference of the Union Abroad for the Editorial Board of *Rabocheye Dyelo* definitely say: “All events of social and political life that affect the proletariat either directly as a special class or as *the vanguard of all the revolutionary forces in the struggle for freedom* should serve as subjects for political propaganda and agitation” (*Two Conferences*, p. 17, our italics). Yes, these are very true and very good words, and we would be fully satisfied if *Rabocheye Dyelo* understood them *and if it refrained from saying in the next breath things that contradict them*. For it is not enough to call ourselves the “vanguard,” the advanced contingent; we must act in such a way that all the other contingents recognise and are obliged to admit that we are marching in the vanguard. And we ask the reader: Are the representatives of the other “contingents” such fools as to take our word for it when we say that we are the “vanguard”? Just picture to yourselves the following: a Social-Democrat comes to the “contingent” of Russian educated radicals, or liberal constitutionalists, and says, We are the vanguard; “the task confronting us now is, as far as possible, to lend the economic struggle itself a political character.” The radical, or constitutionalist, if he is at all intelligent (and there are many intelligent men among Russian radicals and constitutionalists), would only smile at such a speech and would say (to himself, of course, for in the majority of cases he is an experienced diplomat): “Your ‘vanguard’ must be made up of simpletons. They do not even understand that it is our task, the task of the progressive representatives of bourgeois

democracy to lend the workers' economic struggle *itself* a political character. Why, we too, like the West-European bourgeois, want to draw the workers into politics, *but only into trade-unionist, not into Social-Democratic politics*. Trade-unionist politics of the working class is precisely *bourgeois politics* of the working class, and this 'vanguard's' formulation of its task is the formulation of trade-unionist politics! Let them call themselves Social-Democrats to their heart's content, I am not a child to get excited over a label. But they must not fall under the influence of those pernicious orthodox doctrinaires, let them allow 'freedom of criticism' to those who unconsciously are driving Social-Democracy into trade-unionist channels."

And the faint smile of our constitutionalist will turn into Homeric laughter when he learns that the Social-Democrats who talk of Social-Democracy as the vanguard, today, when spontaneity almost completely dominates our movement, fear nothing so much as "belittling the spontaneous element," as "underestimating the significance of the forward movement of the drab everyday struggle, as compared with the propaganda of brilliant and completed ideas," etc., etc.! A "vanguard" which fears that consciousness will outstrip spontaneity, which fears to put forward a bold "plan" that would compel general recognition even among those who differ with us. Are they not confusing "vanguard" with "rearguard"?

Indeed, let us examine the following piece of reasoning by Martynov. On page 40 he says that *Iskra* is one-sided in its tactics of exposing abuses, that "however much we may spread distrust and hatred of the government, we shall not achieve our aim until we have succeeded in developing sufficient active social energy for its overthrow." This, it may be said parenthetically, is the familiar solicitude for the activation of the masses, with a simultaneous striving to restrict one's own activity. But that is not the main point at the moment. Martynov speaks here, accordingly, of *revolutionary* energy ("for overthrowing"). And what conclusion does he arrive at? Since in ordinary times various social strata inevitably march separately, "it is therefore, clear that we Social-Democrats cannot simultaneously guide the activities of various opposition strata, we cannot dictate to them a positive programme of action, we cannot point out to them in what manner they should wage a day-to-day struggle for their interests. . . . The liberal strata will themselves take care of the active struggle for their immediate interests, the struggle that will bring them face to face with our political regime" (p. 41). Thus, having begun with talk about revolutionary energy, about the active struggle for the overthrow of the autocracy, Martynov immediately turns toward trade union energy and active struggle for immediate interests! It goes without saying that we cannot guide the struggle of the students, liberals, etc., for their "immediate interests"; but this was not the

point at issue, most worthy Economist! The point we were discussing was the possible and necessary participation of various social strata in the overthrow of the autocracy; and not only are we *able*, but it is our bounden duty, to guide *these* “activities of the various opposition strata,” if we desire to be the “vanguard.” Not only will our students and liberals, etc., themselves take care of “the struggle that brings them face to face with our political regime”; the police and the officials of the autocratic government will see to this first and foremost. But if “we” desire to be front-rank democrats, we must make it our concern to *direct* the thoughts of those who are dissatisfied only with conditions at the university, or in the Zemstvo, etc., to the idea that the entire political system is worthless. *We* must take upon ourselves the task of organising an all-round political struggle under the leadership of our Party in such a manner as to make it possible for all oppositional strata to render their fullest support to the struggle and to our Party. *We* must train our Social-Democratic practical workers to become political leaders, able to guide all the manifestations of this all-round struggle, able at the right time to “dictate a positive programme of action” for the aroused students, the discontented Zemstvo people, the incensed religious sects, the offended elementary schoolteachers, etc., etc. For that reason, Martynov’s assertion that “with regard to these, we can function *merely in the negative* role of exposers of abuses . . . we can only dissipate their hopes in various government commissions” *is completely false* (our italics). By saying this, Martynov shows that he *absolutely fails to understand* the role that the revolutionary “vanguard” must really play. If the reader bears this in mind, he will be clear as to the *real meaning* of Martynov’s concluding remarks: “*Iskra* is the organ of the revolutionary opposition which exposes the state of affairs in our country, particularly the political state of affairs, insofar as it affects the interests of the most varied strata of the population. We, however, work and will continue to work for the cause of the working class in close organic contact with the proletarian struggle. By restricting the sphere of our active influence we deepen that influence” (63). The true sense of this conclusion is as follows: *Iskra* desires to *elevate* the trade-unionist politics of the working class (to which, through misconception, through lack of training, or through conviction, our practical workers frequently confine themselves) to the level of Social-Democratic politics. *Rabocheye Dyelo*, however, desires to *degrade* Social-Democratic politics to trade-unionist politics. Moreover, it assures the world that the two positions are “entirely compatible within the common cause” (63). *O, sancta simplicitas!*

To proceed. Have we sufficient forces to direct our propaganda and agitation among *all* social classes? Most certainly. Our Economists, who are frequently inclined to deny this, lose sight of the gigantic progress our

movement has made from (approximately) 1894 to 1901. Like real “tail-enders” they often go on living in the bygone stages of the movement’s inception. In the earlier period, indeed, we had astonishingly few forces, and it was perfectly natural and legitimate then to devote ourselves exclusively to activities among the workers and to condemn severely any deviation from this course. The entire task then was to consolidate our position in the working class. At the present time, however, gigantic forces have been attracted to the movement. The best representatives of the younger generation of the educated classes are coming over to us. Everywhere in the provinces there are people, resident there by dint of circumstance, who have taken part in the movement in the past or who desire to do so now and who, are gravitating towards Social-Democracy (whereas in 1894 one could count the Social-Democrats on the fingers of one’s hand). A basic political and organisational shortcoming of our movement is our *inability* to utilise all these forces and give them appropriate work (we shall deal with this more fully in the next chapter). The overwhelming majority of these forces entirely lack the opportunity of “going among the workers,” so that there are no grounds for fearing that we shall divert forces from our main work. In order to be able to provide the workers with real, comprehensive, and live political knowledge, we must have “our own people,” Social-Democrats, everywhere, among all social strata, and in all positions from which we can learn the inner springs of our state mechanism. Such people are required, not only for propaganda and agitation, but in a still larger measure for organisation.

Is there a basis for activity among all classes of the population? Whoever doubts this lags in his consciousness behind the spontaneous awakening of the masses. The working-class movement has aroused and is continuing to arouse discontent in some, hopes of support for the opposition in others, and in still others the realisation that the autocracy is unbearable and must inevitably fall. We would be “politicians” and Social-Democrats in name only (as all too often happens in reality), if we failed to realise that our task is to utilise every manifestation of discontent, and to gather and turn to the best account every protest, however small. This is quite apart from the fact that the millions of the labouring peasantry, handicraftsmen, petty artisans, etc., would always listen eagerly to the speech of any Social-Democrat who is at all qualified. Indeed, is there a single social class in which there are no individuals, groups, or circles that are discontented with the lack of rights and with tyranny and, therefore, accessible to the propaganda of Social-Democrats as the spokesmen of the most pressing general democratic needs? To those who desire to have a clear idea of what the political agitation of a Social-Democrat among *all* classes and strata of the population should be

like, we would point to *political exposures* in the broad sense of the word as the principal (but, of course, not the sole) form of this agitation.

“We must arouse in every section of the population that is at all politically conscious a passion for *political exposure*,” I wrote in my article “Where To Begin” [*Iskra*, May (No. 4), 1901], with which I shall deal in greater detail later. “We must not be discouraged by the fact that the voice of political exposure is today so feeble, timid, and infrequent. This is not because of a wholesale submission to police despotism, but because those who are able and ready to make exposures have no tribune from which to speak, no eager and encouraging audience, they do not see anywhere among the people that force to which it would be worth while directing their complaint against the ‘omnipotent’ Russian Government. . . . We are now in a position to provide a tribune for the nation-wide exposure of the tsarist government, and it is our duty to do this. That tribune must be a Social-Democratic newspaper.”¹⁶

The ideal audience for political exposure is the working class, which is first and foremost in need of all-round and live political knowledge, and is most capable of converting this knowledge into active struggle, even when that struggle does not promise “palpable results.” A tribune for *nation-wide* exposures can be only an all-Russia newspaper. “Without a political organ, a political movement deserving that name is inconceivable in the Europe of today”; in this respect Russia must undoubtedly be included in present-day Europe. The press long ago became a power in our country, otherwise the government would not spend tens of thousands of rubles to bribe it and to subsidise the Katkovs and Meshcherskys. And it is no novelty in autocratic Russia for the underground press to break through the wall of censorship and *compel* the legal and conservative press to speak openly of it. This was the case in the seventies and even in the fifties. How much broader and deeper are now the sections of the people willing to read the illegal underground press, and to learn from it “how to live and how to die,” to use the expression of a worker who sent a letter to *Iskra* (No. 7).²⁵ Political exposures are as much a declaration of war against the *government* as economic exposures are a declaration of war against the factory owners. The moral significance of this declaration of war will be all the greater, the wider and more powerful the campaign of exposure will be and the more numerous and determined the social *class* that has *declared war in order to begin the war*. Hence, political exposures in themselves serve as a powerful instrument for *disintegrating* the system we oppose, as a means for diverting from the enemy his casual or temporary allies, as a means for spreading hostility and distrust among the permanent partners of the autocracy.

In our time only a party that will *organise* really *nation-wide* exposures can become the vanguard of the revolutionary forces. The word “nation-wide”

has a very profound meaning. The overwhelming majority of the non-working-class expositors (be it remembered that in order to become the vanguard, we must attract other classes) are sober politicians and level-headed men of affairs. They know perfectly well how dangerous it is to “complain” even against a minor official, let alone against the “omnipotent” Russian Government. And they will come *to us* with their complaints only when they see that these complaints can really have effect, and that we represent *a political force*. In order to become such a force in the eyes of outsiders, much persistent and stubborn work is required *to raise* our own consciousness, initiative, and energy. To accomplish this it is not enough to attach a “vanguard” label to rearguard theory and practice.

But if we have to undertake the organisation of a really nationwide exposure of the government, in what way will then the class character of our movement be expressed?—the overzealous advocate of “close organic contact with the proletarian struggle” will ask us, as indeed he does. The reply is manifold: we Social-Democrats will organise these nation-wide exposures; all questions raised by the agitation will be explained in a consistently Social-Democratic spirit, without any concessions to deliberate or undeliberate distortions of Marxism; the all-round political agitation will be conducted by a party which unites into one inseparable whole the assault on the government in the name of the entire people, the revolutionary training of the proletariat, and the safeguarding of its political independence, the guidance of the economic struggle of the working class, and the utilisation of all its spontaneous conflicts with its exploiters which rouse and bring into our camp increasing numbers of the proletariat.

But a most characteristic feature of Economism is its failure to understand this connection, more, this identity of the most pressing need of the proletariat (a comprehensive political education through the medium of political agitation and political exposures) with the need of the general democratic movement. This lack of understanding is expressed, not only in “Martynovite” phrases, but in the references to a supposedly class point of view identical in meaning with these phrases. Thus, the authors of the Economist letter in *Iskra*, No. 12, state:¹⁷ “This basic drawback of *Iskra* (overestimation of ideology) is also the cause of its inconsistency on the question of the attitude of Social-Democracy to the various social classes and tendencies. By theoretical reasoning (not by “the growth of Party tasks, which grow together with the Party”), *Iskra* solved the problem of the immediate transition to the struggle against absolutism. In all probability it senses the difficulty of such a task for the workers under the present state of affairs (not only senses, but knows full well that this task appears less difficult to the workers than to the Economist intellectuals with their nursemaid

concern, for the workers are prepared to fight even for demands which, to use the language of the never-to-be-forgotten Martynov, do not “promise palpable results”) but lacking the patience to wait until the workers will have gathered sufficient forces for this struggle, *Iskra* begins to seek allies in the ranks of the liberals and intellectuals.” . . .

Yes, we have indeed lost all “patience” “waiting” for the blessed time, long promised us by diverse “conciliators,” when the Economists will have stopped charging the workers with their own backwardness and justifying their own lack of energy with allegations that the workers lack strength. We ask our Economists: What do they mean by “the gathering of working class strength for the struggle”? Is it not evident that this means the political training of the workers, so that all the aspects of our vile autocracy are revealed to them? And is it not clear that *precisely for this work* we need “allies in the ranks of the liberals and intellectuals,” who are prepared to join us in the exposure of the political attack on the Zemstvos, on the teachers, on the statisticians, on the students, etc.? Is this surprisingly “intricate mechanism” really so difficult to understand? Has not P. B. Axelrod constantly repeated since 1897 that “the task before the Russian Social-Democrats of acquiring adherents and direct and indirect allies among the non-proletarian classes will be solved principally and primarily by the character of the propagandist activities conducted among the proletariat itself”? But the Martynovs and the other Economists continue to imagine that “by economic struggle against the employers and the government” the workers must *first* gather strength (for trade-unionist politics) and *then* “go over”—we presume from trade-unionist “training for activity” to Social-Democratic activity!

“...In this quest,” continue the Economists, “*Iskra* not infrequently departs from the class point of view, obscures class antagonisms, and puts into the forefront the common nature of the discontent with the government, although the causes and the degree of the discontent vary considerably among the ‘allies’. Such, for example, is *Iskra*’s attitude towards the Zemstvo . . .” *Iskra*, it is alleged, “promises the nobles that are dissatisfied with the government’s sops the assistance of the working class, but it does not say a word about the class antagonism that exists between these social strata.” If the reader will turn to the article “The Autocracy and the Zemstvo” (*Iskra*, Nos. 2 and 4), to which, *in all probability*, the authors of the letter refer, he will find that they¹⁸ deal with the attitude of the *government* towards the “mild agitation of the bureaucratic Zemstvo, which is based on the social-estates,” and towards the “independent activity of even the propertied classes.” The article states that the workers cannot look on indifferently while the government is waging a struggle against the Zemstvo, and the Zemstvos are called upon to stop making mild speeches and to speak

firmly and resolutely when revolutionary Social-Democracy confronts the government in all its strength. What the authors of the letter do not agree with here is not clear. Do they think that the workers will “not understand” the phrases “propertied classes” and “bureaucratic Zemstvo based on the social-estates”? Do they think that *urging* the Zemstvo to abandon mild speeches and to speak firmly is “overestimating ideology”? Do they imagine the workers can “gather strength” for the struggle against the autocracy if they know nothing about the attitude of the autocracy towards the Zemstvo *as well*? All this too remains unknown. One thing alone is clear and that is that the authors of the letter have a very vague idea of what the political tasks of Social-Democracy are. This is revealed still more clearly by their remark: “Such, too, is *Iskra’s* attitude towards the student movement” (i.e., it also “obscures the class antagonisms”). Instead of calling on the workers to declare by means of public demonstrations that the real breeding-place of unbridled violence, disorder, and outrage is not the university youth but the Russian Government (*Iskra*, No. 2¹⁹) we ought probably to have inserted arguments in the spirit of *Rabochaya Mys!* Such ideas were expressed by Social-Democrats in the autumn of 1901, after the events of February and March, on the eve of a fresh upsurge of the student movement, which reveals that even in this sphere the “spontaneous” protest against the autocracy is *oustripping* the conscious Social-Democratic leadership of the movement. The spontaneous striving of the workers to defend the students who are being assaulted by the police and the Cossacks surpasses the conscious activity of the Social-Democratic organisation!

“And yet in other articles,” continue the authors of the letter, “*Iskra* sharply condemns all compromise and defends, for instance, the intolerant conduct of the Guesdists.” We would advise those who are wont so conceitedly and frivolously to declare that the present disagreements among the Social-Democrats are unessential and do not justify a split, to ponder these words. Is it possible for people to work together in the same organisation, when some among them contend that we have done extremely little to explain the hostility of the autocracy to the various classes and to inform the workers of the opposition displayed by the various social strata to the autocracy, while others among them see in this clarification a “compromise”—evidently a compromise with the theory of “economic struggle against the employers and the government”?

We urged the necessity of carrying the class struggle into the rural districts in connection with the fortieth anniversary of the emancipation of the peasantry (issue No. 3²⁰) and spoke of the irreconcilability of the local government bodies and the autocracy in relation to Witte’s secret Memorandum (No. 4). In connection with the new law we attacked the feudal landlords

and the government which serves them (No. 8²¹) and we welcomed the illegal Zemstvo congress. We urged the Zemstvo to pass over from abject petitions (No. 8²²) to struggle. We encouraged the students, who had begun to understand the need for the political struggle, and to undertake this struggle (No. 3), while, at the same time, we lashed out at the “outrageous incomprehension” revealed by the adherents of the “purely student” movement, who called upon the students to abstain from participating in the street demonstrations (No. 3, in connection with the manifesto issued by the Executive Committee of the Moscow students on February 25). We exposed the “senseless dreams” and the “lying hypocrisy” of the cunning liberals of *Rossiya*²⁶ (No. 5), while pointing to the violent fury with which the government-gaoler persecuted “peaceful writers, aged professors, scientists, and well-known liberal Zemstvo members” (No. 5, “Police Raid on Literature”). We exposed the real significance of the programme of “state protection for the welfare of the workers” and welcomed the “valuable admission” that “it is better, by granting reforms from above, to forestall the demand for such reforms from below than to wait for those demands to be put forward” (No. 6²³). We encouraged the protesting statisticians (No. 7) and censured the strike-breaking statisticians (No. 9). He who sees in these tactics an obscuring of the class-consciousness of the proletariat and *a compromise with liberalism* reveals his utter failure to understand the true significance of the programme of the *Credo* and carries out that programme *de facto*, however much he may repudiate it. For by *such an approach* he drags Social-Democracy towards the “economic struggle against the employers and the government” and *yields to liberalism*, abandons the task of actively intervening in every “liberal” issue and of determining *his own*, Social-Democratic, attitude towards this question.

F. Once More “Slanderers,” Once More “Mystifiers”

These polite expressions, as the reader will recall, belong to *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which in this way answers our charge that it “is indirectly preparing the ground for converting the working-class movement into an instrument of bourgeois democracy.” In its simplicity of heart *Rabocheye Dyelo* decided that this accusation was nothing more than a polemical sally: these malicious doctrinaires are bent on saying all sorts of unpleasant things about us, and, what can be more unpleasant than being an instrument of bourgeois democracy? And so they print in bold type a “refutation”: “Nothing but downright slander,” “mystification,” “mummery” (*Two Conferences*, pp. 30, 31, 33). Like Jove, *Rabocheye Dyelo* (although bearing little resemblance to that deity) is wrathful because it is wrong, and proves by its hasty abuse that

it is incapable of understanding its opponents' mode of reasoning. And yet, with only a little reflection it would have understood why *any* subservience to the spontaneity of the mass movement and *any* degrading of Social-Democratic politics to the level of trade-unionist politics mean preparing the ground for converting the working-class movement into an instrument of bourgeois democracy. The spontaneous working-class movement is by itself able to create (and inevitably does create) only trade-unionism, and working-class trade-unionist politics is precisely working-class bourgeois politics. The fact that the working class participates in the political struggle, and even in the political revolution, does not in itself make its politics Social-Democratic politics. Will *Rabocheye Dyelo* make bold to deny this? Will it, at long last, publicly, plainly, and without equivocation explain how it understands the urgent questions of international and of Russian Social-Democracy? Hardly. It will never do anything of the kind, because it holds fast to the trick, which might be described as the "not here" method—"It's not me, it's not my horse, I'm not the driver. We are not Economists; *Rabochaya Mysl* does not stand for E'conomism; there is no Economism at all in Russia." This is a remarkably adroit and "political" trick, which suffers from the slight defect, however, that the publications practising it are usually nicknamed, "At your service, sir."

Rabocheye Dyelo imagines that bourgeois democracy in Russia is, in general, merely a "phantom" (*Two Conferences*, p. 32).²⁴ Happy people! Ostrich-like, they bury their heads in the sand and imagine that everything around has disappeared. Liberal publicists who month after month proclaim to the world their triumph over the collapse and even the disappearance of Marxism; liberal newspapers (*S. Peterburgskkiye Vedomosti*,²⁷ *Russkiye Vedomosti*, and many others) which encourage the liberals who bring to the workers the Brentano²⁸ conception of the class struggle and the trade-unionist conception of politics; the galaxy of critics of Marxism, whose real tendencies were so very well disclosed by the *Credo* and whose literary products alone circulate in Russia without let or hindrance; the revival of revolutionary non-Social-Democratic tendencies, particularly after the February and March events—all these, apparently, are just phantoms! All these have nothing at all to do with bourgeois democracy!

Rabocheye Dyelo and the authors of the Economist letter published in *Iskra*, No. 12, should "ponder over the reason why the events of the spring brought about such a revival of revolutionary non-Social-Democratic tendencies instead of increasing the authority and the prestige of Social-Democracy."

The reason lies in the fact that we failed to cope with our tasks. The masses of the workers proved to be more active than we. We lacked adequately

trained revolutionary leaders and organisers possessed of a thorough knowledge of the mood prevailing among all the opposition strata and able to head the movement, to turn a spontaneous demonstration into a political one, broaden its political character, etc. Under such circumstances, our backwardness will inevitably be utilised by the more mobile and more energetic non-Social-Democratic revolutionaries, and the workers, however energetically and self-sacrificingly they may fight the police and the troops, however revolutionary their actions may be, will prove to be merely a force supporting those revolutionaries, the rearguard of bourgeois democracy, and not the Social-Democratic vanguard. Let us take, for example, the German Social-Democrats, whose weak aspects alone our Economists desire to emulate. Why is there *not a single* political event in Germany that does not add to the authority and prestige of Social-Democracy? Because Social-Democracy is always found to be in advance of all others in furnishing the most revolutionary appraisal of every given event and in championing every protest against tyranny. It does not lull itself with arguments that the economic struggle brings the workers to realise that they have no political rights and that the concrete conditions unavoidably impel the working-class movement on to the path of revolution. It intervenes in every sphere and in every question of social and political life; in the matter of Wilhelm's refusal to endorse a bourgeois progressist as city mayor (our Economists have not yet managed to educate the Germans to the understanding that such an act is, in fact, a compromise with liberalism!); in the matter of the law against "obscene" publications and pictures; in the matter of governmental influence on the election of professors, etc., etc. Everywhere the Social-Democrats are found in the forefront, rousing political discontent among all classes, rousing the sluggards, stimulating the laggards, and providing a wealth of material for the development of the political consciousness and the political activity of the proletariat. As a result, even the avowed enemies of socialism are filled with respect for this advanced political fighter, and not infrequently an important document from bourgeois, and even from bureaucratic and Court circles, makes its way by some miraculous means into the editorial office of *Vorwärts*.

This, then, is the resolution of the seeming "contradiction" that surpasses *Rabocheye Dyelo's* powers of understanding to such an extent that it can only throw up its hands and cry, "Mummery!" Indeed, just think of it: We, *Rabocheye Dyelo*, regard the *mass* working-class movement as the *cornerstone* (and say so in bold type!); we warn all and sundry against belittling the significance of the element of spontaneity; we desire to lend the economic struggle itself—*itself*—a political character; we desire to maintain close and organic contact with the proletarian struggle. And yet we are told that we

are preparing the ground for the conversion of the working-class movement into an instrument of bourgeois democracy! And who are they that presume to say this? People who “compromise” with liberalism by intervening in every “liberal” issue (what a gross misunderstanding of “organic contact with the proletarian struggle”!), by devoting so much attention to the students and even (oh horror!) to the *Zemstvos*! People who in general wish to devote a greater percentage (compared with the Economists) of their efforts to activity among non-proletarian classes of the population! What is this but “mummery”?

Poor *Rabocheye Dyelo*! Will it ever find the solution to this perplexing puzzle?

Notes

1. To avoid misunderstanding, we must point out that here, and throughout this pamphlet, by economic struggle, we imply (in keeping with the accepted usage among us) the “practical economic struggle,” which Engels, in the passage quoted above, described as “resistance to the capitalists,” and which in free countries is known as the organised-labour syndical, or trade union struggle. —*Lenin*
2. In the present chapter we deal only with the political struggle, in its broader or narrower meaning. Therefore, we note only in passing, merely as a curiosity, *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s charge that *Iskra* is “too restrained” in regard to the economic struggle (*Two Conferences*, p. 27, rehashed by Martynov in his pamphlet, *Social-Democracy and the Working Class*). If the accusers computed by the hundred-weights or reams (as they are so fond of doing) any given year’s discussion of the economic struggle in the industrial section of *Iskra*, in comparison with the corresponding sections of *Rabocheye Dyelo* and *Rabochaya Mysl* combined, they would easily see that the latter lag behind even in this respect. Apparently, the realisation of this simple truth compels them to resort to arguments that clearly reveal their confusion. “*Iskra*,” they write, “willy-nilly [!] is compelled [!] to reckon with the imperative demands of life and to publish at least [!] correspondence about the working-class movement” (*Two Conferences*, p. 27). Now this is really a crushing argument!—*Lenin*
3. We say “in general,” because *Rabocheye Dyelo* speaks of general principles and of the general tasks of the Party as a whole. Undoubtedly, cases occur in practice when politics really *must* follow economics, but only Economists can speak of this in a resolution intended to apply to the whole of Russia. Cases do occur when it *is possible* “right from the beginning” to carry on political agitation “exclusively on an economic basis”; yet *Rabocheye Dyelo* came in the end to the conclusion that “there is no need for this whatever” (*Two Conferences*, p. 11). In the following chapter, we shall show that the tactics of the “politicians” and revolutionaries not only do not ignore the trade union tasks of Social-Democracy, but that, on the contrary, they alone *can secure* their consistent fulfilment. —*Lenin*

4. These are the precise expressions used in *Two Conferences*, pp. 31, 32, 28 and 80. —*Lenin*
5. *Two Conferences*, p. 32. —*Lenin*
6. *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 60. This is the Martynov variation of the application, which we have characterised above, of the thesis “every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes” to the present chaotic state of our movement. In fact, this is merely a translation into Russian of the notorious Bernsteinian sentence: “The movement is everything, the final aim is nothing.”—*Lenin*
7. P. 43. “Of course, when we advise the workers to present certain economic demands to the government, we do so because in the *economic* sphere the autocratic government is, of necessity, prepared to make certain concessions!”—*Lenin*
8. See *Collected Works*, Vol 5, pp. 253—74. —*Ed.*
9. *Rabochaya Mysl*, “*Separate Supplement*,” p. 14. —*Lenin*
10. See *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 414—19—*Ed.*
11. The demand “to lend the economic struggle itself a political character” most strikingly expresses *subservience to spontaneity* in the sphere of political activity. Very often the economic struggle *spontaneously* assumes a political character, that is to say, without the intervention of the “revolutionary bacilli—the intelligentsia,” without the intervention of the class-conscious Social-Democrats. The economic struggle of the English workers, for instance, also assumed a political character without any intervention on the part of the socialists. The task of the Social-Democrats, however, is not exhausted by political agitation on an economic basis; their task is *to convert* trade-unionist politics into Social-Democratic political struggle, *to utilise* the sparks of political consciousness which the economic struggle generates among the workers, for the purpose of *raising* the workers to the level of *Social-Democratic* political consciousness. The Martynovs, however, instead of raising and stimulating the spontaneously awakening political consciousness of the workers, *how to spontaneity* and repeat over and over *ad nauseam*, that the economic struggle “Impels” the workers to realise their own lack of political rights. It is unfortunate, gentlemen, that the spontaneously awakening trade-unionist political consciousness does not “*impel*” you to an understanding of your Social-Democratic tasks. —*Lenin*
12. To prove that this imaginary speech of a worker to an Economist is based on fact, we shall refer to two witnesses who undoubtedly have direct knowledge of the working-class movement and who are least of all inclined to be partial towards us “doctrinaires”; for one witness is an Economist (who regards even *Rabocheye Dyelo* as a political organ!), and the other is a terrorist. The first witness is the author of a remarkably truthful and vivid article entitled “The St. Petersburg Working-Class Movement and the Practical Tasks of Social-Democracy,” published in *Rabocheye Dyelo* No. 6. He divides the workers into the following categories: (1) class-conscious revolutionaries; (2) intermediate stratum; (3) the remaining masses. The intermediate stratum, he says, “is often more interested in questions of political life than in its own immediate economic interests, the connection between which and the general social conditions it has long understood” ... *Rabochaya Mysl* “is sharply criticised”: “It keeps on

repeating the same thing over and over again, things we have long known, read long ago.” “Again nothing in the political review!” (pp. 30–31). But even the third stratum, “the younger and more sensitive section of the workers, less corrupted by the tavern and the church, who hardly ever have the opportunity of getting hold of political literature, discuss political events in a rambling way and ponder over the fragmentary news they get about student riots,” etc. The terrorist writes as follows: They read over once or twice the petty details of factory life in other towns, not their own, and then they read no more . . . dull, they find it . . . To say nothing in a workers’ paper about the government . . . is to regard the workers as being little children. . . . The workers are not little children” (*Svoboda*, published by the Revolutionary-Socialist Group., pp. 69–70). —*Lenin*

13. Martynov “conceives of another, more realistic [?] dilemma” (*Social-Democracy and the Working Class*, p. 19): “Either Social-Democracy takes over the direct leadership of the economic struggle of the proletariat and by that [!] transforms it into a revolutionary class struggle. . . .” “By that,” i.e., apparently by the direct leadership of the economic struggle. Can Martynov cite an instance in which leading the trade-union struggle alone has succeeded in transforming a trade-unionist movement into a revolutionary class movement? Can he not understand that in order to bring about this “transformation” we must actively take up the “direct leadership” of all-sided political agitation? . . . “Or the other perspective: Social-Democracy refrains from assuming the leadership of the economic struggle of the workers and so . . . clips its own wings . . .” In *Rabocheye Dyelo’s* opinion, quoted above, it is *Iskra* that “refrains.” We have seen, however, that the latter *does far more than Rabocheye Dyelo* to lead the economic struggle, but that, moreover, it does not confine itself thereto and *does not narrow down* its political tasks for its sake. —*Lenin*
14. The big street demonstrations which began in the spring of 1901. (Author’s note to the 1907 edition. —*Ed.*)—*Lenin*
15. For example, during the Franco-Prussian War, Liebknecht dictated a programme of action *for the whole of democracy*; to an even greater extent Marx and Engels did this in 1848. —*Lenin*
16. See *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 21–22—*Ed.*
17. Lack of space has prevented us from replying in detail, in *Iskra*, to this letter, which is highly characteristic of the Economists. We were very glad at its appearance, for the allegations that *Iskra* did not maintain a consistent class point of view had reached us long before that from various sources, and we were waiting for an appropriate occasion, or for a formulated expression of this fashionable charge, to give our reply. Moreover, it is our habit to reply to attacks, not by defence, but by counter-attack. —*Lenin*
18. In the interval between these articles there was one (*Iskra*, No. 3), which dealt especially with class antagonisms in the countryside. (See *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 420–28 —*Ed.*)—*Lenin*
19. See *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 414–19—*Ed.*
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 420–28—*Ed.*
21. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, pp. 95–100—*Ed.*
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 101–102—*Ed.*

23. See *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 87–88—*Ed.*
24. There follows a reference to the “concrete Russian conditions which fatalistically impel the working-class movement on to the revolutionary path.” But these people refuse to understand that the revolutionary path of the working-class movement might not be a Social-Democratic path. When absolutism reigned, the entire West-European bourgeoisie “impelled,” deliberately impelled, the workers on to the path of revolution. We Social-Democrats, however, cannot be satisfied with that. And if we, by any means whatever, degrade Social-Democratic politics to the level of spontaneous trade-unionist politics, we thereby play into the hands of bourgeois democracy. —*Lenin*
25. The letter in *Iskra*, No. 7 (August 1901), was from a weaver. It was published in the section “Workers’ Movement and Letters from the Factories.” The letter testified to the great influence of Lenin’s *Iskra* among the advanced workers.

The letter reads in part:

“... I showed *Iskra* to many fellow-workers and the copy was read to tatters; but we treasure it. . . . *Iskra* writes about our cause, about the All-Russian cause which cannot be evaluated in kopeks or measured in hours; when you read the paper you understand why the gendarmes and the police are afraid of us workers and of the intellectuals whom we follow. It is a fact that they are a threat, not only to the bosses’ pockets, but to the tsar, the employers, and all the rest. . . . It will not take much now to set the working people aflame. All that is wanted is a spark, and the fire will break out. How true are the words ‘The Spark will kindle a flame!’ (The motto of *Iskra*. —*Ed.*) In the past every strike was an important event, but today everyone sees that strikes alone are not enough and that we must now fight for freedom, gain it through struggle. Today everyone, old and young, is eager to read but the sad thing is that there are no books. Last Sunday I gathered eleven people and read to them ‘Where To Begin’. We discussed it until late in the evening. How well it expressed everything, how it gets to the very heart of things. . . . And we would like to write a letter to your *Iskra* and ask you to teach us, not only how to begin, but how to live and how to die.”

26. *Rossiya (Russia)*—a moderate liberal newspaper published in St. Petersburg from 1899 to 1902.
27. *S. Peterburgskiy Vedomosti (St. Petersburg Recorder)*—a newspaper that began publication in St. Petersburg in 1728 as a continuation of the first Russian newspaper *Vedomosti*, founded in 1703. From 1728 to 1874 the *S. Peterburgskiy Vedomosti* was published by the Academy of Sciences and from 1875 onwards by the Ministry of Education; it continued publication until the end of 1917.
28. *L. Brentano*—a German bourgeois economist, a champion of so-called “state socialism,” who tried to prove the possibility of achieving social equality within the framework of capitalism by reforms and through the reconciliation of the interests of the capitalists and of the workers. Using Marxist phraseology as a cover, Brentano and his followers tried to subordinate the working-class movement to the interests of the bourgeoisie.

 IV

The Primitiveness of the Economists and the Organization of the Revolutionaries

Rabocheye Dyelo's assertions, which we have analyzed, that the economic struggle is the most widely applicable means of political agitation and that our task now is to lend the economic struggle itself a political character, etc., express a narrow view, not only of our political, but also of our organizational tasks. The "economic struggle against the employers and the government" does not at all require an all-Russia centralized organization, and hence this struggle can never give rise to such an organization as will combine, in one general assault, all the manifestations of political opposition, protest, and indignation, an organization that will consist of professional revolutionaries and be led by the real political leaders of the entire people. This stands to reason. The character of any organization is naturally and inevitably determined by the content of its activity. Consequently, *Rabocheye Dyelo*, by the assertions analyzed above, sanctifies and legitimizes not only narrowness of political activity, but also of organizational work. In this case, *Rabocheye Dyelo*, as always, proves itself an organ whose consciousness yields to spontaneity. Yet subservience to spontaneously developing forms of organisation, failure to realise the narrowness and primitiveness of our organisational work, of our "handicraft" methods in this most important sphere, failure to realise this, I say, is a veritable ailment from which our movement suffers. It is not an ailment that comes with decline, but one, of course, that comes with growth. It is however at the present time, when the wave of spontaneous indignation, as it were, is sweeping over us, leaders and organisers of the movement, that an irreconcilable struggle must be waged against all defence of backwardness, against any legitimization of narrowness in this matter. It is particularly necessary to arouse in all who participate in practical work, or are preparing to take up that work, discontent with the *amateurism* prevailing among us and an unshakable determination to rid ourselves of it.

A. What Is Primitiveness?

We shall try to answer this question by giving a brief description of the activity of a typical Social-Democratic study circle of the period 1894–1901. We have noted that the entire student youth of the period was absorbed in Marxism. Of course, these students were not only, or even not so much, interested in Marxism as a theory; they were interested in it as an answer to the question, "What is to be done?," as a call to take the field against

the enemy. These new warriors marched to battle with astonishingly primitive equipment and training. In a vast number of cases they had almost no equipment and absolutely no training. They marched to war like peasants from the plough, armed only with clubs. A students' circle establishes contacts with workers and sets to work, without any connection with the old members of the movement, without any connection with study circles in other districts, or even in other parts of the same city (or in other educational institutions), without any organisation of the various divisions of revolutionary work, without any systematic plan of activity covering any length of time. The circle gradually expands its propaganda and agitation; by its activities it wins the sympathies of fairly large sections of workers and of a certain section of the educated strata, which provide it with money and from among whom the "committee" recruits new groups of young people. The attractive power of the committee (or League of Struggle) grows, its sphere of activity becomes wider, and the committee expands this activity quite spontaneously; the very people who a year or a few months previously spoke at the students' circle gatherings and discussed the question, "Whither?," who established and maintained contacts with the workers and wrote and published leaflets, now, establish contacts with other groups of revolutionaries, procure literature, set to work to publish a local newspaper, begin to talk of organising a demonstration, and finally turn to open warfare (which may, according to circumstances, take the form of issuing the first agitational leaflet or the first issue of a newspaper, or of organising the first demonstration). Usually the initiation of such actions ends in an immediate and complete fiasco. Immediate and complete, because this open warfare was not the result of a systematic and carefully thought-out and gradually prepared plan for a prolonged and stubborn struggle, but simply the result of the spontaneous growth of traditional study circle work; because, naturally, the police, in almost every case, knew the principal leaders of the local movement, since they had already "gained a reputation" for themselves in their student days, and the police waited only for the right moment to make their raid. They deliberately allowed the study circle sufficient time to develop its work so that they might, obtain a palpable *corpus delicti*, and they always permitted several of the persons known to them to remain at liberty "for breeding" (which, as far as I know, is the technical term used both by our people and by the gendarmes). One cannot help comparing this kind of warfare with that conducted by a mass of peasants, armed with clubs, against modern troops. And one can only wonder at the vitality of the movement which expanded, grew, and scored victories despite the total lack of training on the part of the fighters. True, from the historical point of view, the primitiveness of equipment was not only inevitable at first, but

even legitimate as one of the conditions for the wide recruiting of fighters, but as soon as serious war operations began (and they began in fact with the strikes in the summer of 1896), the defects in our fighting organisations made themselves felt to an ever-increasing degree. The government, at first thrown into confusion and committing a number of blunders (e.g., its appeal to the public describing the misdeeds of the socialists, or the banishment of workers from the capitals to provincial industrial centres), very soon adapted itself to the new conditions of the struggle and managed to deploy well its perfectly equipped detachments of *agents provocateurs*, spies, and gendarmes. Raids became so frequent, affected such a vast number of people, and cleared out the local study circles so thoroughly that the masses of the workers lost literally all their leaders, the movement assumed an amazingly sporadic character, and it became utterly impossible to establish continuity and coherence in the work. The terrible dispersion of the local leaders; the fortuitous character of the study circle memberships; the lack of training in, and the narrow outlook on, theoretical, political, and organisational questions were all the inevitable result of the conditions described above. Things have reached such a pass that in several places the workers, because of our lack of self-restraint and the inability to maintain secrecy, begin to lose faith in the intellectuals and to avoid them; the intellectuals, they say, are much too careless and cause police raids!

Anyone who has the slightest knowledge of the movement is aware that all thinking Social-Democrats have at last begun to regard these amateurish methods as a disease. In order that the reader who is not acquainted with the movement may have no grounds for thinking that we are “inventing” a special stage or special disease of the movement, we shall refer once again to the witness we have quoted. We trust we shall be forgiven for the length of the passage:

“While the gradual transition to more extensive practical activity,” writes B-v in *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 6, “a transition that is directly dependent on the general transitional period through which the Russian working-class movement is now passing, is a characteristic feature, . . . there is, however, another, no less interesting feature in the general mechanism of the Russian workers’ revolution. *We refer to the general lack of revolutionary forces fit for action*, [all italics ours—Lenin] which is felt not only in St. Petersburg, but throughout Russia. With the general revival of the working-class movement, with the general development of the working masses, with the growing frequency of strikes, with the increasingly open mass struggle of the workers, and with the intensified government persecution, arrests, deportation, and exile, *this lack of highly skilled revolutionary forces is becoming more and more marked* and, without a doubt, *cannot but affect the depth and the general character of the movement*. Many strikes take place without any strong

and direct influence upon them by the revolutionary organisations. . . . A shortage of agitational leaflets and illegal literature is felt. . . . The workers' study circles are left without agitators. . . . In addition, there is a constant dearth of funds. In a word, *the growth of the working class movement is outstripping the growth and development of the revolutionary organisations*. The numerical strength of the active revolutionaries is too small to enable them to concentrate in their own hands the influence exercised upon the whole mass of discontented workers, or to give this discontent even a shadow of coherence and organisation. . . . The separate study circles, the separate revolutionaries, scattered, uncombined, do not represent a single, strong, and disciplined organisation with proportionately developed parts. . . ." Admitting that the immediate organization of fresh study circles to replace those that have been broken up merely proves the vitality of the movement . . . but does not prove the existence of an adequate number of adequately prepared revolutionary workers, the author concludes: "The lack of practical training among the St. Petersburg revolutionaries is seen in the results of their work. The recent trials, especially that of the Self-Emancipation Group and the Labour-against-Capital group,¹⁹ clearly showed that the young agitator, lacking a detailed knowledge of working class conditions and, consequently, of the conditions under which agitation can be carried on in a given factory, ignorant of the principles of secrecy, and understanding only the general principles of Social-Democracy [if he does], is able to carry on his work for perhaps four, five, or six months. Then come arrests, which frequently lead to the break-up of the entire organisation, or at all events, of part of it. The question arises, therefore, can the group conduct successful activity if its existence is measured by months? . . . Obviously, the defects of the existing organisations cannot be wholly ascribed to the transitional period. . . . Obviously, the numerical, and above all the qualitative, make-up of the functioning organisations is no small factor, and the first task our Social-Democrats must undertake . . . is that of *effectively combining the organisations and making a strict selection of their membership*."

B. Primitiveness and Economism

We must now deal with a question that has undoubtedly come to the mind of every reader. Can a connection be established between primitiveness as growing pains that affect the *whole* movement, and Economism, which is *one* of the currents in Russian Social-Democracy? We think that it can. Lack of practical training, of ability to carry on organisational work is certainly common *to us all*, including those who have from the very outset unswervingly stood for revolutionary Marxism. Of course, were it only lack of practical training, no one could blame the practical workers. But the term "primitiveness" embraces something more than lack of training; it denotes a narrow scope of revolutionary work generally, failure to understand that a good organisation of revolutionaries cannot be built on the

basis of such narrow activity, and lastly—and this is the main thing—attempts to justify this narrowness and to elevate it to a special “theory,” i.e., subservience to spontaneity on this question too. Once such attempts were revealed, it became clear that primitiveness is connected with Economism and that we shall never rid ourselves of this narrowness of our organisational activity until we rid ourselves of Economism generally (i.e., the narrow conception of Marxist theory, as well as of the role of Social-Democracy and of its political tasks). These attempts manifested themselves in a twofold direction. Some began to say that the working masses themselves have not yet advanced the broad and militant political tasks which the revolutionaries are attempting to “impose” on them; that they must continue to struggle for *immediate* political demands, to conduct “the economic struggle against the employers and the government”¹ (and, naturally, corresponding to this struggle which is “accessible” to the mass movement there must be an organisation that will be “accessible” to the most untrained youth). Others, far removed from any theory of “gradualness,” said that it is possible and necessary to “bring about a political revolution,” but that this does not require building a strong organisation of revolutionaries to train the proletariat in steadfast and stubborn struggle. All we need do is to snatch up our old friend, the “accessible” cudgel. To drop metaphor, it means that we must organise a general strike,² or that we must stimulate the “spiritless” progress of the working-class movement by means of “excitatory terror.”³ Both these trends, the opportunists and the “revolutionists,” bow to the prevailing amateurism; neither believes that it can be eliminated, neither understands our primary and imperative practical task to establish *an organisation of revolutionaries* capable of lending energy, stability, and continuity to the political struggle.

We have quoted the words of B-v: “The growth of the working-class movement is outstripping the growth and development of the revolutionary organisations.” This “valuable remark of a close observer” (*Rabocheye Dyelo’s* comment on B-v’s article) has a twofold value for us. It shows that we were right in our opinion that the principal cause of the present crisis in Russian Social-Democracy is the *lag of the leaders* (“ideologists,” revolutionaries, Social-Democrats) behind *the spontaneous upsurge of the masses*. It shows that all the arguments advanced by the authors of the Economist letter (in *Iskra*, No. 12), by Krichevsky and by Martynov, as to the danger of belittling the significance of the spontaneous element, of the drab everyday struggle, as to tactics-as-process, etc., are nothing more than a glorification and a defence of primitiveness. These people who cannot pronounce the word “theoretician” without a sneer, who describe their genuflections to common lack of training and backwardness as a “sense for the realities of life,”

reveal in practice a failure to understand our most imperative *practical* tasks. To laggards they shout: Keep in step! Don't run ahead! To people suffering from a lack of energy and initiative in organisational work, from a lack of "plans" for wide and bold activity, they prate about "tactics-as-process"! The worst sin we commit is that we *degrade* our political *and organisational* tasks to the level of the immediate, "palpable," "concrete" interests of the everyday economic struggle; yet they keep singing to us the same refrain: Lend the economic struggle itself a political character! We repeat: this kind of thing displays as much "sense for the realities of life" as was displayed by the hero in the popular fable who cried out to a passing funeral procession, "Many happy returns of the day!"

Recall the matchless, truly "Narcissus-like" superciliousness with which these wiseacres lectured Plekhanov on the "workers' circles generally" (sic!) being "unable to cope with political tasks in the real and *practical* sense of the word, i.e., in the sense of the expedient and successful *practical* struggle for political demands" (*Rabocheye Dyelo's Reply*, p. 24). There are circles and circles, gentlemen! Circles of "amateurs" are not, of course, capable of coping with political tasks so long as they have not become aware of their amateurism and do not abandon it. If, besides this, these amateurs are enamoured of their primitive methods, and insist on writing the word "practical" in italics, and imagine that being practical demands that one's tasks be reduced to the level of understanding of the most backward strata of the masses, then they are hopeless amateurs and, of course, certainly cannot *in general cope with any political tasks*. But a circle of leaders, of the type of Alexeyev and Myshkin, of Khalturin and Zhelyabov, is capable of coping with political tasks in the genuine and most practical sense of the term, for the reason and to the extent that their impassioned propaganda meets with response among the spontaneously awakening masses, and their sparkling energy is answered and supported by the energy of the revolutionary class. Plekhanov was profoundly right, not only in pointing to this revolutionary class and proving that its spontaneous awakening was inevitable, but in setting even the "workers' circles" a great and lofty political task. But you refer to the mass movement that has sprung up since that time in order to *degrade* this task, to *curtail* the energy and scope of activity of the "workers' circles." If you are not amateurs enamoured of your primitive methods, what are you then? You boast that you are practical, but you fail to see what every Russian practical worker knows, namely, the miracles that the energy, not only of a circle, but even of an individual person is able to perform in the revolutionary cause. Or do you think that our movement cannot produce leaders like those of the seventies? If so, why do you think so? Because we lack training? But we are training ourselves, we will go on training ourselves,

and we will be trained! Unfortunately it is true that the surface of the stagnant waters of the “economic struggle against the employers and the government” is overgrown with fungus; people have appeared among us who kneel in prayer to spontaneity, gazing with awe (to take an expression from Plekhanov) upon the “posterior” of the Russian proletariat. But we will get rid of this fungus. The time has come when Russian revolutionaries, guided by a genuinely revolutionary theory, relying upon the genuinely revolutionary and spontaneously awakening class, can at last—at long last!—rise to full stature in all their giant strength. All that is required is for the masses of our practical workers, and the still larger masses of those who dreamed of practical work when they were still at school, to pour scorn and ridicule upon any suggestion that may be made to degrade our political tasks and to restrict the scope of our organisational work. And we will achieve that, rest assured, gentlemen!

In the article “Where To Begin,” I wrote in opposition to *Rabocheye Dyelo*: “The tactics of agitation in relation to some special question, or the tactics with regard to some detail of party organisation may be changed in twenty-four hours; but only people devoid of all principle are capable of changing, in twenty-four hours, or, for that matter, in twenty-four months, their view on the necessity—in general, constantly, and absolutely—of an organisation of struggle and of political agitation among the masses.”⁴ To this *Rabocheye Dyelo* replied: “This, the only one of *Iskra’s* charges that makes a pretence of being based on facts, is totally without foundation. Readers of *Rabocheye Dyelo* know very well that from the outset we not only called for political agitation, without waiting for the appearance of *Iskra* . . . [saying at the same time that not only the workers’ study circles, “but also the mass working-class movement could not regard as its first political task the overthrow of absolutism,” but only the struggle for immediate political demands, and that “the masses begin to understand immediate political demands after one, or at all events, after several strikes”], . . . but that with our publications which we furnished from abroad for the comrades working in Russia, we provided the *only* Social-Democratic political and agitational material . . . [and in this sole material you not only based the widest political agitation exclusively on the economic struggle, but you even went to the extent of claiming that this restricted agitation was the “most widely applicable.” And do you not observe, gentlemen, that your own argument—that this was the *only* material provided—proves the necessity for *Iskra’s* appearance, and its struggle against *Rabocheye Dyelo*?] . . . On the other hand, our publishing activity actually prepared the ground for the tactical unity of the Party . . . [unity in the conviction that tactics is a process of growth of Party tasks that grow together with the Party? A precious unity indeed!] . . . and

by that rendered possible the creation of a 'militant organisation' for which the Union Abroad did all that an organisation abroad could do" (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 15). A vain attempt at evasion! I would never dream of denying that you did all you possibly could. I have asserted and assert now that the *limits* of what is "possible" for you to do are restricted by the narrowness of your outlook. It is ridiculous to talk of a "militant organisation" to fight for "immediate political demands," or to conduct the economic struggle against the employers and the government."

But if the reader wishes to see the pearls of "Economist" infatuation with amateurism, he must, of course, turn from the eclectic and vacillating *Rabocheye Dyelo* to the consistent and determined *Rabochaya Mysl*. In its *Separate Supplement*, p. 13, R. M. wrote: "Now two words about the so-called revolutionary intelligentsia proper. True, on more than one occasion it has proved itself prepared 'to enter into determined battle with tsarism'. The unfortunate thing, however, is that our revolutionary intelligentsia, ruthlessly persecuted by the political police, imagined the struggle against the political police to be the political struggle against the autocracy. That is why, to this day, it cannot understand 'where the forces for the struggle against the autocracy are to be obtained'."

Truly matchless is the lofty contempt for the struggle against the police displayed by this worshipper (in the worst sense of the word) of the *spontaneous* movement! He is prepared *to justify* our inability to organise secret activity by the argument that with the spontaneous mass movement it is not at all important for us to struggle against the political police! Very few people indeed would subscribe to this appalling conclusion; to such an extent have our deficiencies in revolutionary organisations become a matter of acute importance. But if Martynov, for example, refuses to subscribe to this, it will only be because he is unable, or lacks the courage, to think out his ideas to their logical conclusion. Indeed, does the "task" of advancing concrete demands by the masses, demands that promise palpable results, call for special efforts to create a stable, centralised, militant organisation of revolutionaries? Cannot such a "task" be carried out even by masses that do not "struggle against the political police" at all? Could this task, moreover, be fulfilled if, in addition to the few leaders, it were not undertaken by such workers (the overwhelming majority) as are quite *incapable* of "struggling against the political police"? Such workers, average people of the masses, are capable of displaying enormous energy and self-sacrifice in strikes and in street, battles with the police and the troops, and are capable (in fact, are alone capable) of *determining* the outcome of our entire movement—but the struggle against the *political* police requires special qualities; it requires *professional* revolutionaries. And we must see to it, not only that the masses

“advance” concrete demands, but that the masses of the workers “advance” an increasing number of such professional revolutionaries. Thus, we have reached the question of the relation between an organisation of professional revolutionaries and the labour movement pure and simple. Although this question has found little reflection in literature, it has greatly engaged us “politicians” in conversations and polemics with comrades who gravitate more or less towards Economism. It is a question meriting special treatment. But before taking it up, let us offer one further quotation by way of illustrating our thesis on the connection between primitiveness and Economism.

In his *Reply*, Mr. N. N.²⁰ wrote: “The Emancipation of Labour group demands direct struggle against the government without first considering where the material forces for this struggle are to be obtained, and without indicating the *path of the struggle*.” Emphasising the last words, the author adds the following footnote to the word “Path”: “This cannot be explained by purposes of secrecy, because the programme does not refer to a plot but to a *mass movement*. And the masses cannot proceed by secret paths. Can we conceive of a secret strike? Can we conceive of secret demonstrations and petitions?” (*Vademecum*, p. 59.) Thus, the author comes quite close to the question of the “material forces” (organisers of strikes and demonstrations) and to the “paths” of the struggle, but, nevertheless, is still in a state of consternation, because he “worships” the mass movement, i.e., he regards it as something that *relieves* us of the necessity of conducting revolutionary activity and not as something that should encourage us and *stimulate* our revolutionary activity. It is impossible for a strike to remain a secret to those participating in it and to those immediately associated with it, but it may (and in the majority of cases does) remain a “secret” to the masses of the Russian workers, because the government takes care to cut all communication with the strikers, to prevent all news of strikes from spreading. Here indeed is where a special “struggle against the political police” is required, a struggle that can never be conducted actively by such large masses as take part in strikes. This struggle must be organised, according to “all the rules of the art,” by people who are professionally engaged in revolutionary activity. The fact that the masses are spontaneously being drawn into the movement does not make the organisation of this struggle *less necessary*. On the contrary, it makes it *more necessary*; for we socialists would be failing in our direct duty to the masses if we did not prevent the police from making a secret of every strike and every demonstration (and if we did not ourselves from time to time secretly prepare strikes and demonstrations). And we *will succeed in doing this*, because the spontaneously awakening masses will *also produce* increasing numbers of “professional revolutionaries” *from their own*

ranks (that is, if we do not take it into our heads to advise the workers to keep on marking time).

C. Organisation of Workers and Organisation of Revolutionaries

It is only natural to expect that for a Social-Democrat whose conception of the political struggle coincides with the conception of the “economic struggle against the employers and the government,” the “organisation of revolutionaries” will more or less coincide with the “organisation of workers.” This, in fact, is what actually happens; so that when we speak of organisation, we literally speak in different tongues. I vividly recall, for example, a conversation I once had with a fairly consistent Economist, with whom I had not been previously acquainted. We were discussing the pamphlet, *Who Will Bring About the Political Revolution?* and were soon of a mind that its principal defect was its ignoring of the question of organisation. We had begun to assume full agreement between us; but, as the conversation proceeded, it became evident that we were talking of different things. My interlocutor accused the author of ignoring strike funds, mutual benefit societies, etc., whereas I had in mind an organisation of revolutionaries as an essential factor in “bringing about” the political revolution. As soon as the disagreement became clear, there was hardly, as I remember, a single question of principle upon which I was in agreement with the Economist!

What was the source of our disagreement? It was the fact that on questions both of organisation and of politics the Economists are forever lapsing from Social-Democracy into trade-unionism. The political struggle of Social-Democracy is far more extensive and complex than the economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government. Similarly (indeed for that reason), the organisation of the revolutionary Social-Democratic Party must inevitably be of *a kind different* from the organisation of the workers designed for this struggle. The workers’ organisation must in the first place be a trade union organisation; secondly, it must be as broad as possible; and thirdly, it must be as public as conditions will allow (here, and further on, of course, I refer only to absolutist Russia). On the other hand, the organisation of the revolutionaries must consist first and foremost of people who make revolutionary activity their profession (for which reason I speak of the organisation of *revolutionaries*, meaning revolutionary Social-Democrats). In view of this common characteristic of the members of such an organisation, *all distinctions as between workers and intellectuals*, not to speak of distinctions of trade and profession, in both categories, *must be effaced*. Such an organisation must perforce not be very extensive and must be as secret as possible. Let us examine this threefold distinction.

In countries where political liberty exists the distinction between a trade union and a political organisation is clear enough, as is the distinction between trade unions and Social-Democracy. The relations between the latter and the former will naturally vary in each country according to historical, legal, and other conditions; they may be more or less close, complex, etc. (in our opinion they should be as close and as little complicated as possible); but there can be no question in free countries of the organisation of trade unions coinciding with the organisation of the Social-Democratic Party. In Russia, however, the yoke of the autocracy appears at first glance to obliterate all distinctions between the Social-Democratic organisation and the workers' associations, since *all* workers' associations and *all* study circles are prohibited, and since the principal manifestation and weapon of the workers' economic struggle—the strike—is regarded as a criminal (and sometimes even as a political!) offence. Conditions in our country, therefore, on the one hand, strongly “impel” the workers engaged in economic struggle to concern themselves with political questions, and, on the other, they “impel” Social-Democrats to confound trade-unionism with Social-Democracy (and our Krichevskys, Martynovs, and Co., while diligently discussing the first kind of “impulsion,” fail to notice the second). Indeed, picture to yourselves people who are immersed ninety-nine per cent in “the economic struggle against the employers and the government.” Some of them will never, during the *entire* course of their activity (from four to six months), be impelled to think of the need for a more complex organisation of revolutionaries. Others, perhaps, will come across the fairly widely distributed Bernsteinian literature, from which they will become convinced of the profound importance of the forward movement of “the drab everyday struggle.” Still others will be carried away, perhaps, by the seductive idea of showing the world a new example of “close and organic contact with the proletarian struggle”—contact between the trade union and the Social Democratic movements. Such people may argue that the later a country enters the arena of capitalism and, consequently, of the working-class movement, the more the socialists in that country may take part in, and support, the trade union movement, and the less the reason for the existence of non-Social-Democratic trade unions. So far the argument is fully correct; unfortunately, however, some go beyond that and dream of a complete fusion of Social-Democracy with trade-unionism. We shall soon see, from the example of the Rules of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, what a harmful effect such dreams have upon our plans of organisation.

The workers' organisations for the economic struggle should be trade union organisations. Every Social-Democratic worker should as far as possible assist and actively work in these organisations. But, while this is true, it

is certainly not in our interest to demand that only Social-Democrats should be eligible for membership in the “trade” unions, since that would only narrow the scope of our influence upon the masses. Let every worker who understands the need to unite for the struggle against the employers and the government join the trade unions. The very aim of the trade unions would be impossible of achievement, if they did not unite all who have attained at least this elementary degree of understanding, if they were not very *broad* organisations. The broader these organisations, the broader will be our influence over them—an influence due, not only to the “spontaneous” development of the economic struggle, but to the direct and conscious effort of the socialist trade union members to influence their comrades. But a broad organisation cannot apply methods of strict secrecy (since this demands far greater training than is required for the economic struggle). How is the contradiction between the need for a large membership and the need for strictly secret methods to be reconciled? How are we to make the trade unions as public as possible? Generally speaking, there can be only two ways to this end: either the trade unions become legalised (in some countries this preceded the legalisation of the socialist and political unions), or the organisation is kept secret, but so “free” and amorphous, *lose*⁵ as the Germans say, that the need for secret methods becomes almost negligible as far as the bulk of the members is concerned.

The legalisation of non-socialist and non-political labour unions in Russia has begun, and there is no doubt that every advance made by our rapidly growing Social-Democratic working-class movement will multiply and encourage attempts at legalisation—attempts proceeding for the most part from supporters of the existing order, but partly also from the workers themselves and from liberal intellectuals. The banner of legality has already been hoisted by the Vasilyevs and the Zubatovs. Support has been promised and rendered by the Ozerovs and the Wormses,²¹ and followers of the new tendency are now to be found among the workers. Henceforth, we cannot but reckon with this tendency. How we are to reckon with it, on this there can be no two opinions among Social-Democrats. We must steadfastly expose any part played in this movement by the Zubatovs and the Vasilyevs, the gendarmes and the priests, and explain their real intentions to the workers. We must also expose all the conciliatory, “harmonious” notes that will be heard in the speeches of liberal politicians at legal meetings of the workers, irrespective of whether the speeches are motivated by an earnest conviction of the desirability of peaceful class collaboration, by a desire to curry favour with the powers that be, or whether they are simply the result of clumsiness. Lastly, we must warn the workers against the traps often set by the police, who at such open meetings and permitted societies spy out the

“fiery ones” and try to make use of legal organisations to plant their *agents provocateurs* in the illegal organisations.

Doing all this does not at all mean forgetting that *in the long run* the legalisation of the working-class movement will be, to our advantage, and not to that of the Zubatovs. On the contrary, it is precisely our campaign of exposure that will help us to separate the tares from the wheat. What the tares are, we have already indicated. By the wheat we mean attracting the attention of ever larger numbers, including the most backward sections, of the workers to social and political questions, and freeing ourselves, the revolutionaries, from functions that are essentially legal (the distribution of legal books, mutual aid, etc.), the development of which will inevitably provide us with an increasing quantity of material for agitation. In this sense, we may, and should, say to the Zubatovs and the Ozerovs: Keep at it, gentlemen, do your best! Whenever you place a trap in the path of the workers (either by way of direct provocation, or by the “honest” demoralisation of the workers with the aid of “Struivism”) we will see to it that you are exposed. But whenever you take a real step forward, though it be the most “timid zigzag,” we will say: Please continue! And the only step that can be a real step forward is a real, if small, extension of the workers’ field of action. Every such extension will be to our advantage and will help to hasten the advent of legal societies of the kind in which it will not be *agents provocateurs* who are detecting socialists, but socialists who are gaining adherents. In a word, our task is to fight the tares. It is not our business to grow wheat in flower-pots. By pulling up the tares, we clear the soil for the wheat. And while the Afanasy Ivanoviches and Pulkheria Ivanovnas²² are tending their flower-pot crops, we must prepare the reapers, not only to cut down the tares of today, but to reap the wheat of tomorrow.⁶

Thus, we cannot by means of legalisation *solve* the problem of creating a trade union organisation that will be as little secret and as extensive as possible (but we should be extremely glad if the Zubatovs and the Ozerovs disclosed to us even a partial opportunity for such a solution—to this end, however, *we must* strenuously combat them). There remain secret trade union organisations, and we must give all possible assistance to the workers who (as we definitely know) are adopting this course. Trade union organisations, not only can be of tremendous value in developing and consolidating the economic struggle, but can also become a very important auxiliary to political agitation and revolutionary organisation. In order to achieve this purpose, and in order to guide the nascent trade union movement in the channels desired by Social-Democracy, we must first understand clearly the absurdity of the plan of organisation the St. Petersburg Economists have been nursing for nearly five years. That plan is set forth in the “Rules for a

Workers' Mutual Benefit Fund" of July 1897 ("*Listok*" *Rabotnika*, No. 9–10, p. 46, taken from *Rabochaya Mysl*, No. 1), as well as in the "Rules for a Trade Union Workers' Organisation" of October 1900 (special leaflet printed in St. Petersburg and referred to in *Iskra*, No. 1). Both these sets of rules have one main shortcoming: they set up the broad workers' organisation in a rigidly specified structure and confound it with the organisation of revolutionaries. Let us take the last-mentioned set of rules, since it is drawn up in greater detail. The body consists of *fifty-two* paragraphs. Twenty-three deal with the structure, the method of functioning, and the competence of the "workers' circles," which are to be organised in every factory ("a maximum of ten persons") and which elect "central (factory) groups." "The central group," says paragraph 2, "observes all that goes on in its factory or workshop and keeps a record of events." "The central group presents to subscribers a monthly financial account" (par. 17), etc. Ten paragraphs are devoted to the "district organisation," and nineteen to the highly complex interconnection between the Committee of the Workers' Organisation and the Committee of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle (elected representatives of each district and of the "executive groups"—"groups of propagandists, groups for maintaining contact with the provinces, and with the organisation abroad, groups for managing stores; publications, and funds").

Social-Democracy = "executive groups" in relation to the economic struggle of the workers! It would be difficult to show more glaringly how the Economists' ideas deviate from Social-Democracy to trade-unionism, and how alien to them is any idea that a Social-Democrat must concern himself first and foremost with an organisation of revolutionaries capable of guiding the *entire* proletarian struggle for emancipation. To talk of "the political emancipation of the working class" and of the struggle against "tsarist despotism," and at the same time to draft rules like these, means to have no idea whatsoever of the real political tasks of Social-Democracy. Not one of the fifty or so paragraphs reveals even a glimmer of understanding that it is necessary to conduct the widest possible political agitation among the masses, an agitation highlighting every aspect of Russian absolutism and the specific features of the various social classes in Russia. Rules like these are of no use even for the achievement of trade union, let alone political, aims, since trade unions are organised by *trades*, of which no mention is made.

But most characteristic, perhaps, is the amazing top-heaviness of the whole "system," which attempts to bind each single factory and its "committee" by a permanent string of uniform and ludicrously petty rules and a three-stage system of election. Hemmed in by the narrow outlook of Economism, the mind is lost in details that positively reek of red tape and bureaucracy. In practice, of course, three-fourths of the clauses are never applied;

on the other hand, a “secret” organisation of this kind, with its central group in each factory, makes it very easy for the gendarmes to carry out raids on a vast scale. The Polish comrades have passed through a similar phase in their movement, with everybody enthusiastic about the extensive organisation of workers’ benefit funds; but they very quickly abandoned this idea when they saw that such organisations only provided rich harvests for the gendarmes. If we have in mind broad workers’ organisations, and not widespread arrests, if we do not want to provide satisfaction to the gendarmes, we must see to it that these organisations remain without any rigid formal structure. But will they be able to function in that case?

Let us see what the functions are: “. . . To observe all that goes on in the factory and keep a record of events” (par. 2 of the Rules). Do we really require a formally established group for this purpose? Could not the purpose be better served by correspondence conducted in the illegal papers without the setting up of special groups? “. . . To lead the struggles of the workers for the improvement of their workshop conditions” (par. 3). This, too, requires no set organisational form. Any sensible agitator can in the course of ordinary conversation gather what the demands of the workers are and transmit them to a narrow—not a broad—organisation of revolutionaries for expression in a leaflet. “. . . To organise a fund . . . to which subscriptions of two kopeks per ruble⁷ should be made” (par. 9)—and then to present to subscribers a monthly financial account (par. 17), to expel members who fail to pay their contributions (par. 10), and so forth. Why, this is a very paradise for the police; for nothing would be easier for them than to penetrate into such a secrecy of a “central factory fund,” confiscate the money, and arrest the best people. Would it not be simpler to issue one-kopek or two-kopek coupons bearing the official stamp of a well-known (very narrow and very secret) organisation, or to make collections without coupons of any kind and to print reports in a certain agreed code in an illegal paper? The object would thereby be attained, but it would be a hundred times more difficult for the gendarmes to pick up clues.

I could go on analysing the Rules, but I think that what has been said will suffice. A small, compact core of the most reliable, experienced, and hardened workers, with responsible representatives in the principal districts and connected by all the rules of strict secrecy with the organisation of revolutionaries, can, with the widest support of the masses and without any formal organisation, perform *all* the functions of a trade union organisation, in a manner, moreover, desirable to Social-Democracy. Only in this way can we secure the *consolidation* and development of a *Social-Democratic* trade union movement, despite all the gendarmes.

It may be objected that an organisation which is so *lose* that it is not even definitely formed, and which has not even an enrolled and registered membership, cannot be called an organisation at all. Perhaps so. Not the name is important. What is important is that this “organisation without members” shall do everything that is required, and from the very outset ensure a solid connection between our future trade unions and socialism. Only an incorrigible utopian would have a *broad* organisation of workers, with elections, reports, universal suffrage, etc., under the autocracy.

The moral to be drawn from this is simple. If we begin with the solid foundation of a strong organisation of revolutionaries, we can ensure the stability of the movement as a whole and carry out the aims both of Social-Democracy and of trade unions proper. If, however, we begin with a broad workers’ organisation, which is supposedly most “accessible” to the masses (but which is actually most accessible to the gendarmes and makes revolutionaries most accessible to the police), we shall achieve neither the one aim nor the other; we shall not eliminate our rule-of-thumb methods, and, because we remain scattered and our forces are constantly broken up by the police, we shall only make trade unions of the Zubatov and Ozerov type the more accessible to the masses.

What, properly speaking, should be the functions of the organisation of revolutionaries? We shall deal with this question in detail. First, however, let us examine a very typical argument advanced by our terrorist, who (sad fate!) in this matter also is a next-door neighbour to the Economist. *Svoboda*, a journal published for workers, contains in its first issue an article entitled “Organisation,” the author of which tries to defend his friends, the Economist workers of Ivanovo-Voznesensk. He writes:

“It is bad when the masses are mute and unenlightened, when the movement does not come from the rank and file. For instance, the students of a university town leave for their homes during the summer and other holidays, and immediately the workers’ movement comes to a standstill. Can a workers’ movement which has to be pushed on from outside be a real force? No, indeed. . . . It has not yet learned to walk, it is still in leading-strings. So it is in all matters. The students go off, and everything comes to a standstill. The most capable are seized; the cream is skimmed and the milk turns sour. If the ‘committee’ is arrested, everything comes to a standstill until a new one can be formed. And one never knows what sort of committee will be set up next—it may be nothing like the former. The first said one thing, the second may say the very opposite. Continuity between yesterday and tomorrow is broken, the experience of the past does not serve as a guide for the future. And all because no roots have been struck in depth, in the masses; the work is carried on not by a hundred fools, but by a dozen wise men. A dozen wise men can be wiped out at a snap, but when the organisation

embraces masses, everything proceeds from them, and nobody, however he tries, can wreck the cause.” (p. 63)

The facts are described correctly. The picture of our amateurism is well drawn. But the conclusions are worthy of *Rabochaya Mysl*, both as regards their stupidity and their lack of political tact. They represent the height of stupidity, because the author confuses the philosophical and social-historical question of the “depth” of the “roots” of the movement with the technical and organisational question of the best method in combating the gendarmes. They represent the height of political tactlessness, because, instead of appealing from bad leaders to good leaders, the author appeals from the leaders in general to the “masses.” This is as much an attempt to drag us back organisationally as the idea of substituting excitative terrorism for political agitation drags us back politically. Indeed, I am experiencing a veritable *embarras de richesses*, and hardly know where to begin to disentangle the jumble offered up by *Svoboda*. For clarity, let me begin by citing an example. Take the Germans. It will not be denied, I hope, that theirs is a mass organisation, that in Germany everything proceeds from the masses, that the working-class movement there has learned to walk. Yet observe how these millions value their “dozen” tried political leaders, how firmly they cling to them. Members of the hostile parties in parliament have often taunted the socialists by exclaiming: “Fine democrats you are indeed! Yours is a working-class movement only in name; in actual fact the same clique of leaders is always in evidence, the same Bebel and the same Liebknecht, year in and year out, and that goes on for decades. Your supposedly elected workers’ deputies are more permanent than the officials appointed by the Emperor!” But the Germans only smile with contempt at these demagogic attempts to set the “masses” against the “leaders,” to arouse bad and ambitious instincts in the former, and to rob the movement of its solidity and stability by undermining the confidence of the masses in their “dozen wise men.” Political thinking is sufficiently developed among the Germans, and they have accumulated sufficient political experience to understand that without the “dozen” tried and talented leaders (and talented men are not born by the hundreds), professionally trained, schooled by long experience, and working in perfect harmony, no class in modern society can wage a determined struggle. The Germans too have had demagogues in their ranks who have flattered the “hundred fools,” exalted them above the “dozen wise men,” extolled the “horny hand” of the masses, and (like Most and Hasselmann) have spurred them on to reckless “revolutionary” action and sown distrust towards the firm and steadfast leaders. It was only by stubbornly and relentlessly combating all demagogic elements within the socialist movement that German socialism has managed to grow and

become as strong as it is. Our wiseacres, however, at a time when Russian Social-Democracy is passing through a crisis entirely due to the lack of sufficiently trained, developed, and experienced leaders to guide the spontaneously awakening masses, cry out, with the profundity of fools: "It is a bad business when the movement does not proceed from the rank and file."

"A committee of students is of no use; it is not stable." Quite true. But the conclusion to be drawn from this is that we must have a committee of professional *revolutionaries*, and it is immaterial whether a student or a worker is capable of becoming a professional revolutionary. The conclusion you draw, however, is that the working-class movement must not be pushed on from outside! In your political innocence you fail to notice that you are playing into the hands of our Economists and fostering our amateurism. Wherein, may I ask, did our students "push on" our workers? *In the sense* that the student brought to the worker the fragments of political knowledge he himself possesses, the crumbs of socialist ideas he has managed to acquire (for the principal intellectual diet of the present-day student, legal Marxism, could furnish only the rudiments, only scraps of knowledge). There has never been too much of *such* "pushing on from outside"; on the contrary, there has so far been all too little of it in our movement, for we have been stewing too assiduously in our own juice; we have bowed far too slavishly to the elementary "economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government." We professional revolutionaries must and will make it our business to engage in *this kind of* "pushing on" a hundred times more forcibly than we have done hitherto. But the very fact that you select so hideous a phrase as "pushing on from outside"—a phrase which cannot but rouse in the workers (at least in the workers who are as unenlightened as you yourselves) a sense of distrust towards *all* who bring them political knowledge and revolutionary experience from outside, which cannot but rouse in them an instinctive desire to resist *all* such people—proves you to be demagogues, and *demagogues* are the worst enemies of the working class.

And, please—don't hasten howling about my "uncomradely methods" of debating. I have not the least desire to doubt the purity of your intentions. As I have said, one may become a demagogue out of sheer political innocence. But I have shown that you have descended to demagoguery, and I will never tire of repeating that demagogues are the worst enemies of the working class. The worst enemies, because they arouse base instincts in the masses, because the unenlightened worker is unable to recognise his enemies in men who represent themselves, and sometimes sincerely so, as his friends. The worst enemies, because in the period of disunity and vacillation, when our movement is just beginning to take shape, nothing is

easier than to employ demagogic methods to mislead the masses, who can realise their error only later by bitter experience. That is why the slogan of the day for the Russian Social-Democrat must be—resolute struggle against Svoboda and *Rabocheye Dyelo*, both of which have sunk to the level of demagogy. We shall deal with this further in greater detail.⁸

“A dozen wise men can be more easily wiped out than a hundred fools.” This wonderful truth (for which the hundred fools will always applaud you) appears obvious only because in the very midst of the argument you have skipped from one question to another. You began by talking and continued to talk of the unearthing of a “committee,” of the unearthing of an “organisation,” and now you skip to the question of unearthing the movement’s “roots” in their “depths.” The fact is, of course, that our movement cannot be unearthed, for the very reason that it has countless thousands of roots deep down among the masses; but that is not the point at issue. As far as “deep roots” are concerned, we cannot be “unearthed” even now, despite all our amateurism, and yet we all complain, and cannot but complain, that the “organisations” are being unearthed and as a result it is impossible to maintain continuity in the movement. But since you raise the question of *organisations* being unearthed and persist in your opinion, I assert that it is far more difficult to unearth a dozen wise men than a hundred fools. This position I will defend, no matter how much you instigate the masses against me for my “anti-democratic” views, etc. As I have stated repeatedly, by “wise men,” in connection with organisation, I mean *professional revolutionaries*, irrespective of whether they have developed from among students or working men. I assert: (1) that no revolutionary movement can endure without a stable organisation of leaders maintaining continuity; (2) that the broader the popular mass drawn spontaneously into the struggle, which forms the basis of the movement and participates in it, the more urgent the need for such an organisation, and the more solid this organisation must be (for it is much easier for all sorts of demagogues to side-track the more backward sections of the masses); (3) that such an organisation must consist chiefly of people professionally engaged in revolutionary activity; (4) that in an autocratic state, the more we *confine* the membership of such an organisation to people who are professionally engaged in revolutionary activity and who have been professionally trained in the art of combating the political police, the more difficult will it be to unearth the organisation; and (5) the *greater* will be the number of people from the working class and from the other social classes who will be able to join the movement and perform active work in it.

I invite our Economists, terrorists, and “Economists-terrorists”⁹ to confute these propositions. At the moment, I shall deal only with the last two

points. The question as to whether it is easier to wipe out “a dozen wise-men” or “a hundred fools” reduces itself to the question, above considered, whether it is possible to have a mass *organisation* when the maintenance of strict secrecy is essential. We can never give a mass organisation that degree of secrecy without which there can be no question of persistent and continuous struggle against the government. To concentrate all secret functions in the hands of as small a number of professional revolutionaries as possible does not mean that the latter will “do the thinking for all” and that the rank and file will not take an active part in the *movement*. On the contrary, the membership will promote increasing numbers of the professional revolutionaries from its ranks; for it will know that it is not enough for a few students and for a few working men waging the economic struggle to gather in order to form a “committee,” but that it takes years to train oneself to be a professional revolutionary; and the rank and file will “think,” not only of amateurish methods, but of such training. Centralisation of the secret functions of the *organisation* by no means implies centralisation of all the functions of the *movement*. Active participation of the widest masses in the illegal press will not diminish because a “dozen” professional revolutionaries centralise the secret functions connected with this work; on the contrary, it will *increase* tenfold. In this way, and in this way alone, shall we ensure that reading the illegal press, writing for it, and to some extent even distributing it, will *almost cease to be secret work*, for the police will soon come to realise the folly and impossibility of judicial and administrative red-tape procedure over every copy of a publication that is being distributed in the thousands. This holds not only for the press, but for every function of the movement, even for demonstrations. The active and widespread participation of the masses will not suffer; on the contrary, it will benefit by the fact that a “dozen” experienced revolutionaries, trained professionally no less than the police, will centralise all the secret aspects of the work—the drawing up of leaflets, the working out of approximate plans; and the appointing of bodies of leaders for each urban district, for each institution, etc. (I know that exception will be taken to my “undemocratic” views, but I shall reply below fully to this anything but intelligent objection.) Centralisation of the most secret functions in an organisation of revolutionaries will not diminish, but rather increase the extent and enhance the quality of the activity of a large number of other organisations that are intended for a broad public and are therefore as loose and as non-secret as possible, such as workers’ trade unions; workers’ self-education circles and circles for reading illegal literature; and socialist, as well as democratic, circles among *all* other sections of the population; etc., etc. We must have such circles, trade unions, and organisations everywhere in *as large a number as possible* and

with the widest variety of functions; but it would be absurd and harmful *to confound* them with the organisation of *revolutionaries*, to efface the borderline between them, to make still more hazy the all too faint recognition of the fact that in order to “serve” the mass movement we must have people who will devote themselves exclusively to Social-Democratic activities, and that such people must *train* themselves patiently and steadfastly to be professional revolutionaries.

Yes, this recognition is incredibly dim. Our worst sin with regard to organisation consists in the fact that by *our primitiveness we have lowered the prestige of revolutionaries in Russia*. A person who is flabby and shaky on questions of theory, who has a narrow outlook, who pleads the spontaneity of the masses as an excuse for his own sluggishness, who resembles a trade union secretary more than a spokesman of the people, who is unable to conceive of a broad and bold plan that would command the respect even of opponents, and who is inexperienced and clumsy in his own professional art—the art of combating the political police—such a man is not a revolutionary, but a wretched amateur!

Let no active worker take offence at these frank remarks, for as far as insufficient training is concerned, I apply them first and foremost to myself. I used to work in a study circle²³ that set itself very broad, all-embracing tasks; and all of us, members of that circle, suffered painfully and acutely from the realisation that we were acting as amateurs at a moment in history when we might have been able to say, varying a well-known statement: “Give us an organisation of revolutionaries, and we will overturn Russia” The more I recall the burning sense of shame I then experienced, the bitterer become my feelings towards those pseudo-Social-Democrats whose preachings “bring disgrace on the calling of a revolutionary,” who fail to understand that our task is not to champion the degrading of the revolutionary to the level of an amateur, but to *raise* the amateurs to the level of revolutionaries.

D. The Scope of Organisational Work

We have heard B-v tell us about “the lack of revolutionary forces fit for action which is felt not only in St. Petersburg, but throughout Russia.” Hardly anyone will dispute this fact. But the question is, how is it to be explained? B-v writes:

“We shall not go into an explanation of the historical causes of this phenomenon; we shall merely state that a society, demoralised by prolonged political reaction and split by past and present economic changes, promotes from its own ranks *an extremely small number of persons fit for revolutionary work*; that

the working class does produce revolutionary workers who to some extent reinforce the ranks of the illegal organisations, but that the number of such revolutionaries is inadequate to meet the requirements of the times. This is all the more so because the worker who spends eleven and a half hours a day in the factory is in such a position that he can, in the main, perform only the functions of an agitator; but propaganda and organisation, the delivery and reproduction of illegal literature, the issuance of leaflets, etc., are duties which must necessarily fall mainly upon the shoulders of an extremely small force of intellectuals.” (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 6, pp. 38–39)

On many points we disagree with B-v, particularly with those we have emphasised, which most saliently reveal that, although weary of our amateurism (as is every thinking practical worker), B-v cannot find the way out of this intolerable situation because he is weighted down by Economism. The fact is that society produces very *many* persons fit for “the cause,” but we are unable to make use of them all. The critical, transitional state of our movement in this respect may be formulated as follows: *There are no people—yet there is a mass of people*. There is a mass of people, because the working class and increasingly varied social strata, year after year, produce from their ranks an increasing number of discontented people who desire to protest, who are ready to render all the assistance they can in the struggle against absolutism, the intolerableness of which, though not yet recognised by all, is more and more acutely sensed by increasing masses of the people. At the same time, we have no people, because we have no leaders, no political leaders, no talented organisers capable of arranging extensive and at the same time uniform and harmonious work that would employ all forces, even the most inconsiderable. “The growth and development of the revolutionary organisations” lag, not only behind the growth of the working-class movement, which even B-v admits, but behind that of the general democratic movement among all strata of the people. (In passing, probably B-V would now regard this as supplementing his conclusion.) The scope of revolutionary work is too narrow, as compared with the breadth of the spontaneous basis of the movement. It is too hemmed in by the wretched theory of “economic struggle against the employers and the government.” Yet, at the present time, not only Social-Democratic political agitators, but Social-Democratic organisers must “go among all classes of the population.”¹⁰ There is hardly a single practical worker who will doubt that the Social-Democrats could distribute the thousand and one minute functions of their organisational work among individual representatives of the most varied classes. Lack of specialisation is one of the most serious defects of our technique, about which B-v justly and bitterly complains. The smaller each separate “operation” in our common cause the more people we can find capable of carrying out such operations (people who, in the

majority of cases, are completely incapable of becoming professional revolutionaries); more difficult will it be for the police to “net” all these “detail workers,” and the more difficult will it be for them to frame up, out of an arrest for some petty affair, a “case” that would justify the government’s expenditure on “security.” As for the number of people ready to help us, we referred in the preceding chapter to the gigantic change that has taken place in this respect in the last five years or so. On the other hand, in order to unite all these tiny fractions into one whole, in order not to break up the movement while breaking up its functions, and in order to imbue the people who carry out the minute functions with the conviction that their work is necessary and important, without which conviction they will never do the work,¹¹ it is necessary to have a strong organisation of tried revolutionaries. The more secret such an organisation is, the stronger and more widespread will be the confidence in the Party. As we know, in time of war, it is not only of the utmost importance to imbue one’s own army with confidence in its strength, but it is important also to convince the enemy and all *neutral* elements of this strength; friendly neutrality may sometimes decide the issue. If such an organisation existed, one built up on a firm theoretical foundation and possessing a Social-Democratic organ, we should have no reason to fear that the movement might be diverted from its path by the numerous “outside” elements that are attracted to it. (On the contrary, it is precisely at the present time, with amateurism prevalent, that we see many Social-Democrats leaning towards the *Credo* and only imagining that they are Social Democrats.) In a word, specialisation necessarily presupposes centralisation, and in turn imperatively calls for it.

But B-v himself, who has so excellently described the necessity for specialisation, underestimates its importance, in our opinion, in the second part of the argument we have quoted. The number of working-class revolutionaries is inadequate, he says. This is perfectly true, and once again we stress that the “valuable communication of a close observer” fully confirms our view of the causes of the present crisis in Social-Democracy, and, consequently, of the means required to overcome it. Not only are revolutionaries in general lagging behind the spontaneous awakening of the masses, but even worker-revolutionaries are lagging behind the spontaneous awakening of the working-class masses. This *fact* confirms with clear evidence, from the “practical” point of view, too, not only the absurdity but even the *politically reactionary nature* of the “pedagogics” to which we are so often treated in the discussion of our duties to the workers. This fact proves that our very first and most pressing duty is to help to train working-class revolutionaries who will be on the same level *in regard to Party activity* as the revolutionaries from amongst the intellectuals (we emphasise the words “in regard to Party

activity,” for, although necessary, it is neither so easy nor so pressingly necessary to bring the workers up to the level of intellectuals in other respects). Attention, therefore, must be devoted *principally to raising* the workers to the level of revolutionaries; it is not at all our task *to descend* to the level of the “working masses” as the Economists wish to do, or to the level of the “average worker” as *Svoboda* desires to do (and by this ascends to the second grade of Economist “pedagogics”). I am far from denying the necessity for popular literature for the workers, and especially popular (of course, not vulgar) literature for the especially backward workers. But what annoys me is this constant confusion of pedagogics with questions of politics and organisation. You, gentlemen, who are so much concerned about the “average worker,” as a matter of fact, rather insult the workers by your desire *to talk down* to them when discussing working-class politics and working-class organisation. Talk about serious things in a serious manner; leave pedagogics to the pedagogues, and not to politicians and organisers! Are there not advanced people, “average people,” and “masses” among the intelligentsia too? Does not everyone recognise that popular literature is also required for the intelligentsia, and is not such literature written? Imagine someone, in an article on organising college or high-school students, repeating over and over again, as if he had made a new discovery, that first of all we must have an organisation of “average students.” The author of such an article would be ridiculed, and rightly so. Give us your ideas on organisation, if you have any, he would be told, and we ourselves will decide who is “average,” who above average, and who below. But if you have no organisational ideas *of your own*, then all your exertions in behalf of the “masses” and “average people” will be simply boring. You must realise that these questions of “politics” and “organisation” are so serious in themselves that they cannot be dealt with in any other but a serious way. We can and must *educate* workers (and university and Gymnasium students) so that we *may be able to discuss* these questions with them. But once you do bring up these questions, you must give real replies to them; do not fall back on the “average,” or on the “masses”; do not try to dispose of the matter with facetious remarks and mere phrases.¹²

To be fully prepared for his task, the worker-revolutionary must likewise become a professional revolutionary. Hence B-v is wrong in saying that since the worker spends eleven and a half hours in the factory, the brunt of all other revolutionary functions (apart from agitation) “*must necessarily* fall mainly upon the shoulders of an extremely small force of intellectuals.” But this condition does not obtain out of sheer “necessity.” It obtains because we are backward, because we do not recognise our duty to assist every capable worker to become a *professional* agitator, organiser, propagandist, literature

distributor, etc., etc. In this respect, we waste our strength in a positively shameful manner; we lack the ability to husband that which should be tended and reared with special care. Look at the Germans: their forces are a hundredfold greater than ours. But they understand perfectly well that really capable agitators, etc., are not often promoted from the ranks of the "average." For this reason they immediately try to place every capable working man in conditions that will enable him to develop and apply his abilities to the fullest: he is made a professional agitator, he is encouraged to widen the field of his activity, to spread it from one factory to the whole of the industry, from a single locality to the whole country. He acquires experience and dexterity in his profession; he broadens his outlook and increases his knowledge; he observes at close quarters the prominent political leaders from other localities and of other parties; he strives to rise to their level and combine in himself the knowledge of the working-class environment and the freshness of socialist convictions with professional skill, without which, the proletariat *cannot* wage a stubborn struggle against its excellently trained enemies. In this way alone do the working masses produce men of the stamp of Bebel and Auer. But what is to a great extent automatic in a politically free country must in Russia be done deliberately and systematically by our organisations. A worker-agitator who is at all gifted and "promising" *must not be left* to work eleven hours a day in a factory. We must arrange that he be maintained by the Party; that he may go underground in good time; that he change the place of his activity, if he is to enlarge his experience, widen his outlook, and be able to hold out for at least a few years in the struggle against the gendarmes. As the spontaneous rise of their movement becomes broader and deeper, the working-class masses promote from their ranks not only an increasing number of talented agitators, but also talented organisers, propagandists, and "practical workers" in the best sense of the term (of whom there are so few among our intellectuals who, for the most part, in the Russian manner, are somewhat careless and sluggish in their habits). When we have forces of specially trained worker-revolutionaries who have gone through extensive preparation (and, of course, revolutionaries "of all arms of the service"), no political police in the world will then be able to contend with them, for these forces, boundlessly devoted to the revolution, will enjoy the boundless confidence of the widest masses of the workers. We are directly to *blame* for doing too little to "stimulate" the workers to take this path, common to them and to the "intellectuals," of professional revolutionary training, and for all too often dragging them back by our silly speeches about what is "accessible" to the masses of the workers, to the "average workers," etc.

In this, as in other respects, the narrow scope of our organisational work is without a doubt due directly to the fact (although the overwhelming majority of the “Economists” and the novices in practical work do not perceive it) that we restrict our theories and our political tasks to a narrow field. Subservience to spontaneity seems to inspire a fear of taking even one step away from what is “accessible” to the masses, a fear of rising too high above mere attendance on the immediate and direct requirements of the masses. Have no fear, gentlemen! Remember that we stand so low on the plane of organisation that the very idea that we could rise *too* high is absurd!

E. “Conspiratorial” Organisation and “Democratism”

Yet there are many people among us who are so sensitive to the “voice of life” that they fear it more than anything in the world and charge the adherents of the views here expounded with following a Narodnaya Volya line, with failing to understand “democratism,” etc. These accusations, which, of course, have been echoed by *Rabocheye Dyelo*, need to be dealt with.

The writer of these lines knows very well that the St. Petersburg Economists levelled the charge of Narodnaya Volya tendencies also against *Rabochaya Gazeta* (which is quite understandable when one compares it with *Rabochaya Mysl*). We were not in the least surprised, therefore, when, soon after the appearance of *Iskra*, a comrade informed us that the Social-Democrats in the town of X describe *Iskra* as a Narodnaya Volya organ. We, of course, were flattered by this accusation; for what decent Social-Democrat has not been accused by the Economists of being a Narodnaya Volya sympathiser?

These accusations are the result of a twofold misunderstanding. First, the history of the revolutionary movement is so little known among us that the name “Narodnaya Volya” is used to denote any idea of a militant centralised organisation which declares determined war upon tsarism. But the magnificent organisation that the revolutionaries had in the seventies, and that should serve us as a model, was not established by the Narodnaya Volya, but by the *Zemlya i Volya*, which split up into the Chorny Peredel and the Narodnaya Volya. Consequently, to regard a militant revolutionary organisation as something specifically Narodnaya Volya in character is absurd both historically and logically; for *no* revolutionary trend, if it seriously thinks of struggle, can dispense with such an organisation. The mistake the Narodnaya Volya committed was not in striving to enlist all the discontented in the organisation and to direct this organisation to resolute struggle against the autocracy; on the contrary, that was its great historical merit. The mistake was in relying on a theory which in substance was not a revolutionary theory at all, and the Narodnaya Volya members either did not know how,

or were unable, to link their movement inseparably with the class struggle in the developing capitalist society. Only a gross failure to understand Marxism (or an “understanding” of it in the spirit of “Struveism”) could prompt the opinion that the rise of a mass, spontaneous working-class movement *relieves* us of the duty of creating as good an organisation of revolutionaries as the Zemlya i Volya had, or, indeed, an incomparably better one. On the contrary, this movement *imposes* the duty upon us; for the spontaneous struggle of the proletariat will not become its genuine “class struggle” until this struggle is led by a strong organisation of revolutionaries.

Secondly, many people, including apparently B. Krichevsky (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 18), misunderstand the polemics that Social-Democrats have always waged against the “conspiratorial” view of the political struggle. We have always protested, and will, of course, continue to protest against *confining* the political struggle to conspiracy.¹³ But this does not, of course, mean that we deny the need for a strong revolutionary organisation. Thus, in the pamphlet mentioned in the preceding footnote, after the polemics against reducing the political struggle to a conspiracy, a description is given (as a Social-Democratic ideal) of an organisation so strong as to be able to “resort to . . . rebellion” and to every other form of attack, in order to “deliver a smashing blow against absolutism.”¹⁴ In *form* such a strong revolutionary organisation in an autocratic country may also be described as a “conspiratorial” organisation, because the French word “conspiracy” is the equivalent of the Russian word “zagovar” (“conspiracy”), and such an organisation must have the utmost secrecy. Secrecy is such a necessary condition for this kind of organisation that all the other conditions (number and selection of members, functions, etc.) must be made to conform to it. It would be extremely naive indeed, therefore, to fear the charge that we Social-Democrats desire to create a conspiratorial organisation. Such a charge should be as flattering to every opponent of Economism as the charge of following a Narodnaya Volya line.

The objection may be raised that such a powerful and strictly secret organisation, which concentrates in its hands all the threads of secret activities, an organisation which of necessity is centralised, may too easily rush into a premature attack, may thoughtlessly intensify the movement before the growth of political discontent, the intensity of the ferment and anger of the working class, etc., have made such an attack possible and necessary. Our reply to this is: Speaking abstractly, it cannot be denied, of course, that a militant organisation may thoughtlessly engage in battle, which *may* end in a defeat entirely avoidable under other conditions. But we cannot confine ourselves to abstract reasoning on such a question, because every battle bears within itself the abstract possibility of defeat, and there is no

way of *reducing* this possibility except by organised preparation for battle. If, however, we proceed from the concrete conditions at present obtaining in Russia, we must come to the positive conclusion that a strong revolutionary organisation is absolutely necessary precisely for the purpose of giving stability to the movement and of *safeguarding* it against the possibility of making thoughtless attacks. Precisely at the present time, when no such organisation yet exists, and when the revolutionary movement is rapidly and spontaneously growing, we *already observe* two opposite extremes (which, as is to be expected, “meet”). These are: the utterly unsound Economism and the preaching of moderation, and the equally unsound “excitative terror,” which strives “artificially to call forth symptoms of the end of the movement, which is developing and strengthening itself, when this movement is as yet nearer to the start than to the end” (V. Zasluch, in *Zarya*, No. 2–3, p. 353). And the instance of *Rabocheye Dyelo* shows that *there exist* Social-Democrats who give way to both these extremes. This is not surprising, for, apart from other reasons, the “economic struggle against the employers and the government” can *never satisfy* revolutionaries, and opposite extremes will therefore always appear here and there. Only a centralised, militant organisation that consistently carries out a Social-Democratic policy, that satisfies, so to speak, all revolutionary instincts and strivings, can safeguard the movement against making thoughtless attacks and prepare attacks that hold out the promise of success.

A further objection may be raised, that the views on organisation here expounded contradict the “democratic principle.” Now, while the earlier accusation was specifically Russian in origin, this one *is specifically foreign* in character. And only an organisation abroad (the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad) was capable of giving its Editorial Board instructions like the following:

“*Organisational Principle.* In order to secure the successful development and unification of Social-Democracy, the broad democratic principle of Party organisation must be emphasised, developed, and fought for; this is particularly necessary in view of the anti-democratic tendencies that have revealed themselves in the ranks of our Party.” (*Two Conferences*, p. 18)

We shall see in the next chapter how *Rabocheye Dyelo* combats *Iskra’s* “anti-democratic tendencies.” For the present, we shall examine more closely the “principle” that the Economists advance. Everyone will probably agree that “the broad democratic principle” presupposes the two following conditions: first, full publicity, and secondly, election to all offices. It would be absurd to speak of democracy without publicity, moreover, without a publicity that is not limited to the membership of the organisation.

We call the German Socialist Party a democratic organisation because all its activities are carried out publicly; even its party congresses are held in public. But no one would call an organisation democratic that is hidden from every one but its members by a veil of secrecy. What is the use, then, of advancing “the *broad* democratic principle” when the fundamental condition for this principle *cannot be fulfilled* by a secret organisation? “The broad principle” proves itself simply to be a resounding but hollow phrase. Moreover, it reveals a total lack of understanding of the urgent tasks of the moment in regard to organisation. Everyone knows how great the lack of secrecy is among the “broad” masses of our revolutionaries. We have heard the bitter complaints of B-v on this score and his absolutely just demand for a “strict selection of members” (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 6, p. 42). Yet, persons who boast a keen “sense of realities” *urges*, in a situation like this, not the strictest secrecy and the strictest (consequently, more restricted) selection, of members, but “the *broad* democratic principle”! This is what you call being wide of the mark.

Nor is the situation any better with regard to the second attribute of democracy, the principle of election. In politically free countries, this condition is taken for granted. “They are members of the Party who accept the principles of the Party programme and render the Party all possible support,” reads Clause 1 of the Rules of the German Social-Democratic Party. Since the entire political arena is as open to the public view as is a theatre stage to the audience, this acceptance or non-acceptance, support or opposition, is known to all from the press and from public meetings. Everyone knows that a certain political figure began in such and such a way, passed through such and such an evolution, behaved in a trying moment in such and such a manner, and possesses such and such qualities; consequently, *all* party members, knowing all the facts, can elect or refuse to elect this person to a particular party office. The general control (in the literal sense of the term) exercised over every act of a party man in the political field brings into existence an automatically operating mechanism which produces what in biology is called the “survival of the fittest.” “Natural selection” by full publicity, election, and general control provides the assurance that, in the last analysis, every political figure will be “in his proper place,” do the work for which he is best fitted by his powers and abilities, feel the effects of his mistakes on himself, and prove before all the world his ability to recognise mistakes and to avoid them.

Try to fit this picture into the frame of our autocracy! Is it conceivable in Russia for all who accept the principles of the Party programme and render the Party all possible support to control every action of the revolutionary working in secret? Is it possible for all to elect one of these revolutionaries

to any particular office, when, in the very interests of the work, the revolutionary must conceal his identity from nine out of ten of these “all”? Reflect somewhat over the real meaning of the high-sounding phrases to which *Rabocheye Dyelo* gives utterance, and you will realise that “broad democracy” in Party organisation, amidst the gloom of the autocracy and the domination of gendarmerie, is nothing more than a *useless and harmful* toy. It is a useless toy because, in point of fact, no revolutionary organisation has ever practiced, or could practice, *broad* democracy, however much it may have desired to do so. It is a harmful toy because any attempt to practise “the broad democratic principle” will simply facilitate the work of the police in carrying out large-scale raids, will perpetuate the prevailing primitiveness, and will divert the thoughts of the practical workers from the serious and pressing task of training themselves to become professional revolutionaries to that of drawing up detailed “paper” rules for election systems. Only abroad, where very often people with no opportunity for conducting really active work gather, could this “playing at democracy” develop here and there, especially in small groups.

To show the unseemliness of *Rabocheye Dyelo*’s favourite trick of advancing the plausible “principle” of democracy in revolutionary affairs, we shall again summon a witness. This witness, Y. Serebryakov, editor of the London magazine, *Nakanune*, has a soft spot for *Rabocheye Dyelo* and is filled with a great hatred for Plekhanov and the “Plekhanovites.” In its articles on the split in the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad, *Nakanune* definitely sided with *Rabocheye Dyelo* and poured a stream of petty abuse upon Plekhanov. All the more valuable, therefore, is this witness in the question at issue. In *Nakanune* for July (No. 7) 1899, an article entitled “Concerning the Manifesto of the Self-Emancipation of the Workers Group,” Serebryakov argued that it was “indecent” to talk about such things as “self-deception, leadership, and the so-called Areopagus in a serious revolutionary movement” and, *inter alia*, wrote:

“Myshkin, Rogachov, Zhelyabov, Mikhailov, Perovskaya, Figner, and others never regarded themselves as leaders, and no one ever elected or appointed them as such, although in actuality, they were leaders, because, in the propaganda period, as well as in the period of the struggle against the government, they took the brunt of the work upon themselves, they went into the most dangerous places, and their activities were the most fruitful. They became leaders, not because they wished it, but because the comrades surrounding them had confidence in their wisdom, in their energy, in their loyalty. To be afraid of some kind of Areopagus (if it is not feared, why write about it?) that would arbitrarily govern the movement is far too naive. Who would pay heed to it?”

We ask the reader, in what way does the “Areopagus” differ from “anti democratic tendencies”? And is it not evident that *Rabocheye Dyelo’s* “plausible” organisational principle is equally naive and indecent; naive, because no one would pay heed to the “Areopagus,” or people with “anti-democratic tendencies,” if “the comrades surrounding them had” no “confidence in their wisdom, energy, and loyalty”; indecent, because it is a demagogic sally calculated to play on the conceit of some, on the ignorance of others regarding the actual state of our movement, and on the lack of training and the ignorance of the history of the revolutionary movement on the part of still others. The only serious organisational principle for the active workers of our movement should be the strictest secrecy, the strictest selection of members, and the training of professional revolutionaries. Given these qualities, something even more than “democratism” would be guaranteed to us, namely, complete, comradely, mutual confidence among revolutionaries. This is absolutely essential for us, because there can be no question of replacing it by general democratic control in Russia. It would be a great mistake to believe that the impossibility of establishing real “democratic” control renders the members of the revolutionary organisation beyond control altogether. They have not the time to think about toy forms of democratism (democratism within a close and compact body of comrades in which complete, mutual confidence prevails), but they have a lively sense of their *responsibility*, knowing as they do from experience that an organisation of real revolutionaries will stop at nothing to rid itself of an unworthy member. Moreover, there is a fairly well-developed public opinion in Russian (and international) revolutionary circles which has a long history behind it, and which sternly and ruthlessly punishes every departure from the duties of comradeship (and “democratism,” real and not toy democratism, certainly forms a component part of the conception of comradeship). Take all this into consideration and you will realise that this talk and these resolutions about “anti-democratic tendencies” have the musty odour of the playing at generals which is indulged in abroad.

It must be observed also that the other source of this talk, viz., naivete is likewise fostered by the confusion of ideas concerning the meaning of democracy. In Mr. and Mrs. Webb’s book on the English trade unions there is an interesting chapter entitled “Primitive Democracy.” In it the authors relate how the English workers, in the first period of existence of their unions, considered it an indispensable sign of democracy for all the members to do all the work of managing the unions; not only were all questions decided by the vote of all the members, but all official duties were fulfilled by all the members in turn. A long period of historical experience was required for worker’s to realise the absurdity of such a conception of democracy and to

make them understand the necessity for representative institutions, on the one hand, and for full-time officials, on the other. Only after a number of cases of financial bankruptcy of trade union treasuries had occurred did the workers realise that the rates of contributions and benefits cannot be decided merely by a democratic vote, but that this requires also the advice of insurance experts. Let us take also Kautsky's book on parliamentarism and legislation by the people. There we find that the conclusions drawn by the Marxist theoretician coincide with the lessons learned from many years of practical experience by the workers who organised "spontaneously." Kautsky strongly protests against Rittinghausen's primitive conception of democracy; he ridicules those who in the name of democracy demand that "popular newspapers shall be edited directly by the people"; he shows the need for *professional* journalists, parliamentarians, etc., for the Social-Democratic leadership of the proletarian class struggle; he attacks the socialism of anarchists and *litterateurs* who in their "striving for effect" extol direct legislation by the whole people, completely failing to understand that this idea can be applied only relatively in modern society.

Those who have performed practical work in our movement know how widespread the "primitive" conception of democracy is among the masses of the students and workers. It is not surprising that this conception penetrates also into rules of organisations and into literature. The Economists of the Bernsteinian persuasion included in their rules the following: "§ 10. All affairs affecting the interests of the whole of the union organisation shall be decided by a majority vote of all its members." The Economists of the terrorist persuasion repeat after them. "The decisions of the committee shall become effective only after they have been referred to all the circles" (*Svoboda*, No. 1, p. 67). Observe that this proposal for a widely applied referendum is advanced *in addition* to the demand that *the whole* of the organisation be built on an elective basis! We would not, of course, on this account condemn practical workers who have had too few opportunities for studying the theory and practice of real democratic organisations. But when *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which lays claim to leadership, confines itself, under such conditions, to a resolution on broad democratic principles, can this be described as anything but a mere "striving for effect"?

F. Local and All-Russia Work

The objections raised against the plan of organisation here outlined on the grounds that it is undemocratic and conspiratorial are totally unsound. Nevertheless, there remains a question which is frequently put and which deserves detailed examination. This is the question of the relations

between local work and all-Russia work. Fears are expressed that the formation of a centralised organisation may shift the centre of gravity from the former to the latter, damage the movement through weakening our contacts with the working masses and the continuity of local agitation generally. To these fears we reply that our movement in the past few years has suffered precisely from the fact that local workers have been too absorbed in local work; that therefore it is absolutely necessary to shift the centre of gravity somewhat to national work; and that, far from weakening this would strengthen our ties and the continuity of our local agitation. Let us take the question of central and local newspapers. I would ask the reader not to forget that we cite the publication of newspapers only as *an example* illustrating an immeasurably broader and more varied revolutionary activity in general.

In the first period of the mass movement (1896–1898), an attempt was made by local revolutionary workers to publish an all-Russia paper—*Rabochaya Gazeta*. In the next period (1898–1900), the movement made an enormous stride forward, but the attention of the leaders was wholly absorbed by local publications. If we compute the total number of the local papers that were published, we shall find that on the average one issue per month was published.¹⁵ Does this not clearly illustrate our amateurism? Does this not clearly show that our revolutionary organisation lags behind the spontaneous growth of the movement? If *the same number* of issues had been published, not by scattered local groups, but by a single organisation, we would not only have saved an enormous amount of effort, but we would have secured immeasurably greater stability and continuity in our work. This simple point is frequently lost sight of by those practical workers who work *actively* and almost exclusively on local publications (unfortunately this is true even now in the overwhelming majority of cases), as well as by the publicists who display an astonishing quixotism on this question. The practical workers usually rest content with the argument that “it is difficult”¹⁶ for local workers to engage in the organisation of an all-Russia newspaper, and that local newspapers are better than no newspapers at all. This argument is, of course, perfectly just, and we, no less than any practical worker, appreciate the enormous importance and usefulness of local newspapers *in general*. But not this is the point. The point is, can we not overcome the fragmentation and primitiveness that are so glaringly expressed in the thirty issues of local newspapers that have been published throughout Russia in the course of two and a half years? Do not restrict yourselves to the indisputable, but too general, statement about the usefulness of local newspapers generally; have the courage frankly to admit their negative aspects revealed by the experience of two and a half years. This experience has shown that under the conditions in which we work, these local newspapers

prove, in the majority of cases, to be unstable in their principles, devoid of political significance, extremely costly in regard to expenditure of revolutionary forces, and totally unsatisfactory from a technical point of view (I have in mind, of course, not the technique of printing, but the frequency and regularity of publication). These defects are riot accidental; they are the inevitable outcome of the fragmentation which, on the one hand, explains the predominance of local newspapers in the period under review, and, on the other, is *fostered* by this predominance. It is positively beyond the strength of a separate local organisation to raise its newspaper to the level of a political organ maintaining stability of principles; it is *beyond its strength* to collect and utilise sufficient material to shed light on the whole of our political life. The argument usually advanced to support the need for numerous local newspapers in free countries that the cost of printing by local workers is low and that the people can be kept more fully and quickly informed—this argument as experience has shown, speaks *against* local newspapers in Russia. They turn out to be excessively costly in regard to the expenditure of revolutionary forces, and appear very rarely, for the simple reason that the publication of an *illegal* newspaper, however small its size, requires an extensive secret apparatus, such as is possible with large-scale factory production; for this apparatus cannot be created in a small, handicraft workshop. Very frequently, the primitiveness of the secret apparatus (every practical worker can cite numerous cases) enables the police to take advantage of the publication and distribution of one or two issues to make *mass* arrests, which result in such a clean sweep that it becomes necessary to start all over again. A well-organised secret apparatus requires professionally well-trained revolutionaries and a division of labour applied with the greatest consistency, but both these requirements are beyond the strength of a separate local organisation, however strong it may be at any given moment. Not only the general interests of our movement as a whole (training of the workers in consistent socialist and political principles) but also specifically local interests are *better served by non-local newspapers*. This may seem paradoxical at first sight, but it has been proved to the hilt by the two and a half years of experience referred to. Everyone will agree that had all the local forces that were engaged in the publication of the thirty issues of newspapers worked on a single newspaper, sixty, if not a hundred, issues could easily have been published, with a fuller expression, in consequence, of all the specifically local features of the movement. True, it is no easy matter to attain such a degree of organisation, but we must realise the need for it. Every local study circle must think about it and *work actively* to achieve it, without waiting for an impetus from outside, without being tempted by the

popularity and closer proximity of a local newspaper which, as our revolutionary experience has shown, proves to a large extent to be illusory.

And it is a bad service indeed those publicists render to the practical work who, thinking themselves particularly (close to the practical workers, fail to see this illusoriness, and make shift with the astoundingly hollow and cheap argument that we must have local newspapers, we must have district newspapers, and we must have all-Russia newspapers. Generally speaking, of course, all these are necessary, but once the solution of a concrete organisational problem is undertaken, surely time and circumstances must be taken into consideration. Is it not quixotic for *Svoboda* (No. 1, p. 68) to write in a special article “dealing with *the question of a newspaper*”: “It seems to us that every locality, with any appreciable number of workers, should have its own workers’ newspaper; not a newspaper imported from somewhere, but its very own.” If the publicist who wrote these words refuses to think of their meaning, then at least the reader may do it for him. How many scores, if not hundreds, of “localities” with any appreciable number of workers there are in Russia, and what a perpetuation of our amateurish methods this would mean if indeed every local organisation set about publishing its own. newspaper! How this diffusion would facilitate the gendarmerie’s task of netting—and without “any appreciable” effort—the local revolutionary workers at the very outset of their activity and of preventing them from developing into real revolutionaries. A reader of an all-Russia newspaper, continues the author, would find little interest in the descriptions of the malpractices of the factory owners and the “details of factory life in various towns not his own.” But “an inhabitant of Orel would not find Orel affairs dull reading. In every issue he would learn who had been ‘picked for a lambasting’ and who had been ‘flayed’, and he would be in high spirits” (p. 69). Certainly, the Orel reader is in high spirits, but our publicist’s flights of imagination are also high—too high. He should have asked himself whether such concern with trivialities is tactically in order. We are second to none in appreciating the importance and necessity of factory exposures, but it must be borne in mind that we have reached a stage when St. Petersburg folk find it dull reading the St. Petersburg correspondence of the St. Petersburg *Rabochaya Mysl*. Leaflets are the medium through which local factory exposures have always been *and must continue* to be made, but we must raise the level of the *newspaper*, not lower it to the level of a factory leaflet. What we ask of a newspaper is not so much “petty” exposures, as exposures of the major, typical evils of factory life, exposures based on especially striking facts and capable, therefore, of arousing the interest of all workers and all leaders of the movement, of really enriching

their knowledge, broadening their outlook, and serving as a starting-point for awakening new districts and workers from ever-newer trade areas.

“Moreover, in a local newspaper, all the malpractices of the factory administration and other authorities may be denounced then and there. In the case of a general, distant newspaper, however, by the time the news reaches it the facts will have been forgotten in the source localities. The reader, on getting the paper, will exclaim: ‘When was that—who remembers it?’” (*ibid.*). Precisely—who remembers it! From the same source we learn that the 30 issues of newspapers which appeared in the course of two and a half years were published in six cities. This averages *one issue per city per half-year!* And even if our frivolous publicist *trebled* his estimate of the productivity of local work (which would be wrong in the case of an average town, since it is impossible to increase productivity to any considerable extent by our rule-of-thumb methods), we would still get only one issue every two months, i.e., nothing at all like “denouncing then and there.” It would suffice, however, for ten local organisations to combine and send their delegates to take an active part in organising a general newspaper, to enable us every fortnight to “denounce,” over the *whole of Russia*, not petty, but really outstanding and typical evils. No one who knows the state of affairs in our organisations can have the slightest doubt on that score. As for catching the enemy red-handed—if we mean it seriously and not merely as a pretty phrase—that is quite beyond the ability of an illegal paper generally. It can be done only by a leaflet, because the time limit for exposures of that nature can be a day or two at the most (e.g., the usual brief strikes, violent factory clashes, demonstrations, etc.).

“The workers live not only at the factory, but also in the city,” continues our author, rising from the particular to the general, with a strict consistency that would have done honour to Boris Krichevsky himself; and he refers to matters like municipal councils, municipal hospitals, municipal schools, and demands that workers’ newspapers should not ignore municipal affairs in general.

This demand—excellent in itself—serves as a particularly vivid illustration of the empty abstraction to which discussions of local newspapers are all too frequently limited. In the first place, if indeed newspapers appeared “in every locality with any appreciable number of workers” with such detailed information on municipal affairs as *Svoboda* desires, this would, under our Russian conditions, inevitably degenerate into actual concern with trivialities, lead to a weakening of the consciousness of the importance of an all-Russia revolutionary assault upon the tsarist autocracy, and strengthen the extremely virile shoots—not uprooted but rather hidden or temporarily suppressed—of the tendency that has become noted as a result of the

famous remark about revolutionaries who talk a great deal about non-existent parliaments and too little about existent municipal councils. We say “inevitably,” in order to emphasise that *Svoboda* obviously does not desire this, but the contrary, to come about. But good intentions are not enough. For municipal affairs to be dealt with in their proper perspective, in relation to our entire work, this perspective must *first* be clearly conceived, firmly established, not only by argument, but by numerous examples, so that it may acquire the stability of a *tradition*. This is still far from being the case with us. Yet this must be done *first*, before we can allow ourselves to think and talk about an extensive local press.

Secondly, to write really well and interestingly about municipal affairs, one must have first-hand knowledge, not book knowledge, of the issues. But there are hardly any Social-Democrats *anywhere in Russia* who possess such knowledge. To be able to write in newspapers (not in popular pamphlets) about municipal and state affairs, one must have fresh and varied material gathered and written up by able people. And in order to be able to gather and write up such material, we must have something more than the “primitive democracy” of a primitive circle, in which everybody does everything and all entertain themselves by playing at referendums. It is necessary to have a staff of expert writers and correspondents, an army of Social-Democratic reporters who establish contacts far and wide, who are able to fathom all sorts of “state secrets” (the knowledge of which makes the Russian government official so puffed up, but the blabbing of which is such an easy matter to him), who are able to penetrate “behind the scenes”—an army of people who must, as their “official duty,” be ubiquitous and omniscient. And we, the Party that fights against all economic, political, social, and national oppression, can and must find, gather, train, mobilise, and set into motion such an army of omniscient people—all of which requires still to be done. Not only has not a single step in this direction been taken in the overwhelming majority of localities, but even the recognition of its necessity is very often lacking. One will search in vain in our Social-Democratic press for lively and interesting articles, correspondence, and exposures dealing with our big and little affairs—diplomatic, military, ecclesiastical, municipal, financial, etc., etc. There is *almost nothing*, or very little, about these matters.¹⁷ That is why “it always annoys me frightfully when a man comes to me, utters beautiful and charming words” about the need for newspapers in “every locality with any appreciable number of workers” that will expose factory, municipal, and government evils.

The predominance of the local papers over a central press may be a sign of either poverty or luxury. Of poverty, when the movement has not yet developed the forces for large-scale production, continues to flounder in

amateurism, and is all but swamped with “the petty details of factory life.” Of luxury, when the movement *has fully mastered* the task of comprehensive exposure and comprehensive agitation, and it becomes necessary to publish numerous local newspapers in addition to the central organ. Let each decide for himself what the predominance of local newspapers implies in present-day Russia. I shall limit myself to a precise formulation of my own conclusion, to leave no grounds for misunderstanding. Hitherto, the majority of our local organisations have thought almost exclusively in terms of local newspapers, and have devoted almost all their activities to this work. This is abnormal; the very opposite should have been the case. The majority of the local organisations should think principally of the publication of an all-Russia newspaper and devote their activities chiefly to it. Until this is done, we shall not be able to establish a *single* newspaper capable, to any degree, of serving the movement with *comprehensive* press agitation. When this is done, however, normal relations between the necessary central newspaper and the necessary local newspapers will be established automatically.

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It would seem at first glance that the conclusion on the necessity for shifting the centre of gravity from local to all-Russia work does not apply to the sphere of the specifically economic struggle. In this struggle, the immediate enemies of the workers are the individual employers or groups of employers, who are not bound by any organisation having even the remotest resemblance to the purely military, strictly centralised organisation of the Russian Government—our immediate enemy in the political struggle—which is led in all its minutest details by a single will.

But that is not the case. As we have repeatedly pointed out, the economic struggle is a trade struggle, and for that reason it requires that the workers be organised according to trades, not only according to place of employment. Organisation by trades becomes all the more urgently necessary, the more rapidly our employers organise in all sorts of companies and syndicates. Our fragmentation and our amateurism are an outright hindrance to this work of organisation which requires the existence of a single, all-Russia body of revolutionaries capable of giving leadership to the all-Russia trade unions. We have described above the type of organisation that is needed for this purpose; we shall now add but a few words on the question of our press in this connection.

Hardly anyone will doubt the necessity for every Social-Democratic newspaper to have a *special department* devoted to the trade union (economic)

struggle. But the growth of the trade union movement compels us to think about the creation of a trade union press. It seems to us, however, that with rare exceptions, there can be no question of trade union newspapers in Russia at the present time; they would be a luxury, and many a time we lack even our daily bread. The form of trade union press that would suit the conditions of our illegal work and is already required at the present time is *trade union pamphlets*. In these pamphlets, *legal*¹⁸ and illegal material should be gathered and grouped systematically, on the working conditions in a given trade, on the differences in this respect in the various parts of, Russia; on the main demands advanced by the workers in the given trade; on the inadequacies of legislation affecting that trade; on outstanding instances of economic struggle by the workers in the trade; on the beginnings, the present state, and the requirements of their trade union organisation, etc. Such pamphlets would, in the first place, relieve our Social-Democratic press of a mass of trade details that are of interest only to workers in the given trade. Secondly, they would record the results of our experience in the trade union struggle, they would preserve the gathered material, which now literally gets lost in a mass of leaflets and fragmentary correspondence; and they would summarise this material. Thirdly, they could serve as guides for agitators, because working conditions change relatively slowly and the main demands of the workers in a given trade are extremely stable (cf., for example, the demands advanced by the weavers in the Moscow district in 1885 and in the St. Petersburg district in 1896). A compilation of such demands and needs might serve for years as an excellent handbook for agitators on economic questions in backward localities or among the backward strata of the workers. Examples of successful strikes in a given region, information on higher living standards, on improved working conditions, in one locality, would encourage the workers in other localities to take up the fight again and again. Fourthly, having made a start in generalising the trade union struggle and in this way strengthening the link between the Russian trade union movement and socialism, the Social-Democrats would at the same time see to it that our trade union work occupied neither too small nor too large a place in our Social-Democratic work as a whole. A local organisation that is cut off from organisations in other towns finds it very difficult, sometimes almost impossible, to maintain a correct sense of proportion (the example of *Rabochaya Mysl* shows what a monstrous exaggeration can be made in the direction of trade-unionism) But an all-Russia organisation of revolutionaries that stands undeviatingly on the basis of Marxism, that leads the entire political struggle and possesses a staff of professional agitators, will never find it difficult to determine the proper proportion.

Notes

1. *Rabochaya Mysl* and *Rabocheye Dyelo*, especially the *Reply* to Plekhanov. —*Lenin*
2. See “Who Will Bring About the Political Revolution?” in the collection published in Russia, entitled *The Proletarian Struggle*. Re-issued by the Kiev Committee. —*Lenin*
3. *Regeneration of Revolutionism* and the journal *Svoboda*. —*Lenin*
4. See *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 18 —*Ed.*
5. German “loose.” —*Ed.*
6. *Iskra’s* campaign against the tares evoked the following angry outburst from *Rabocheye Dyelo*: “For *Iskra*, the signs of the times lie not so much in great events [of the spring], as in the miserable attempts of the agents of Zubatov to ‘legalise’ the working-class movement. It fails to see that these facts tell against it; for they testify that the working-class movement has assumed menacing proportions in the eyes of the government” (*Two Conferences*, p. 27). For all this we have to blame the “dogmatism” of the orthodox who “turn a deaf ear to the imperative demands of life.” They obstinately refuse to see the yard-high wheat and are combating inch-high tares! Does this not reveal a “distorted sense of perspective in regard to the Russian working-class movement” (*ibid.*, p. 27)? —*Lenin*
7. Of wages earned. —*Tr.*
8. For the moment let us observe merely that our remarks on “pushing on from outside” and *Svoboda’s* other disquisitions on organisation apply in *their entirety* to all the Economists, including the adherents of *Rabocheye Dyelo*; for some of them have actively preached and defended such views on organisation, while others among them have drifted into them. —*Lenin*
9. This term is perhaps more applicable to *Svoboda* than the former, for in an article entitled “The Regeneration of Revolutionism” the publication defends terrorism, while in the article at present under review it defends Economism. One might say of *Svoboda* that “it would if it could, but it can’t.” Its wishes and intentions are of the very best—but the result is utter confusion; this is chiefly due to the fact that, while *Svoboda* advocates continuity of organisation, it refuses to recognise continuity of revolutionary thought and Social-Democratic theory. It wants to revive the professional revolutionary (“The Regeneration of Revolutionism”), and to that end proposes, first, excitative terrorism, and, secondly,—an organisation of average workers” (*Svoboda*, No. 1, p. 66, et seq.), as less likely to be “pushed on from outside.” In other words, it proposes to pull the house down to use the timber for heating it. —*Lenin*
10. Thus, an undoubted revival of the democratic spirit has recently been observed among persons in military service, partly as a consequence of the more frequent street battles with “enemies” like workers and students. As soon as our available forces permit, we must without fail devote the most serious attention to propaganda and agitation among soldiers and officers, and to the creation of “military organisations” affiliated to our Party. —*Lenin*
11. I recall that once a comrade told me of a factory inspector who wanted to help the Social-Democrats, and actually did, but complained bitterly that he did not know whether his “information” reached the proper revolutionary centre,

how much his help was really required, and what possibilities there were for utilising his small and petty services. Every practical worker can, of course, cite many similar instances in which our primitiveness deprived us of allies. These services, each “small” in itself, but invaluable when taken in the mass, could and would be rendered to us by office employees and officials, not only in factories, but in the postal service, on the railways, in the Customs, among the nobility, among the clergy, and in *every* other walk of life, including even the police and the Court! Had we a real party, a real militant organisation of revolutionaries, we would not make undue demands on every one of these “aides,” we would not hasten always and invariably to bring them right into the very heart of our “illegality,” but, on the contrary, we would husband them most carefully and would even train people especially for such functions, bearing in mind that many students could be of much greater service to the Party as “aides” holding some official post than as “short-term” revolutionaries. But, I repeat, only an organisation that is firmly established and has no lack of active forces would have the right to apply such tactics. —*Lenin*

12. *Svoboda*, No. 1, p. 66, in the article “Organisation”: “The heavy tread of the army of workers will reinforce all the demands that will be advanced in behalf of Russian Labour”—Labour with a capital L, of course. And the author exclaims: “I am not in the least hostile towards the intelligentsia, but [but—the word that Shchedrin translated as meaning: The ears never grow higher than the forehead!]—but I always get frightfully annoyed when a man comes to me uttering beautiful and charming words and demands that they be accepted for their [his?] beauty and other virtues” (p. 62). Yes, I always get “frightfully annoyed,” too. —*Lenin*
13. Cf. *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*, p. 21, polemics against P. L. Lavrov. (See *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 340–41. —Ed.)—*Lenin*
14. *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*, p. 23. (See *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 342. —Ed.) Apropos, we shall give another illustration of the fact that *Rabocheye Dyelo* either does not understand what it is talking about or changes its views “with the wind.” In No. 1 of *Rabocheye Dyelo*, we find the following passage in italics: “The substance set forth in the pamphlet accords entirely with the editorial programme of *Rabocheye Dyelo*” (p. 142). Really? Does the view that the overthrow of the autocracy must not be set as the first task of the mass movement accord with the views expressed in *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*? Do the theory of “the economic struggle against the employers and the government” and the stages theory accord with the views expressed in that pamphlet? We leave it to the reader to judge whether a periodical that understands the meaning of “accordance in opinion” in this peculiar manner can have firm principles. —*Lenin*
15. See *Report to the Paris Congress*,²⁴ p. 14. From that time (1897) to the spring of 1900, thirty issues of various papers were published in various places. . . . On an average, over one issue per month was published.”—*Lenin*
16. This difficulty is more apparent than real. In fact, *there is not* a single local study circle that lacks the opportunity of taking up some function or other in connection with all-Russia work. “Don’t say, I can’t; say, I won’t.”—*Lenin*
17. That is why even examples of exceptionally good local newspapers fully confirm our point of view. For example, *Yuzhny Rabochy*²⁵ is an excellent newspa-

per, entirely free of instability of principle. But it has been unable to provide what it desired for the local movement, owing to the infrequency of its publication and to extensive police raids. Principled presentation of the fundamental questions of the movement and wide political agitation, which our Party most urgently requires at the present time, has proved too big a job for the local newspaper. The material of particular value it has published, like the articles on the mine owners' convention and on unemployment, was not strictly local material, *it was required for the whole of Russia*, not for the South alone. No such articles have appeared in any of our Social-Democratic newspapers. —*Lenin*

18. Legal material is particularly important in this connection, and we are particularly behind in our ability to gather and utilise it systematically. It would not be an exaggeration to say that one could somehow compile a trade union pamphlet on the basis solely of legal material, but it could not be done on the basis of illegal material alone. In gathering illegal material from Workers oil questions like those dealt with in the publications of *Rabochaya Mysl*, we waste a great deal of the efforts of revolutionaries (whose place in this work could very easily be taken by legal workers), and yet we never obtain good material. The reason is that a worker who very often knows only a single department of a large factory and almost always the economic results, but not the general conditions and standards of his work, cannot acquire the knowledge which is possessed by the office staff of a factory, by inspectors, doctors, etc., and which is scattered in petty newspaper reports and in special industrial, medical, Zemstvo, and other publications.

I vividly recall my "first experiment," which I would never like to repeat. I spent many weeks "examining" a worker, who would often visit me, regarding every aspect of the conditions prevailing in the enormous factory at which he was employed. True, after great effort, I managed to obtain material for a description (of the one single factory!), but at the end of the interview the worker would wipe the sweat from his brow, and say to me smilingly: 'I find it easier to work overtime than to answer your questions.'

The more energetically we carry on our revolutionary struggle, the more the government will be compelled to legalise part of the "trade union" work, thereby relieving us of part of our burden. —*Lenin*

19. The full name of this small organisation was *Workers' Group for the Struggle Against Capital*; its views were close to those of the "Economists." The group was formed in St. Petersburg in the spring of 1899; it prepared a mimeographed leaflet, "Our Programme," which was never circulated, owing to the arrest of the group.
20. *N. N.*—pseudonym of S. N. Prokopovich, an active "Economist" who later became a Cadet.
21. *Vasilyev, N. V.*—Colonel of the Gendarmes, supporter of the Zubatov "police socialism."
- Ozerov, I. Kh. and Worms, A. E.* —professors at Moscow University, spokesmen for the "police socialism" of Zubatov.
22. *Afanasy Ivanovich and Pulkheria Ivanovna*—a patriarchal family of petty provincial landlords in Gogol's *Old-Time Landowners*.
23. Lenin refers here to his own revolutionary activity in St. Petersburg in 1893–95.

24. The reference is to the pamphlet *Report on the Russian Social-Democratic Movement to International Socialist Congress in Paris, 1900*. The Report was submitted to the Congress by the Editorial Board of *Rabocheye Dyelo* on behalf of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad and was published as a separate pamphlet in Geneva in 1901; the pamphlet also contained the report of the Bund (“The History of the Jewish Working-Class Movement in Russia and Poland”).
25. *Yuzhny Rabochy (The Southern Worker)*—a Social-Democratic newspaper, illegally published from January 1900 to April 1903 by a group of that name; twelve issues appeared.

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V

The “Plan” for an All-Russia Political Newspaper

“The most serious blunder *Iskra* committed in this connection” writes B. Krichevsky (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, p. 30), charging us with a tendency to “convert theory into a lifeless doctrine by isolating it from practice,” “was its ‘plan’ for a general party organisation” (viz., the article entitled “Where To Begin”¹). Martynov echoes this idea in declaring that “*Iskra*’s tendency to belittle the significance of the forward march of the drab everyday struggle in comparison with the propaganda of brilliant and completed ideas . . . was crowned with the plan for the organisation of a party which it sets forth in the article entitled ‘Where To Begin’ in issue No. 4” (*ibid.*, p. 61). Finally, L. Nadezhdin has of late joined in the chorus of indignation against this “plan” (the quotation marks were meant to express sarcasm). In his pamphlet, which we have just received, entitled *The Eve of the Revolution* (published by the “Revolutionary-Socialist Group” *Svoboda*, whose acquaintance we have made), he declares (p. 126): “To speak now of an organisation held together by an all-Russia newspaper means propagating armchair ideas and armchair work” and represents a manifestation of “bookishness,” etc.

That our terrorist turns out to be in agreement with the champions of the “forward march of the drab everyday struggle” is not surprising, since we have traced the roots of this intimacy between them in the chapters on politics and organisation. But must draw attention here to the fact that Nadezhdin is the only one who has conscientiously tried to grasp the train of thought in an article he disliked and has made an attempt to reply to the point, whereas *Rabocheye Dyelo*, has said nothing that is material to the subject, but has tried merely to confuse the question by a series of unseemly, demagogic sallies. Unpleasant though the task may be, we must first spend some time in cleansing this Augean stable.

A. Who Was Offended by the Article “Where to Begin”

Let us present a small selection of the expletives and exclamations that *Rabocheye Dyelo* hurled at us. “It is not a newspaper that can create a party organisation, but vice versa. . . .” A newspaper, standing above the party, outside of its control, and independent of it, thanks to its having its own staff of agents. “By what miracle has *Iskra* forgotten about the actually existing Social-Democratic organisations of the party to which it belongs? . . .” “Those who possess firm principles and a corresponding plan are the supreme regulators of the real struggle of the party and dictate to it their plan. . . .” “The plan drives our active and virile organisations into the kingdom of shadows and desires to call into being a fantastic network of agents. . . .” “Were *Iskra*’s plan carried into effect, every trace of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, which is taking shape, would be obliterated. . . .” “A propagandist organ becomes an uncontrolled autocratic law-maker for the entire practical revolutionary struggle. . . .” “How should our Party react to the suggestion that it be *completely* subordinated to an autonomous editorial board?” etc., etc.

As the reader can see from the contents and the tone of these above quotations, *Rabocheye Dyelo* has taken offence. Offence, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the organisations and committees of our Party which it alleges *Iskra* desires to drive into the kingdom of shadows and whose very traces it would obliterate. How terrible! But a curious thing should be noted. The article “Where To Begin” appeared in May 1901. The articles in *Rabocheye Dyelo* appeared in September 1901. Now we are in mid-January 1902. During these five months (prior to and after September), *not a single* committee and *not a single* organisation of the Party protested formally against this monster that seeks to drive them into the kingdom of shadows; and yet scores and hundreds of communications from all parts of Russia have appeared during this period in *Iskra*, as well as in numerous local and non-local publications. How could it happen that those who would be driven into the realm of shadows are not aware of it and have not taken offence, though a third party has?

The explanation is that the committees and other organisations are engaged in real work and are not playing at “democracy.” The committees read the article “Where To Begin,” saw that it represented an attempt “to elaborate a definite plan for an organisation, so *that its formation may be undertaken from all aspects*”; and since they knew and saw very well that *not one* of these “sides” would dream of “setting about to build it” until it was convinced of its necessity, and of the correctness of the architectural plan, it has naturally never occurred to them to take offence at the boldness of

the people who said in *Iskra*: "In view of the pressing importance of the question we, on our part, take the liberty of submitting to the comrades a skeleton plan to be developed in greater detail in a pamphlet now in preparation for the print." With a conscientious approach to the work, was it possible to view things otherwise than that if the comrades *accepted* the plan submitted to them, they would carry it out, not because they are "subordinate," but because they would be convinced of its necessity for our common cause, and that if they *did not accept it*, then the "skeleton" (a pretentious word, is it not?) would remain merely a skeleton? Is it not demagoguery to fight against the skeleton of a plan, not only by "picking it to pieces" and advising comrades to reject it, but by *inciting* people inexperienced in revolutionary matters against its authors *merely on the grounds* that they *dare* to "legislate" and come out as the "supreme regulators," i.e., because they *dare to propose* an outline of a plan? Can our Party develop and make progress if an attempt *to raise* local functionaries to broader views, tasks, plans, etc., is objected to, not only with the claim that these views are erroneous, but on the grounds that the very "desire" *to "raise"* us gives "offence"? Nadezhdin, too, "picked" our plan "to pieces," but he did not sink to such demagoguery as cannot be explained solely by naivete or by primitiveness of political views. From the outset, he emphatically rejected the charge that we intended to establish an "inspectorship over the Party." That is why Nadezhdin's criticism of the plan can and should be answered on its merits, while *Rabocheye Dyelo* deserves only to be treated with contempt.

But contempt for a writer who sinks so low as to shout about autocracy and "subordination" does not relieve us of the duty of disentangling the confusion that such people create in the minds of their readers. Here we can clearly demonstrate to the world the nature of catchwords like "broad democracy." We are accused of forgetting the committees, of desiring or attempting to drive them into the kingdom of shadows, etc. How can we reply to these charges when, out of considerations of secrecy, we can give the reader *almost no facts* regarding our real relationships with the committees? Persons hurling vehement accusations calculated to provoke the crowd prove to be ahead of us because of their brazenness and their disregard of the duty of a revolutionary to conceal carefully from the eyes of the world the relationships and contacts which he maintains, which he is establishing or trying to establish. Naturally, we refuse once and for all to compete with such people in the field of "democratism." As to the reader who is not initiated in all Party affairs, the only way in which we can discharge our duty to him is to acquaint him, not with what is and what is *im Werden* but with *a particle* of what has taken place and what may be told as a thing of the past.

The Bund hints that we are “impostors”²; the Union Abroad accuses us of attempting to obliterate all traces of the Party. Gentlemen, you will get complete satisfaction when we relate to the public *four facts* concerning the past.

First fact.³ The members of one of the Leagues of Struggle, who took a direct part in founding our Party and in sending a delegate to the Inaugural Party Congress, reached agreement with a member of the *Iskra* group regarding the publication of a series of books for workers that were to serve the entire movement. The attempt to publish the series failed and the pamphlets written for it, *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats* and *The New Factory Law*,⁴ by a circuitous course and through the medium of third parties, found their way abroad, where they were published.¹⁴

Second fact. Members of the Central Committee of the Bund approached a member of the *Iskra* group with the proposal to organise what the Bund then described as a “literary laboratory.” In making the proposal, they stated that unless this was done, the movement would greatly retrogress. The result of these negotiations was the appearance of the pamphlet *The Working-Class Cause in Russia*.⁵

Third fact. The Central Committee of the Bund, via a provincial town, approached a member of the *Iskra* group with the proposal that he undertake the editing of the revived *Rabochaya Gazeta* and, of course, obtained his consent. The offer was later modified: the comrade in question was invited to act as a contributor, in view of a new plan for the composition of the Editorial Board. Also this proposal, of course, obtained his consent.¹⁵ Articles were sent (which we managed to preserve): “Our Programme” which was a direct protest against Bernsteinism, against the change in the line of the legal literature and of *Rabochaya Mysl*; “Our Immediate Task” (“to publish a Party organ that shall appear regularly and have close contacts with all the local groups,” the drawbacks of the prevailing “amateurism”), “An Urgent Question” (an examination of the objection that it is necessary *first* to develop the activities of local groups before undertaking the publication of a common organ; an insistence on the paramount importance of a “revolutionary organisation” and on the necessity of “developing organisation, discipline, and the technique of secrecy to the highest degree of perfection”).⁶ The proposal to resume publication of *Rabochaya Gazeta* was not carried out, and the articles were not published.

Fourth fact. A member of the committee that was organising the second regular congress of our Party communicated to a member of the *Iskra* group the programme of the congress and proposed that group as editorial board of the revived *Rabochaya Gazeta*. This preliminary step, as it were,

was later sanctioned by the committee to which this member belonged, and by the Central Committee of the Bund.¹⁶ The *Iskra* group was notified of the place and time of the congress and (uncertain of being able, for certain reasons, to send a delegate) drew up a written report for the congress. In the report, the idea was suggested that the mere election of a Central Committee would not only fail to solve the question of unification at a time of such complete disorder as the present, but would even compromise the grand idea of establishing a party, in the event of an early, swift, and thorough police round-up, which was more than likely in view of the prevailing lack of secrecy; that therefore, a beginning should be made by inviting all committees and all other organisations to support the revived common organ, which would establish *real* contacts between all the committees and *really* train a group of leaders for the entire movement; and that the committees and the Party would very easily be able to transform such a group into a Central Committee as soon as the group had grown and become strong. In consequence of a number of police raids and arrests, however, the congress could not take place. For security reasons the report was destroyed, having been read only by a few comrades, including the representatives of one committee.

Let the reader now judge for himself the character of the methods employed by the Bund in hinting that we were impostors, or by *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which accuses us of trying to relegate the committees to the kingdom of shadows and to “substitute” for the organisation of a party an organisation disseminating the ideas advocated by a single newspaper. It was to the committees, *on their repeated invitation*, that we reported on the necessity for adopting a definite plan of concerted activities. It was precisely for the Party organisation that we elaborated this plan, in articles sent to *Rabochaya Gazeta*, and in the report to the Party congress, again on the invitation of those who held such an influential position in the Party that they took the initiative in its (actual) restoration. Only after the *twice* repeated attempts of the Party organisation, *in conjunction with ourselves, officially* to revive the central organ of the Party had failed, did we consider it our bounden duty to publish an *unofficial* organ, in order that with the *third* attempt the comrades might have before them the results of *experience* and not merely conjectural proposals. Now certain results of this experience are present for all to see, and all comrades may now judge whether we properly understood our duties and what should be thought of people that strive to mislead those unacquainted with the immediate past, simply because they are piqued at our having pointed out to some their inconsistency on the “national” question, and to others the inadmissibility of their vacillation in matters of principle.

B. Can a Newspaper Be a Collective Organiser?

The quintessence of the article “Where To Begin” consists in the fact that it discusses *precisely* this question and gives an affirmative reply to it. As far as we know, the only attempt to examine this question on its merits and to prove that it must be answered in the negative was made by L. Nadezhdin, whose argument we reproduce in full:

“... It pleased us greatly to see *Iskra* (No. 4) present the question of the need for an all-Russia newspaper; but we cannot agree that this presentation bears relevance to the title ‘Where To Begin’. Undoubtedly this is an extremely important matter, but neither a newspaper, nor a series of popular leaflets, nor a mountain of manifestoes, can serve as the basis for a militant organisation in revolutionary times. We must set to work to build strong political organisations in the localities. We lack such organisations; we have been carrying on our work mainly among enlightened workers, while the masses have been engaged almost exclusively in the economic struggle. *If strong political organisations are not trained locally, what significance will even an excellently organised all-Russia newspaper have?* It will be a burning bush, burning without being consumed, but firing no one! *Iskra* thinks that around it and in the activities in its behalf people will gather and organise. *But they will find it far easier to gather and organise around activities that are more concrete.* This something more concrete must and should be the extensive organisation of local newspapers, the immediate preparation of the workers’ forces for demonstrations, the constant activity of local organisations among the unemployed (indefatigable distribution of pamphlets and leaflets, convening of meetings, appeals to actions of protest against the government, etc.). We must begin live political work in the localities, and when the time comes to unite on this real basis, it will not be an artificial, paper unity; not by means of newspapers can such a unification of local work into an all-Russia cause be achieved!” (*The Eve of the Revolution*, p. 54)

We have emphasised the passages in this eloquent tirade that most clearly show the author’s incorrect judgement of our plan, as well as the incorrectness of his point of view in general, which is here contraposed to that of *Iskra*. Unless we train strong political organisations in the localities, even an excellently organised all-Russia newspaper will be of no avail. This is incontrovertible. But the whole point is that *there is no other way of training* strong political organisations except through the medium of an all-Russia newspaper. The author missed the most important statement *Iskra* made *before it proceeded* to set forth its “plan”: that it was necessary “to call for the formation of a revolutionary organisation, capable of uniting all forces and guiding the movement in actual practice and *not in name alone*, that is, *an organisation ready at any time to support every protest and every outbreak* and use it to build up and consolidate the fighting forces suitable for the decisive

struggle.” But now after the February and March events, everyone will agree with this in principle, continues *Iskra*. Yet what we need is not a solution of the question in principle, but its *practical solution*; we must immediately advance a definite constructive plan through which all may immediately set to work to build *from every side*. Now we are again being dragged away from the practical solution towards something which in principle is correct, indisputable, and great, but which is entirely inadequate and incomprehensible to the broad masses of workers, namely, “to rear strong political organisations”! This is not the point at issue, most worthy author. The point is how to go about the rearing and how to accomplish it.

It is not true to say that “we have been carrying on our work mainly among enlightened workers, while the masses have been engaged almost exclusively in the economic struggle.” Presented in such a form, the thesis reduces itself to *Svoboda*’s usual but fundamentally false contraposition of the enlightened workers to the “masses.” In recent years, even the enlightened workers have been “engaged almost exclusively in the economic struggle.” That is the first point. On the other hand, the masses will never learn to conduct the political struggle until we help *to train* leaders for this struggle, both from among the enlightened workers and from among the intellectuals. Such leaders can acquire training *solely* by systematically evaluating *all* the everyday aspects of our political life, *all attempts* at protest and struggle on the part of the various classes and on various grounds. Therefore, to talk of “rearing political organisations” and at the same time *to contrast* the “paper work” of a political newspaper to “live political work in the localities” is plainly ridiculous. *Iskra* has adapted its “plan” for a newspaper to the “plan” for creating a “militant preparedness” to support the unemployed movement, peasant revolts, discontent among, the Zemstvo people, “popular indignation against some tsarist bashi-bazouk on the rampage,” etc. Anyone who is at all acquainted with the movement knows full well that the vast majority of local organisations have *never even dreamed* of these things; that many of the prospects of “live political work” here indicated *have never* been realised by a single organisation; that the attempt, for example, to call attention to the growth of discontent and protest among the Zemstvo intelligentsia rouses feelings of consternation and perplexity in Nadezhdin (“Good Lord, is this newspaper intended for Zemstvo people?”—The *Eve*, p. 129), among the Economists (Letter to *Iskra*, No. 12), and among many practical workers. Under these circumstances, it is possible to “begin” *only* by inducing people *to think* about all these things, to summarise and generalise all the diverse signs of ferment and active struggle. In our time, when Social-Democratic tasks are being degraded, *the only way* “live political work” can be *begun* is with live political agitation, which

is impossible unless we have an all-Russia newspaper, frequently issued and regularly distributed.

Those who regard the *Iskra* “plan” as a manifestation of “bookishness” have totally failed to understand its substance and take for the goal that which is suggested as the most suitable means for the present time. These people have not taken the trouble to study the two comparisons that were drawn to present a clear illustration of the plan. *Iskra* wrote: The publication of an all-Russia political newspaper must be *the main line* by which we may unswervingly develop, deepen, and expand the organisation (viz., the revolutionary organisation that is ever ready to support every protest and every outbreak). Pray tell me, when bricklayers lay bricks in, various parts of an enormous, unprecedentedly large structure, is it “paper” work to use a line to help them find the correct place for the bricklaying; to indicate to them the ultimate goal of the common work; to enable them to use, not only every brick, but even every piece of brick which, cemented to the bricks laid before and after it, forms a finished, continuous line? And are we not now passing through precisely such a period in our Party life when we have bricks and bricklayers, but lack the guideline for all to see and follow? Let them shout that in stretching out the line, we want to command. Had we desired to command, gentlemen, we would have written on the title page, not “*Iskra*, No. 1,” but “*Rabochaya Gazeta*, No. 3,” as we were invited to do by certain comrades, and *as we would have had a perfect right to do* after the events described above. But we did not do that. We wished to have our hands free to wage an irreconcilable struggle against all pseudo-Social-Democrats; we wanted our line, if properly laid, to be respected because it was correct, and not because it had been laid by an official organ.

“The question of uniting local activity in central bodies runs in a vicious circle,” Nadezhdin lectures us; “unification requires homogeneity of the elements, and the homogeneity can be created only by something that unites; but the unifying element may be the product of strong local organisations which at the present time are by no means distinguished for their homogeneity.” This truth is as revered and as irrefutable as that we must train strong political organisations. And it is equally barren. *Every* question “runs in a vicious circle” because political life as a whole is an endless chain consisting of an infinite number of links. The whole art of politics lies in finding and taking as firm a grip as we can of the link that is least likely to be struck from our hands, the one that is most important at the given moment, the one that most of all guarantees its possessor the possession of the whole chain.⁷ If we had a crew of experienced bricklayers who had learned to work so well together that they could lay their bricks exactly as required without a guideline (which, speaking abstractly, is by no means impossible), then perhaps

we might take hold of some other link. But it is unfortunate that as yet we have no experienced bricklayers trained for teamwork, that bricks are often laid where they are not needed at all, that they are not laid according to the general line, but are so scattered that the enemy can shatter the structure as if it were made of sand and not of bricks.

Another comparison: “A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser. In this respect *it may be compared to the scaffolding* erected round a building under construction; it marks the contours of the structure and facilitates communication between the builders, permitting them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour.”⁸ Does this sound anything like the attempt of an armchair author to exaggerate his role? The scaffolding is not required at all for the dwelling; it is made of cheaper material, is put up only temporarily, and is scrapped for firewood as soon as the shell of the structure is completed. As for the building of revolutionary organisations, experience shows that sometimes they may be built without scaffolding, as the seventies showed. But at the present time we cannot even imagine the possibility of erecting the building we require without scaffolding.

Nadezhdin disagrees with this, saying: “*Iskra* thinks that around it and in the activities in its behalf people will gather and organise. *But they will find it far easier* to gather and organise around *activities that are more concrete!*” Indeed, “far easier around activities that are more concrete.” A Russian proverb holds: “Don’t spit into a well, you may want to drink from it.” But there are people who do not object to drinking from a well that has been spat into. What despicable things our magnificent, legal “Critics of Marxism” and illegal admirers of *Rabochaya Mysl* have said in the name of this something more concrete! How restricted our movement is by our own narrowness, lack of initiative, and hesitation, which are justified with the traditional argument about finding it “far easier to gather around something more concrete!” And Nadezhdin—who regards himself as possessing a particularly keen sense of the “realities of life,” who so severely condemns “armchair” authors and (with pretensions to wit) accuses *Iskra* of a weakness for seeing Economism everywhere, and who sees himself standing far above the division between the orthodox and the Critics—fails to see that with his arguments he contributes to the narrowness that arouses his indignation and that he is drinking from the most spat-in well! The sincerest indignation against narrowness, the most passionate desire to raise its worshippers from their knees, will not suffice if the indignant one is swept along without sail or rudder and, as “spontaneously” as the revolutionaries of the seventies, clutches at such things as “excitative terror,” “agrarian terror,” “sounding the tocsin etc. Let us take a glance

at these “more concrete” activities around which he thinks it will be “far easier” to gather and organise: (1) local newspapers; (2) preparations for demonstrations; (3) work among the unemployed. It is immediately apparent that all these things have been seized upon at random as a pretext for saying something; for, however we may regard them, it would be absurd to see in them anything especially suitable for “gathering and organising.” The selfsame Nadezhdin says a few pages further: “It is time we simply stated the fact that activity of a very pitiable kind is being carried on in the localities, the committees are not doing a tenth of what they could do . . . the coordinating centres we have at present are the purest fiction, representing a sort of revolutionary bureaucracy, whose members mutually grant generalships to one another; and so it will continue until strong local organisations grow up.” These remarks, though exaggerating the position somewhat, no doubt contain many a bitter truth; but can it be said that Nadezhdin does not perceive the connection between the pitiable activity in the localities and the narrow mental outlook of the functionaries, the narrow scope of their activities, inevitable in the circumstances of the lack of training of Party workers confined to local organisations? Has he, like the author of the article on organisation, published in *Svoboda*, forgotten how the transition to a broad local press (from 1898) was accompanied by a strong intensification of Economism and “primitiveness”? Even if a “broad local press” could be established at all satisfactorily (and we have shown this to be impossible, save in very, exceptional cases)—even then the local organs could not “gather and organise” *all* the revolutionary forces for a *general* attack upon the autocracy and for leadership of the *united* struggle. Let us not forget that we are here discussing *only* the “rallying,” organising significance of the newspaper, and we could put to Nadezhdin, who defends fragmentation, the question he himself has ironically put: “Have we been left a legacy of 200,000 revolutionary organisers?” Furthermore, “preparations for demonstrations” cannot be *contraposed* to *Iskra’s* plan, for the very reason that this plan includes the organisation of the broadest possible demonstrations *as one of its aims*; the point under discussion is the selection of the practical *means*. On this point also Nadezhdin is confused, for he has lost sight of the fact that only forces that are “gathered and organised” can “prepare for” demonstrations (which hitherto, in the overwhelming majority of cases, have taken place spontaneously) and that we *lack* precisely *the ability* to rally and organise. “Work among the unemployed.” Again the same confusion; for this too represents one of the field operations of the mobilised forces and not a plan for mobilising the forces. The extent to which Nadezhdin here too underestimates the harm caused by our fragmentation, by our lack of “200,000 organisers,”

can be seen from the fact that: many people (including Nadezhdin) have reproached *Iskra* for the paucity of the news it gives on unemployment and for the casual nature of the correspondence it publishes about the most common affairs of rural life. The reproach is justified; but *Iskra* is “guilty without sin.” We strive “to stretch a line” through the countryside too, where there are hardly any bricklayers anywhere, and we are *obliged* to encourage *everyone* who informs us even as regards the most common facts, in the hope that this will increase the number of our contributors in the given field and will ultimately *train us all* to select facts that are really the most outstanding. But the material on which we can train is so scanty that, unless we generalise it for the whole of Russia, we shall have very little to train on at all. No doubt, one with at least as much ability as an agitator and as much knowledge of the life of the vagrant as Nadezhdin manifests could render priceless service to the movement by carrying on agitation among the unemployed; but such a person would be simply hiding his light under a bushel if he failed to inform all comrades in Russia as regards every step he took in his work, so that others, who, in the mass, still lack the ability to undertake new kinds of work, might learn from his example.

All without exception now talk of the importance of unity, of the necessity for “gathering and organising”; but in the majority of cases what is lacking is a definite idea of where to begin and how to bring about this unity. Probably all will agree that if we “unite,” say, the district circles in a given town, it will be necessary to have for this purpose common institutions, i.e., not merely the common title of “League,” but genuinely common work, exchange of material, experience, and forces, distribution of functions, not only by districts, but through specialisation on a town-wide scale. All will agree that a big secret apparatus will not pay its way (to use a commercial expression) “with the resources” (in both money and manpower, of course) of a single district, and that this narrow field will not provide sufficient scope for a specialist to develop his talents. But the same thing applies to the co-ordination of activities of a number of towns, since even a specific locality will be and, in the history of our Social-Democratic movement, has proved to be, far too narrow a field; we have demonstrated this above in detail with regard to political agitation and organisational work. What we require foremost and imperatively is to broaden the field, establish real contacts between the towns on the basis of regular, common work; for fragmentation weighs down on the people and they are “stuck in a hole” (to use the expression employed by a correspondent to *Iskra*), not knowing what is happening in the world, from whom to learn, or how to acquire experience and satisfy their desire to engage in broad activities. I continue to insist that we can start establishing real contacts only with the aid of a common newspaper, as the only regular,

all-Russia enterprise, one which will summarise the results of the most diverse forms of activity and thereby stimulate people to march forward untiringly along all the innumerable paths leading to revolution, in the same way as all roads lead to Rome. If we do not want unity in name only, we must arrange for all local study circles immediately to assign, say, a fourth of their forces to active work for the common cause, and the newspaper will immediately convey to them⁹ the general design, scope, and character of the cause; it will give them a precise indication of the most keenly felt shortcomings in the all-Russia activity, where agitation is lacking and contacts are weak, and it will point out which little wheels in the vast general mechanism a given study circle might repair or replace with better ones. A study circle that has not yet begun to work, but which is only just seeking activity, could then start, not like a craftsman in an isolated little workshop unaware of the earlier development in “industry” or of the general level of production methods prevailing in industry, but as a participant in an extensive enterprise that reflects the whole general revolutionary attack on the autocracy. The more perfect the finish of each little wheel and the larger the number of detail workers engaged in the common cause, the closer will our network become and the less will be the disorder in the ranks consequent on inevitable police, raids.

The mere function of distributing a newspaper would help to establish actual contacts (if it is a newspaper worthy of the name, i.e., if it is issued regularly, not once a month like a magazine, but at least four times a month). At the present time, communication between towns on revolutionary business is an extreme rarity, and, at all events, is the exception rather than the rule. If we had a newspaper, however, such communication would become the rule and would secure, not only the distribution of the newspaper, of course, but (what is more important) an exchange of experience, of material, of forces, and of resources. Organisational work would immediately acquire much greater scope, and the success of one locality would serve as a standing encouragement to further perfection; it would arouse the desire to utilise the experience gained by comrades working in other parts of the country. Local work would become far richer and more varied than it is at present. Political and economic exposures gathered from all over Russia would provide mental food for workers of all trades and *all stages of development*; they would provide material and occasion for talks and readings on the most diverse subjects, which would, in addition, be suggested by hints in the legal press, by talk among the people, and by “shamefaced” government statements. Every outbreak, every demonstration, would be weighed and, discussed in its every aspect in all parts of Russia and would thus stimulate a desire to keep up with, and even surpass, the others (we socialists do not by any means flatly reject all emulation or all “competition”!) and

consciously prepare that which at first, as it were, sprang up spontaneously, a desire to take advantage of the favourable conditions in a given district or at a given moment for modifying the plan of attack, etc. At the same time, this revival of local work would obviate that desperate, “convulsive” exertion of all efforts and risking of *all* forces which every single demonstration or the publication of every single issue of a local newspaper now frequently entails. On the one hand, the police would find it much more difficult to get at the “roots,” if they did not know in what district to dig down for them. On the other hand, regular common work would train our people to adjust the force of a *given* attack to the strength of the given contingent of the common army (at the present time hardly anyone ever thinks of doing that, because in nine cases out of ten these attacks occur spontaneously); such regular common work would facilitate the “transportation” from one place to another, not only of literature, but also of revolutionary forces.

In a great many cases these forces are now being bled white on restricted local work, but under the circumstances we are discussing it would be possible to transfer a capable agitator or organiser from one end of the country to the other, and the occasion for doing this would constantly arise. Beginning with short journeys on Party business at the Party’s expense, the comrades would become accustomed to being maintained by the Party, to becoming professional revolutionaries, and to training themselves as real political leaders.

And if indeed we succeeded in reaching the point when all, or at least a considerable majority, of the local committees local groups, and study circles took up active work for the common cause, we could, in the not distant future, establish a weekly newspaper for regular distribution in tens of thousands of copies throughout Russia. This newspaper would become part of an enormous pair of smith’s bellows that would fan every spark of the class struggle and of popular indignation into a general conflagration. Around what is in itself still a very innocuous and very small, but regular and *common*, effort, in the full sense of the word, a regular army of tried fighters would systematically gather and receive their training. On the ladders and scaffolding of this general organisational structure there would soon develop and come to the fore Social-Democratic Zhelyabovs from among our revolutionaries and Russian Bebels from among our workers, who would take their place at the head of the mobilised army and rouse the whole people to settle accounts with the shame and the curse of Russia.

That is what we should dream of!

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“We should dream!” I wrote these words and became alarmed. I imagined myself sitting at a “unity conference” and opposite me were the *Rabocheye Dyelo* editors and contributors. Comrade Martynov rises and, turning to me, says sternly: “Permit me to ask you, has an autonomous editorial board the right to dream without first soliciting the opinion of the Party committees?” He is followed by Comrade Krichevsky; who (philosophically deepening Comrade Martynov, who long ago rendered Comrade Plekhanov more profound) continues even more sternly: “I go further. I ask, has a Marxist any right at all to dream, knowing that according to Marx, mankind always sets itself the tasks it can solve and that tactics is a process of the growth of Party tasks which grow together with the Party?”

The very thought of these stern questions sends a cold shiver down my spine and makes me wish for nothing but a place to hide in. I shall try to hide behind the back of Pisarev.

“There are rifts and rifts,” wrote Pisarev of the rift between dreams and reality.

“My dream may run ahead of the natural march of events or may fly off at a tangent in a direction in which no natural march of events will ever proceed. In the first case my dream will not cause any harm; it may even support and augment the energy of the working men. . . . There is nothing in such dreams that would distort or paralyse labour-power. On the contrary, if man were completely deprived of the ability to dream in this way, if he could not from time to time run ahead and mentally conceive, in an entire and completed picture, the product to which his hands are only just beginning to lend shape, then I cannot at all imagine what stimulus there would be to induce man to undertake and complete extensive and strenuous work in the sphere of art, science, and practical endeavour. . . . The rift between dreams and reality causes no harm if only the person dreaming believes seriously in his dream, if he attentively observes life, compares his observations with his castles in the air, and if, generally speaking, he works conscientiously for the achievement of his fantasies. If there is some connection between dreams and life then all is well.”¹⁷

Of this kind of dreaming there is unfortunately too little in our movement. And the people most responsible for this are those who boast of their sober views, their “closeness” to the “concrete,” the representatives of legal criticism and of illegal “tail-ism.”

C. What Type of Organisation Do We Require?

From what has been said the reader will see that our “tactics. as-plan” consists in rejecting an immediate *call* for assault; in demanding “to lay

effective siege to the enemy fortress”; or, in other words, in demanding that all efforts be directed towards gathering, organising, and *mobilising* a permanent army. When we ridiculed *Rabocheye Dyelo* for its leap from Economism to shouting for an assault (for which it clamoured in *April 1901*, in “*Listok Rabochego Dyela*, 157 No. 6) it of course came down on us with accusations of being “doctrinaire,” of failing to understand our revolutionary duty, of calling for caution, etc. Of course, we were not in the least surprised to hear these accusations from those who totally lack principles and who evade all arguments by references to a profound “tactics-as-process,” any more than we were surprised by the fact that these charges were repeated by Nadezhdin, who in general has a supreme contempt for durable programmes and the fundamentals of tactics.

It is said that history does not repeat itself. But Nadezhdin exerts every effort to cause it to repeat itself and he zealously imitates Tkachov¹⁸ in strongly condemning “revolutionary culturism,” in shouting about “sounding the tocsin” and about a special “eve-of-the-revolution point of view,” etc., Apparently, he has forgotten the well-known maxim that while an original historical event represents a tragedy, its replica is merely a farce.¹⁹ The attempt to seize power, which was prepared by the preaching of Tkachov and carried out by means of the “terrifying” terror that did really terrify, had grandeur, but the “excitative” terror of a Tkachov the Little is simply ludicrous, particularly so when it is supplemented with the idea of an organisation of average people.

“If *Iskra* would only emerge from its sphere of bookishness,” wrote Nadezhdin, “it would realise that these (instances like the worker’s letter to *Iskra*, No. 7, etc.) are symptoms of the fact that soon, very soon, the ‘assault’ will begin, and to speak now [sic!] of an organisation linked with an all-Russia newspaper means to propagate armchair ideas and armchair activity.” What an unimaginable muddle—on the one hand, excitative terror and an “organisation of average people,” along with the opinion that it is far “easier” to gather around something “more concrete,” like a local newspaper, and, on the other, the view that to talk “now” about an all-Russia organisation means to propagate armchair thoughts, or, bluntly put, “now” it is already too late! But what of the “extensive organisation of local newspapers”—is it not too late for that, my dear L. Nadezhdin? And compare with this *Iskra*’s point of view and tactical line: excitative terror is nonsense; to talk of an organisation of average people and of the *extensive* publication of local newspapers means to fling the door wide open to Economism. We must speak of a single all-Russia organisation of revolutionaries, and it will never be too late to talk of that until the real, not a paper, assault begins.

“Yes, as far as organisation is concerned the situation is anything but brilliant,” continues Nadezhdin. “Yes, *Iskra* is entirely right in saying that the mass of our fighting forces consists of volunteers and insurgents. . . . You do well to give such a sober picture of the state of our forces. But why, at the same time, do you forget that *the masses are not ours at all*, and consequently, will *not ask us* when to begin military operations; they will simply go and ‘rebel’. . . . When the crowd itself breaks out with its elemental destructive force it *may* overwhelm and sweep aside the ‘regular troops’ among whom we prepared all the time to introduce extremely systematic organisation, but never *managed* to do so.” (Our italics)

Astounding logic! *For the very reason* that the “masses are not ours” it is stupid and unseemly to shout about an immediate “assault,” for assault means attack by regular troops and not a spontaneous mass upsurge. For the very reason that the masses *may* overwhelm and sweep aside the regular troops we must without fail “manage to keep up” with the spontaneous upsurge by our work of “introducing extremely systematic organisation” in the regular troops, for the more we “manage” to introduce such organisation the more probably will the regular troops not be overwhelmed by the masses, but will take their place at their head. Nadezhdin is confused because he imagines that troops in the course of systematic organisation are engaged in something that isolates them from the masses, when in actuality they are engaged exclusively in all-sided and all-embracing political agitation, i.e., precisely in work that *brings closer and merges into a single whole* the elemental destructive force of the masses and the conscious destructive force of the organisation of revolutionaries. You, gentlemen, wish to lay the blame where it does not belong. For it is precisely the *Svoboda* group that, by including terror *in its programme*, calls for an organisation of terrorists, and such an organisation would indeed prevent our troops from establishing closer contacts with the masses, which, unfortunately, are still not ours, and which, unfortunately, do not yet ask us, or rarely ask us, when and how to launch their military operations.

“We shall miss the revolution itself,” continues Nadezhdin in his attempt to scare *Iskra*, “in the same way as we missed . . . the recent events, which came upon us like a bolt from the blue.” This sentence, taken in connection with what has been quoted above, clearly demonstrates the absurdity of the “eve-of-the-revolution point of view” invented by *Svoboda*.¹⁰ Plainly put, this special “point of view” boils down to this that it is too late “now” to discuss and prepare. If that is the case, most worthy opponent of “bookishness,” what was the use of writing a pamphlet of 132 pages on questions of theory¹¹ and tactics”? Don’t you think it would have been more becoming

for the “eve-of-the-revolution point of view” to have issued 132,000 leaflets containing the summary call, “Bang them—knock’em down!”?

Those who make nation-wide political agitation the cornerstone of their programme, *their tactics, and their organisational work*, as *Iskra* does, stand the least risk of missing the revolution. The people who are now engaged throughout Russia in weaving the network of connections that spread from the all-Russia newspaper not only did not miss the spring events, but, on the contrary, gave us an opportunity to foretell them. Nor did they miss the demonstrations that were described in *Iskra*, Nos. 13 and 14; on the contrary, they took part in them, clearly realising that it was their duty to come to the aid of the spontaneously rising masses and, at the same time, through the medium of the newspaper, help all the comrades in Russia to inform themselves of the demonstrations and to make use of their gathered experience. And if they live they *will* not miss the revolution, which, first and foremost, will demand of us experience in agitation, ability to support (in a Social-Democratic manner) every protest, as well as direct the spontaneous movement, while safeguarding it from the mistakes of friends and the traps of enemies.

We have thus come to the last reason that compels us so strongly to insist on the plan of an organisation centred round an all-Russia newspaper, through the common work for the common newspaper. Only such organisation will ensure the *flexibility* required of a militant Social-Democratic organisation, viz., the ability to adapt itself immediately to the most diverse and rapidly changing conditions of struggle, the ability, “on the one hand, to avoid an open battle against an overwhelming enemy, when the enemy has concentrated all his forces at one spot and yet, on the other, to take advantage of his unwieldiness and to attack him when and where he least expects it.”¹² It would be a grievous error indeed to build the Party organisation in anticipation only of outbreaks and street fighting, or only upon the “forward march of the drab everyday struggle.” We must *always* conduct our everyday work and always be prepared for every situation, because very frequently it is almost impossible to foresee when a period of outbreak will give way to a period of calm. In the instances, however, when it is possible to do so, we could not turn this foresight to account for the purpose of reconstructing our organisation; for in an autocratic country these changes take place with astonishing rapidity, being sometimes connected with a single night raid by the tsarist janizaries.²⁰ And the revolution itself must not by any means be regarded as a single act (as the Nadezhdins apparently imagine), but as a series of more or less powerful outbreaks rapidly alternating with periods of more or less complete calm. For that reason, the principal content of the activity of our Party organisation, the focus of this activity,

should be work that is both possible and essential in the period of a most powerful outbreak as well as in the period of complete calm, namely, work of political agitation, connected throughout Russia, illuminating all aspects of life, and conducted among the broadest possible strata of the masses. But this work *is unthinkable* in present-day Russia without an all-Russia newspaper, issued very frequently. The organisation, which will form round this newspaper, the organisation of its *collaborators* (in the broad sense of the word, i.e., all those working for it), will be ready *for everything*, from upholding the honour, the prestige, and the continuity of the Party in periods of acute revolutionary “depression” to preparing for, appointing the time for, and carrying out the *nation-wide armed uprising*.

Indeed, picture to yourselves a very ordinary occurrence in Russia—the total round-up of our comrades in one or several localities. In the absence of a *single*, common, regular activity that combines all the local organisations, such round-ups frequently result in the interruption of the work for many months. If, however, all the local organisations had one common activity, then, even in the event of a very serious round-up, two or three energetic persons could in the course of a few weeks establish contact between the common centre and new youth circles, which, as we know, spring up very quickly even now. And when the common activity, hampered by the arrests, is apparent to all, new circles will be able to come into being and make connections with the centre even more rapidly.

On the other hand, picture to yourselves a popular uprising. Probably everyone will now agree that we must think of this and prepare for it. But how? Surely the Central Committee cannot appoint agents to all localities for the purpose of preparing the uprising. Even if we had a Central Committee, it could achieve absolutely nothing by such appointments under present-day Russian conditions. But a network of agents¹³ that would form in the course of establishing and distributing the common newspaper would not have to “sit about and wait” for the call for an uprising, but could carry on the regular activity that would guarantee the highest probability of success in the event of an uprising. Such activity would strengthen our contacts with the broadest strata of the working masses and with all social strata that are discontented with the autocracy, which is of such importance for an uprising. Precisely such activity would serve to cultivate the ability to estimate correctly the general political situation and, consequently, the ability to select the proper moment for an uprising. Precisely such activity would train all local organisations to respond simultaneously to the same political questions, incidents, and events that agitate the whole of Russia and to react to such “incidents” in the most vigorous, uniform, and expedient manner possible; for an uprising is in essence the most vigorous, most uniform, and

most expedient “answer” of the entire people to the government. Lastly, it is precisely such activity that would train all revolutionary organisations throughout Russia to maintain the most continuous, and at the same time the most secret, contacts with one another, thus creating *real* Party unity; for without such contacts it will be impossible collectively to discuss the plan for the uprising and to take the necessary preparatory measures on the eve, measures that must be kept in the strictest secrecy.

In a word, the “plan for an all-Russia political newspaper,” far from representing the fruits of the labour of armchair workers, infected with dogmatism and bookishness (as it seemed to those who gave but little thought to it), is the most practical plan for immediate and all-round preparation of the uprising, with, at the same time, no loss of sight for a moment of the pressing day-to-day work.

Notes

1. See *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 13–24 —*Ed.*
2. *Iskra*, No. 8. The reply of the Central Committee of the General Jewish Union of Russia and Poland to our article on the national question. —*Lenin*
3. We deliberately refrain from relating these facts²¹ in the sequence of their occurrence. —*Lenin*
4. See *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 323–51 and 267–315 —*Ed.*
5. The author requests me to state that, like his previous pamphlets, this one was sent to the Union Abroad on the assumption that its publications were edited by the Emancipation of Labour group (owing to certain circumstances, he could not then—February 1899—know of the change in editorship). The pamphlet will be republished by the League²² at an early date. —*Lenin*
6. See *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 210–14, 215–20, 221–26 —*Ed.*
7. Comrade Krichevsky and Comrade Martynov! I call your attention to this outrageous manifestation of “autocracy,” “uncontrolled authority,” “supreme regulating,” etc. just think of it: a desire to *possess* the whole chain!! Send in a complaint at once. Here you have a ready-made topic for two leading articles for No. 12 of *Rabocheye Dyelo!* —*Lenin*
8. Martynov, in quoting the first sentence of this passage in *Rabocheye Dyelo* (No. 10, p. 62), omitted the second, as if desiring to emphasise either his unwillingness to discuss the essentials of the question or his inability to understand them. —*Lenin*
9. *A reservation*: that is, if a given study circle sympathises with the policy of the newspaper and considers it useful to become a collaborator, meaning by that, not only for literary collaboration, but for revolutionary collaboration generally. *Note for Rabocheye Dyelo*: Among revolutionaries who attach value to the cause and not to playing at democracy, who do not separate “sympathy” from the most active and lively participation, this reservation is taken for granted. —*Lenin*
10. *The Eve of the Revolution*, p. 62. —*Lenin*

11. In his *Review of Questions of Theory*, Nadezhdin, by the way, made almost no contribution whatever to the discussion of questions of theory, apart, perhaps, from the following passage, a most peculiar one from the “eve-of-the-revolution point of view”: “Bernsteinism, on the whole, is losing its acuteness for us at the present moment, as is the question whether Mr. Adamovich will prove that Mr. Struve has already earned a lacing, or, on the contrary, whether Mr. Struve will refute Mr. Adamovich and will refuse to resign—it really makes no difference, because the hour of revolution has struck” (p. 110). One can hardly imagine a more glaring illustration of Nadezhdin’s infinite disregard for theory. We have proclaimed “the eve of the revolution,” therefore “it really makes no difference” whether or not the orthodox will succeed in finally driving the Critics from their positions! Our wiseacre fails to see that it is precisely during the revolution that we shall stand in need of the results of our theoretical battles with the Critics in order to be able resolutely to combat their *practical* positions! —*Lenin*
12. *Iskra*, No. 4, “Where To Begin.” “Revolutionary culturists, who do not accept the eve-of-the-revolution point of view, are not in the least perturbed by the prospect of working for a long period of time,” writes Nadezhdin (p. 62). This brings us to observe: Unless we are able to devise political tactics and an organisational plan for *work over a very long period*, while ensuring, in *the very process of this work*, our Party’s readiness to be at its post and fulfil its duty in every contingency whenever the march of events is accelerated—unless we succeed in doing this, we shall prove to be but miserable political adventurers. Only Nadezhdin, who began but yesterday to describe himself as a Social-Democrat, can forget that the aim of Social-Democracy is to transform radically the conditions of life of the whole of mankind and that for this reason it is not permissible for a Social-Democrat to be “perturbed” by the question of the duration of the work. —*Lenin*
13. Alas, alas! Again I have let slip that awful word “agents,” which jars so much on the democratic ears of the Martynovs! I wonder why this word did not offend the heroes of the seventies and yet offends the amateurs of the nineties? I like the word, because it clearly and trenchantly indicates *the common cause* to which all the agents bend their thoughts and actions, and if I had to replace this word by another, the only word I might select would be the word “collaborator,” if it did not suggest a certain bookishness and vagueness. The thing we need is a military organisation of agents. However, the numerous Martynovs (particularly abroad), whose favourite pastime is “mutual grants of generalships to one another,” may instead of saying “passport agent” prefer to say, “Chief of the Special Department for Supplying Revolutionaries with Passports.” etc. —*Lenin*
14. The reference is to the negotiations between the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class and Lenin who, in the second half of 1897, wrote the two pamphlets mentioned.
15. The reference is to the negotiations between Lenin and the Central Committee of the Bund.
16. The “*fourth fact*” of which Lenin speaks was the attempt of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad and the Bund to convene the Second Congress

of the R.S.D.L.P. in the spring of 1900. The “*member of the committee*” referred to was I. H. Lalayants (a member of the Ekaterinoslav Social-Democratic Committee) who came to Moscow in February 1900 for talks with Lenin.

17. Lenin cites the article by D. I. Pisarev “Blunders of Immature Thinking.”
18. *Tkachov, P. N.* (1844–1885)—one of the ideologists of revolutionary Narodism, a follower of the Auguste Blanqui.
19. Lenin refers to the following passage from Marx’s *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*: “Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce” (see Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1958, p. 247).
20. *Janizaries*—privileged Turkish infantry, abolished in 1826. The janizaries plundered the population and were known for their unusual brutality. Lenin called the tsarist police “janizaries.”
21. Lenin added this footnote for purposes of secrecy. The facts are enumerated in the order in which they actually took place.
22. The reference is to the League of Russian Revolutionary Social-Democracy Abroad.

Conclusion

The history of Russian Social-Democracy can be distinctly divided into three periods:

The first period embraces about ten years, approximately from 1884 to 1894. This was the period of the rise and consolidation of the theory and programme of Social-Democracy. The adherents of the new trend in Russia were very few in number. Social-Democracy existed without a working-class movement, and as a political party it was at the embryonic stage of development.

The second period embraces three or four years—1894–98. In this period Social-Democracy appeared on the scene as a social movement, as the upsurge of the masses of the people, as a political party. This is the period of its childhood and adolescence. The intelligentsia was fired with a vast and general zeal for struggle against Narodism and for going among the workers; the workers displayed a general enthusiasm for strike action. The movement made enormous strides. The majority of the leaders were young people who had not reached “the age of thirty-five” which to Mr. N. Mikhailovsky appeared to be a sort of natural border-line. Owing to their youth, they proved to be untrained for practical work and they left the scene with astonishing rapidity. But in the majority of cases the scope of their activity was very wide. Many of them had begun their revolutionary thinking

as adherents of Narodnaya Volya. Nearly all had in their early youth enthusiastically worshipped the terrorist heroes. It required a struggle to abandon the captivating impressions of those heroic traditions, and the struggle was accompanied by the breaking off of personal relations with people who were determined to remain loyal to the Narodnaya Volya and for whom the young Social-Democrats had profound respect. The struggle compelled the youthful leaders to educate themselves to read illegal literature of every trend, and to study closely the questions of legal Narodism. Trained in this struggle, Social-Democrats went into the working-class movement without “for a moment” forgetting either the theory of Marxism, which brightly illumined their path, or the task of overthrowing the autocracy. The formation of the Party in the spring of 1898 was the most striking and at the same time the last act of the Social-Democrats of this period.

The third period, as we have seen, was prepared in 1897 and it definitely cut off the second period in 1898 (1898-?). This was a period of disunity, dissolution, and vacillation. During adolescence a youth’s voice breaks. And so, in this period, the voice of Russian Social-Democracy began to break, to strike a false note—on the one hand, in the writings of Messrs. Struve and Prokopovich, of Bulgakov and Berdyaev, and on the other, in those of V. In and R. M., of B. Krichevsky and Martynov. But it was only the leaders who wandered about separately and drew back; the movement itself continued to grow, and it advanced with enormous strides. The proletarian struggle spread to new strata of the workers and extended to the whole of Russia, at the same time indirectly stimulating the revival of the democratic spirit among the students and among other sections of the population. The political consciousness of the leaders, however, capitulated before the breadth and power of the spontaneous upsurge; among the Social-Democrats, another type had become dominant—the type of functionaries, trained almost exclusively on “legal Marxist” literature, which proved to be all the more inadequate the more the spontaneity of the masses demanded political consciousness on the part of the leaders. The leaders not only lagged behind in regard to theory (“freedom of criticism”) and practice (“primitiveness”), but they sought to justify their backwardness by all manner of high-flown arguments. Social-Democracy was degraded to the level of trade-unionism by the Brentano adherents in legal literature, and by the tail-enders in illegal literature. The *Credo* programme began to be put into operation, especially when the “primitive methods” of the Social-Democrats caused a revival of revolutionary non-Social-Democratic tendencies.

If the reader should feel critical that I have dealt at too great length with a certain *Rabocheye Dyelo*, I can say only that *Rabocheye Dyelo* acquired “historical” significance because it most notably reflected the “spirit” of this third

period.¹ It was not the consistent R. M., but the weathercock Krichevskys and Martynovs who were able properly to express the disunity and vacillation, the readiness to make concessions to “criticism” to “Economism,” and to terrorism. Not the lofty contempt for practical work displayed by some worshipper of the “absolute” is characteristic of this period, but the combination of pettifogging practice and utter disregard for theory. It was not so much in the direct rejection of “grandiose phrases” that the heroes of this period engaged as in their vulgarisation. Scientific socialism ceased to be an integral revolutionary theory and became a hodgepodge “freely” diluted with the content of every new German textbook that appeared; the slogan “class struggle” did not impel to broader and more energetic activity but served as a balm, since “the economic struggle is inseparably linked with the political struggle”; the idea of a party did not serve as a call for the creation of a militant organisation of revolutionaries, but was used to justify some sort of “revolutionary bureaucracy” and infantile playing at “democratic” forms.

When the third period will come to an end and the fourth (now heralded by many portents) will begin we do not know. We are passing from the sphere of history to the sphere of the present and, partly, of the future. But we firmly believe that the fourth period will lead to the consolidation of militant Marxism, that Russian Social-Democracy will emerge from the crisis in the full flower of manhood, that the opportunist rearguard will be “replaced” by the genuine vanguard of the most revolutionary class.

In the sense of calling for such a “replacement” and by way of summing up what has been expounded above, we may meet the question, What is to be done? with the brief reply:

Put an End to the Third Period.

Notes

1. I could also reply with the German proverb: *Den Sack schlägt man, den Esel meint man* (you beat the sack, but you mean the donkey). Not *Rabocheye Dyelo* alone, but also *the broad mass of practical workers and theoreticians* was carried away by the “criticism” *a la mode*, becoming confused in regard to the question of spontaneity and lapsing from the Social-Democratic to the trade-unionist conception of our political and organisational tasks. —*Lenin*

Appendix⁸

The Attempt to Unite *Iskra* With *Rabocheye Dyelo*

It remains for us to describe the tactics adopted and consistently pursued by *Iskra* in its organisational relations with *Rabocheye Dyelo*. These tactics were fully expressed in *Iskra*, No. 1, in the article entitled “The Split in the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad.”¹ From the outset we adopted the point of view that the *real* Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad, which at the First Congress of our Party was recognised as its representative abroad, *had split* into two organisations; that the question of the Party’s representation remained an open one, having been settled only temporarily and conditionally by the election, at the International Congress in Paris, of two members to represent Russia on the International Socialist Bureau,⁹ one from each of the two sections of the divided Union Abroad. We declared that fundamentally *Rabocheye Dyelo* was wrong; in principle we emphatically took the side of the Emancipation of Labour group, at the same time refusing to enter into the details of the split and noting the services rendered by the Union Abroad in the sphere of purely practical work.²

Consequently, ours was, to a certain extent, a waiting policy. We made a concession to the opinions prevailing among the majority of the Russian Social-Democrats that the most determined opponents of Economism could work hand in hand with the Union Abroad because it had repeatedly declared its agreement in principle with the Emancipation of Labour group, without, allegedly, taking an independent position on fundamental questions of theory and tactics. The correctness of our position was indirectly proved by the fact that almost simultaneously with the appearance of the first issue of *Iskra* (December 1900) three members separated from the Union, formed the so-called “Initiators’ Group,” and offered their services: (1) to the foreign section of the *Iskra* organisation, (2) to the revolutionary *Sotsial-Demokrat* organisation, and (3) to the Union Abroad, as mediators in negotiations for reconciliation. The first two organisations at once announced their agreement; *the third turned down* the offer. True, when a speaker related these facts at the “Unity” Conference last year, a member of the Administrative Committee of the Union Abroad declared the rejection of the offer to have been due *entirely* to the fact that the Union Abroad was dissatisfied with the composition of the Initiators’ Group. While I consider it my duty to cite this explanation, I cannot, however, refrain from observing that it is an unsatisfactory one; for, knowing that two organisations had agreed to enter into negotiations, the Union Abroad could have approached them through another intermediary or directly.

In the spring of 1901 both *Zarya* (No. 1, April) and *Iskra* (No. 4, May)³ entered into open polemics with *Rabocheye Dyelo*. *Iskra* particularly attacked the article “A Historic Turn” in *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which, in its *April* supplement, that is, after the spring events, revealed instability on the question of terror and the calls for “blood,” with which many had been carried away at the time. Notwithstanding the polemics, the Union Abroad agreed to resume negotiations for reconciliation through the instrumentality of a new group of “conciliators.” A preliminary conference of representatives of the three cited organisations, held in June, framed a draft agreement on the basis of a very detailed “accord on principles,” which the Union Abroad published in the pamphlet *Two Conferences*, and the League Abroad in the pamphlet *Documents of the “Unity” Conference*.

The contents of this accord on principles (more frequently named the Resolutions of the June Conference) make it perfectly clear that we put forward as an absolute condition for unity *the most emphatic* repudiation of any and every manifestation of opportunism generally, and of Russian opportunism in particular. Paragraph 1 reads: “We repudiate all attempts to introduce opportunism into the proletarian class struggle—attempts that have found expression in the so-called Economism, Bernsteinism, Millebrandism, etc.” “The sphere of Social-Democratic activities includes . . . ideological struggle against all opponents of revolutionary Marxism” (4, c); “In every sphere of organisational and agitational activity Social-Democracy must never for a moment forget that the immediate task of the Russian proletariat is the overthrow of the autocracy” (5, a); “agitation . . . not only on the basis of the everyday struggle between wage-labour and capital” (5, b); “. . . we do not recognise . . . a stage of purely economic struggle and of struggle for partial political demands” (5, c); “. . . we consider it important for the movement to criticise tendencies that make a principle of the elementariness and narrowness of the lower forms of the movement” (5, d). Even a complete outsider, having read these resolutions at all attentively, will have realised from their very formulations that they are directed against people who were opportunists and Economists, who, even for a moment, forgot the task of overthrowing the autocracy, who recognised the theory of stages, who elevated narrowness to a principle, etc. Anyone who has the least acquaintance with the polemics conducted by the Emancipation of Labour group, *Zarya*, and *Iskra* against *Rabocheye Dyelo* cannot doubt for a single moment that these resolutions repudiate, point by point, the very errors into which *Rabocheye Dyelo* strayed. Hence, when a member of the Union Abroad declared at the “Unity” Conference that the articles in No. 10 of *Rabocheye Dyelo* had been prompted, not by a new “historic turn” on the part of the Union Abroad, but by the excessive “abstractness” of the

resolution,⁴ the assertion was justly ridiculed by one of the speakers. Far from being abstract, he said, the resolutions were incredibly concrete: one could see at a glance that they were “trying to catch somebody.”

This remark occasioned a characteristic incident at the Conference. On the one hand, Krichevsky, seizing upon the word “catch” in the belief that this was a slip of the tongue which betrayed our evil intentions (“to set a trap”), pathetically exclaimed: “Whom are they out to catch?” “Whom indeed?” rejoined Plekhanov sarcastically. “Let me come to the aid of Comrade Plekhanov’s lack of perspicacity,” replied Krichevsky. “Let me explain to him that the trap was set for the *Editorial Board of Rabocheye Dyelo* [general laughter] but we have not allowed ourselves to be caught!” (A remark from the left: “All the worse for you!”) On the other hand, a member of the Borba group (a group of conciliators), opposing the amendments of the Union Abroad to the resolutions and desiring to defend our speaker, declared that obviously the word “catch” was dropped by chance in the heat of polemics.

For my part, I think the speaker responsible for uttering the word will hardly be pleased with this “defence.” I think the words “trying to catch somebody” were “true words spoken in jest”; we have always accused *Rabocheye Dyelo* of instability and vacillation, and, naturally, we *had* to try to catch it in order to put a stop to the vacillation. There is not the slightest suggestion of evil intent in this, for we were discussing instability of principles and we succeeded in “catching” the Union Abroad in such comradely manner⁵ that Krichevsky himself and one other member of the Administrative Committee of the Union signed the June resolutions.

The articles in *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10 (our comrades saw the issue for the first time when they arrived at the Conference, a few days before the meetings started) clearly showed that a new turn had taken place in the Union Abroad in the period between the summer and the autumn: the Economists had once more gained the upper hand, and the Editorial Board, which veered with every “wind,” again set out to defend “the most pronounced Berristeinians” and “freedom of criticism,” to defend “spontaneity,” and through the lips of Martynov to preach the “theory of restricting” the sphere of our political influence (for the alleged purpose of rendering this influence more complex). Once again Parvus’ apt observation that it is difficult to catch an opportunist with a formula has been proved correct. An opportunist will readily put his name to *any* formula and as readily abandon it, because opportunism means precisely a lack of definite and firm principles. Today, the opportunists have repudiated *all* attempts to introduce opportunism, repudiated *all* narrowness, solemnly promised “never for a moment to forget about the task of overthrowing the autocracy” and to carry on “agitation not only on the basis of the everyday

struggle between wage-labour and capital,” etc., etc. But tomorrow they will change their form of expression and revert to their old tricks on the pretext of defending spontaneity and the forward march of the drab everyday struggle, of extolling demands promising palpable results, etc. By continuing to assert that in the articles in No. 10 “the Union Abroad did not and does not now see any heretical departure from the general principles of the draft adopted at the conference” (*Two Conferences*, p. 26), the Union Abroad merely reveals a complete lack of ability, or of desire, to understand the essential points of the disagreements.

After the tenth issue of *Rabocheye Dyelo*, we could make one effort: open a general discussion in order to ascertain whether all the members of the Union Abroad agreed with the articles and with the Editorial Board. The Union Abroad is particularly displeased with us because of this and accuses us of trying to sow discord in its ranks, of interfering in other people’s business, etc. These accusations are obviously unfounded, since with an elected editorial board that “veers” with every wind, however light, everything depends upon the direction of the wind, and we defined the direction at private meetings at which no one was present, except members of the organisations intending to unite. The amendments to the June resolutions submitted in the name of the Union Abroad have removed the last shadow of hope of arriving at agreement. The amendments are documentary evidence of the new turn towards Economism and of the fact that the majority of the Union members are in agreement with *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10. It was moved to delete the words “so-called Economism” from the reference to manifestations of opportunism (on the plea that “the meaning” of these words “was vague”; but if that were so, all that was required was a more precise definition of the nature of the widespread error), and to delete “Millerandism” (although Krichevsky had defended it in *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 2–3, pp. 83–84, and still more openly in *Vorwärts*⁶). Notwithstanding the fact that the June resolutions definitely indicated that the task of Social-Democracy is “to guide every manifestation of the proletarian struggle against all forms of political, *economic*, and social oppression,” thereby calling for the introduction of system and unity in all these manifestations of the struggle, the Union Abroad added the wholly superfluous words that “the economic struggle is a powerful stimulus to the mass movement” (taken by itself, this assertion cannot be disputed, but with the existence of narrow Economism it could not but give occasion for false interpretations). Moreover, even the direct *constriction* of “politics” was suggested for the June resolutions, both by the deletion of the words “not for a moment” (to forget the aim of overthrowing the autocracy) and by the addition of the words “the economic struggle is the most widely applicable means of

drawing the masses into active political struggle.” Naturally, upon the submission of such amendments, the speakers on our side refused, one after another, to take the floor, considering it hopeless to continue negotiations with people who were again turning towards Economism and were striving to secure for themselves freedom to vacillate.

It was precisely the preservation of the independent features and the autonomy of *Rabocheye Dyelo*, considered by the Union to be the *sine qua non* of the durability of our future agreement, that *Iskra* regarded as the stumbling-block to agreement” (*Two Conferences*, p. 25). This is most inexact. We never had any designs against *Rabocheye Dyelo’s* autonomy.⁷ We did indeed *absolutely refuse to recognise* the independence of its features, if by “independent features” is meant independence on questions of principle in theory and tactics. The June resolutions contain an utter repudiation of *such* independence of features, because, in practice, such “independence of features” has always meant, as we have pointed out, all manner of vacillations fostering the disunity which prevails among us and which is intolerable from the Party point of view. *Rabocheye Dyelo’s* articles in its tenth issue, together with its “amendments” clearly revealed its desire to preserve this kind of independence of features, and such a desire naturally and inevitably led to a rupture and a declaration of war. But all of us were ready to recognise *Rabocheye Dyelo’s* “independence of features” in the sense that it should concentrate on definite literary functions. A proper distribution of these functions naturally called for: (1) a theoretical magazine, (2) a political newspaper, and (3) popular collections of articles and popular pamphlets. Only by agreeing to such a distribution of functions would *Rabocheye Dyelo* have proved that it *sincerely* desired to abandon once and for all its errors, against which the June resolutions were directed. Only such a distribution of functions would have removed all possibility of friction, effectively guaranteed a durable agreement, and, at the same time, served as a basis for a revival and for new successes of our movement.

At present not a single Russian Social-Democrat can have any doubts that the final rupture between the revolutionary and the opportunist tendencies was caused, not by any “organisational” circumstances, but by the desire of the opportunists to consolidate the independent features of opportunism and to continue to cause confusion of mind by the disquisitions of the Krichevskys and Martynovs.

Notes

1. See *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 378–79 —Ed. —*Lenin*

2. Our judgement of the split was based, not only upon a study of the literature on the subject, but also on information gathered abroad by several members of our organisation. —*Lenin*
3. See *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 13–24 —*Ed.* —*Lenin*
4. This assertion is repeated in *Two Conferences*, p. 25. —*Lenin*
5. Precisely: In the introduction to the June resolutions we said that Russian Social-Democracy as a whole always stood by the principles of the Emancipation of Labour group and that the particular service of the Union Abroad was its publishing and organising activity. In other words, we expressed our complete readiness to forget the past and to recognise the usefulness (for the cause) of the work of our comrades of the Union Abroad *provided* it completely ceased the vacillation we tried to “catch.” Any impartial person reading the June resolutions will only thus interpret them. If the Union Abroad, after having *caused* a split by its new turn towards Economism (in its articles in No. 10 and in the amendments), now solemnly charges us with untruth (*Two Conferences*, p. 30), because of what we said about its services, then, of course, such an accusation can only evoke a smile. —*Lenin*
6. A polemic on the subject started in *Vorwärts* between its present editor, Kautsky, and the Editorial Board of *Zarya*. We shall not fail to acquaint the Russian reader with this controversy.¹⁰ —*Lenin*
7. That is, if the editorial consultations in connection with the establishment of a joint supreme council of the combined organisations are not to be regarded as a restriction of autonomy. But in June *Rabocheye Dyelo* agreed to this. —*Lenin*
8. Lenin omitted this appendix when *What Is To Be Done?* was republished in the collection *Twelve Years* in 1907. p. 521
9. *The International Socialist Bureau*—the executive body of the Second International established by decision of the Paris Congress in 1900. From 1905 onwards Lenin was a member of the Bureau as a representative of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.
10. *Iskra*, No. 18 (March 10, 1902) published in the section “From the Party” An item entitled “*Zarya’s* Polemic with *Vorwärts*,” summing up the controversy.

Correction to *What Is to Be Done?*

The Initiators’ Group of whom I speak in the pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?* p. 141,¹ have asked me to make the following correction to my description of the part they played in the attempt to reconcile the Social-Democratic organisations abroad: “Of the three members of this group, only one left the Union Abroad at the end of 1900; the others left in 1901, only after becoming convinced that it was impossible to obtain the Union’s consent to a conference with the *Iskra* organisation abroad and the revolutionary *Sotsial-Demokrat* organisation, which the Initiators’ Group had proposed. The Administrative Committee of the Union Abroad at first rejected this proposal, contending that the persons comprising the Initiators’ Group were ‘not

competent' to act as mediators, and it expressed the desire to enter into direct contact with the *Iskra* organisation abroad. Soon thereafter, however, the Administrative Committee of the Union Abroad informed the Initiators' Group that following the appearance of the first number of *Iskra* containing the report of the split in the Union, it had altered its decision and no longer desired to maintain relations with *Iskra*. After this, how can one explain the statement made by a member of the Administrative Committee of the Union Abroad that the latter's rejection of a conference was called forth *entirely* by its dissatisfaction with the composition of the Initiators' Group? It is true that it is equally difficult to explain why the Administrative Committee of the Union Abroad agreed to a conference in June of last year, still remained in force and *Iskra's* 'negative' attitude to the Union Abroad was still more strongly expressed in the first issue of *Zarya*, and in No. 4 of *Iskra*, both of which appeared prior to the June Conference."

N. Lenin

Note

1. See present volume, p. 521–22.—Ed.

The Right of Nations to Self-Determination

Study and Discussion Guide

What is Meant by the Self-Determination of Nations?

1. What connections does Lenin make between economic factors and nations' right to self-determination?
2. Discuss why Lenin insists the right of nations to self-determination, first and foremost, is the right to exist as an independent national state.
3. What is Lenin's response to Rosa Luxemburg's position that small nations economically dependent on larger ones are unable to become independent and self-determined?

The Historically Concrete Presentation of the Question

4. True to his commitment to the dynamic relationship between theory and practice, Lenin begins this section noting that it is incorrect to

- dogmatically advance abstract theoretical statements like all nations have a right to self-determination, which instead must be, “examined within *definite* historical limits.” What does Lenin go on to argue this requires for our examination of nation’s right to self-determination?
5. What is the significance of the two periods of capitalist development Lenin identifies to the question of the self determination of nations?
 6. Lenin conceptualizes these two periods as “not walled off from each other.” This is a very important point for us to consider as we reflect on historical change and development. Why?
 7. What is Lenin’s critique of Rosa Luxemburg? Why might we say he is accusing her of engaging in a de-contextualized discourse? Why does Lenin take issue with this?

The Concrete Features of the National Question in Russia, and Russia’s Bourgeois-Democratic Reformation

8. Why does Lenin argue it is an absurdity to compare the programs of Western European socialists to Russian and Eastern ones?
9. Lenin’s answer points to the way any relevant socialist program must be grounded in historical concreteness. That is, Lenin argues that because Western European countries had already gone through the period of bourgeois revolutions by the end of the nineteenth century and had established themselves as nation states, socialists in those countries had no need to declare their right to self-determination. Russia, China, Turkey, etc. were going through this period in the beginning of the twentieth century and therefore declared their right as nations to self-determination. How might this insight inform our educational program in the US at this particular historical juncture?

“Practicality” in the National Question

10. Responding to Rosa Luxemburg’s insistence that the Soviet Union’s program contains nothing “practical,” Lenin asks what the demand for practicality in the national question means. How does he answer his own question here?
11. In his answer Lenin points to 3 possible interpretations of practicality in the national question. Discuss each one at length.
12. For example, why does Lenin argue that following the lead of the bourgeoisie on their interpretation of practicality on the national question will result in the proletariat following their lead and falling into opportunism?

13. What does Lenin offer in terms of advice for ensuring the proletariat does not subordinate its own national liberation to the bourgeoisie's national liberation?
14. What role does Lenin afford education in this process?
15. How does Lenin explain that what is practical for proletarian self-determination is impractical for the bourgeoisie and vice-versa?
16. Why does Lenin argue that it is fundamental for the proletariat in their struggle continuously demand the right to secession to avoid being subverted by bourgeois practicality?
17. Why is combating all nationalism and national privileges central to oppressed nations' right to self-determination?
18. What is the difference between internationalism and nationalism? How do these competing orientations approach the question of self-determination differently?

The Liberal Bourgeoisie and the Socialist Opportunists in the National Question

19. In Lenin's thorough critique of Rosa Luxemburg he now takes aim at her insistence that advocating for the right of self-determination is actually to support the bourgeois nationalism of oppressed nations. How does Lenin respond to this assertion? How is it relevant today in countries such as Syria, Iran, and Russia for example?
20. Lenin then argues that to assess the importance of oppressed nations advocating for their right to self-determination and their right to secession it is necessary to review the orientations of all social classes to this question. What conclusion does Lenin come to? How does he come to this conclusion? What evidence does he draw on?
21. What is the attitude of the capitalist class toward the rights of the multinational working class in the US? What does this mean for communist organizing in the US?
22. What is the crucial difference between secession and separatism? Why does Lenin focus on this?
23. Why do Liberals hold such a hostile view of oppressed nations' right to self-determination? What parallels can we draw with liberal tendencies and their orientation toward communists in the US?

Norway's Secession from Sweden

24. Lenin argues that Rosa Luxemburg takes up the issue of Norway's secession from Sweden but winds up completely avoiding the issue. How does Lenin explain this?

25. What conclusions does Lenin come to in regards to Norway's secession from Sweden?
26. What lessons might we take from Lenin here in regards to our own time and context?
27. What can be learned from the Swedish workers' attitude toward Norwegian workers' right to secession?

The Resolution of the London International Congress, 1896

28. Why is it so important, for Lenin, to challenge Rosa Luxemburg on what he describes as her shifting and shuffling to avoid the first part of the 1896 Resolution of the International proclaiming the right of nations to self-determination?
29. Discuss the issue and significance of the independence of Poland as discussed by Lenin.
30. What is the contemporary significance of the question of self-determination of nations?

The Utopian Karl Marx and the Practical Rosa Luxemburg

31. Discuss the significance of the following passage where Lenin summarizes Marx and Engels' position on the national question: "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)."
32. How does Lenin summarize Marx's position on the national question in regards to Ireland. Why is this significant in terms of challenging Luxemburg?
33. How does Lenin use Marx's shifting position on the way in which Irish liberation would come about to strengthen his position? How does this discussion further reinforce the general need for the party's positions to always be grounded in the constantly developing concrete situation rather than on decontextualized theoretical dogmas?
34. How does Lenin then discuss the theoretical grounds Marx's position was based upon?
35. Lenin ends this chapter emphasizing the educational lessons Marx's example offers the working class. How would you sum-

marize this educational implication? How is Marx's example here continuing to teach the communist movement in the contemporary context?

The 1903 Program and Its Liquidators

36. Discuss how the Resolution of the 1903 Second Congress impacted Luxemburg's 1908 Polish article, according to Lenin.
37. How does Lenin answer his own question: "How was 'self-determination' understood by the delegates to the Second Congress?"
38. What critique of Trotsky does Lenin make? What contemporary relevance might you see?
39. What is "Liquidationism" and why does Lenin oppose it?

Conclusion

40. How does Lenin summarize the issue of self-determination?
41. What challenges does Lenin identify that lay ahead for the proletarian struggle, which includes workers from oppressed nations as well as from oppressor nations? Why is this such an important distinction when considering self-determination?
42. What points of relevance do you see in Lenin's conclusion with the struggle in the contemporary context?

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The Right of Nations to Self-Determination

Written: February–May 1914

Source: Lenin's *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1972, Moscow, Volume 20, pp. 393–454.

Clause 9 of the Russian Marxists' Programme, which deals with the right of nations to self-determination, has (as we have already pointed out in *Prosveshcheniye*)¹ given rise lately to a crusade on the part of the opportunists. The Russian liquidator Semkovsky, in the St. Petersburg liquidationist newspaper, and the Bundist Liebman and the Ukrainian nationalist-socialist Yurkevich in their respective periodicals have violently attacked this clause and treated it with supreme contempt. There is no doubt that this campaign of a motley array of opportunists against our Marxist Programme is closely connected with present-day nationalist vacillations in general. Hence we consider a detailed examination of this question timely. We would mention, in passing, that none of the opportunists named above has offered a single argument of his own; they all merely repeat what Rosa Luxemburg said in her lengthy Polish article of 1908–09, "The National Question and Autonomy." In our exposition we shall deal mainly with the "original" arguments of this last-named author.

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 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?

It is not surprising that the Semkovskys, Liebmans and Yurkeviches did not even think of raising this question, and shrugged it off by scoffing at the “obscurity” of the Marxist Programme, apparently unaware, in their simplicity, that the self-determination of nations is dealt with, not only in the Russian Programme of 1903, but in the resolution of the London International Congress of 1896 (with which I shall deal in detail in the proper place). Far more surprising is the fact that Rosa Luxemburg, who declaims a great deal about the supposedly abstract and metaphysical nature of the clause in question, should herself succumb to the sin of abstraction and metaphysics. It is Rosa Luxemburg herself who is continually lapsing into generalities about self-determination (to the extent even of philosophising amusingly on the question of how the will of the nation is to be ascertained), without any where clearly and precisely asking herself whether the gist of the matter lies in legal definitions or in the experience of the national movements throughout the world.

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* No.11, 1907–08; Russian translation in the journal *Nauchnaya Mysl*,³ 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” (backward). Needless to say, Kautsky speaks of abnormality exclusively in the sense of lack of conformity with what is best adapted to the requirements of a developing capitalism.

The question now is: How did Rosa Luxemburg treat these historico-economic conclusions of Kautsky’s? Are they right or wrong? Is Kautsky right in his historico-economic theory, or is Bauer, whose theory is basically psychological? What is the connection between Bauer’s undoubted “national opportunism,” his defence of cultural-national autonomy, his nationalistic infatuation (“an occasional emphasis on the national aspect,” as Kautsky put it), his “enormous exaggeration of the national aspect and

complete neglect of the international aspect” (Kautsky)—and his underestimation of the strength of the urge to create a national state?

Rosa Luxemburg has not even raised this question. She has not noticed the connection. She has not considered the *sum total* of Bauer’s theoretical views. She has not even drawn a line between the historico-economic and the psychological theories of the national question. She confines herself to the following remarks in criticism of Kautsky:

“This ‘best’ national state is only an abstraction, which can easily be developed and defended theoretically, but which does not correspond to reality.”
(*Przegląd Socjaldemokratyczny*, 1908, No. 6, p. 499.)

And in corroboration of this emphatic statement there follow arguments 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*.⁴ 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 circumstance 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 capitalism 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 multi-national 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.

The conditions under which the bourgeois-democratic demand for a "national state" should be supported from a Marxist, i.e., class-proletarian, point of view will be dealt with in detail below. For the present, we shall confine ourselves to the definition of the *concept* of "self-determination," and

only note that Rosa Luxemburg *knows* what this concept means (“national state”), whereas her opportunist partisans, the Liebmanns, the Semkovskys, the Yurkeviches, *do not even know that!*

Notes

1. See pp. 17–51 of this volume.—*Ed.*
2. *Die Neue Zeit*—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 the founders of Marxism were first published in this journal, among them K. Marx’s *Critique of the Gotha Programme* and Engels’s “Criticism of the Draft Social-Democratic Programme of 1891.” Engels often gave pointers to the editors of *Die Neue Zeit* and criticised their deviations from Marxism. Other prominent leaders of the German and international labour movement who contributed to the journal at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries were A. Bebel, W. Liebknecht, R. Luxemburg, F. Mehring, Clara Zetkin, G. V. Plekhanov and P. Lafargue. Beginning with the late nineties, after the death of Engels, the journal regularly published articles by revisionists, including a series of articles by E. Bernstein “Problems of Socialism,” which launched a revisionists’ campaign against Marxism. During World War I the journal took a centrist stand and supported the social-chauvinists.
3. *Nauchnaya Mysl (Scientific Thought)*—a journal of a Menshevik trend, published in Riga in 1908.
4. See Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1959, p. 765. p. 399

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.

It is here that we come up against the weakest point in Rosa Luxemburg's arguments. With extraordinary zeal, she embellishes her article with a collection of hard words directed against §9 of our Programme, which she

declares to be “sweeping,” “a platitude,” “a metaphysical phrase,” and so on without end. It would be natural to expect an author who so admirably condemns metaphysics (in the Marxist sense, i.e., anti-dialectics) and empty abstractions to set us an example of how to make a concrete historical analysis of the question. The question at issue is the national programme of the Marxists of a definite country—Russia, in a definite period—the beginning of the twentieth century. But does Rosa Luxemburg raise the question as to *what historical* period Russia is passing through, or *what are the concrete* features of the national question and the national movements of that *particular* country in that *particular* period?

No, she does not! *She says absolutely nothing about it!* In her work you will not find even the shadow of an analysis of how the national question stands in *Russia* in the present historical period, or of the specific features of *Russia* in this particular respect!

We are told that the national question in the Balkans is presented differently from that in Ireland; that Marx appraised the Polish and Czech national movements in the concrete conditions of 1848 in such and such a way (a page of excerpts from Marx); that Engels appraised the struggle of the forest cantons of Switzerland against Austria and the Battle of Morgarten which took place in 1315 in such and such a way (a page of quotations from Engels with the appropriate comments from Kautsky); that Lassalle regarded the peasant war in Germany of the sixteenth century as reactionary, etc.

It cannot be said that these remarks and quotations have any novelty about them, but at all events it is interesting for the reader to be occasionally reminded just how Marx, Engels and Lassalle approached the analysis of concrete historical problems in individual countries. And a perusal of these instructive quotations from Marx and Engels reveals most strikingly the ridiculous position Rosa Luxemburg has placed herself in, she preaches eloquently and angrily the need for a concrete historical analysis of the national question in different countries at different times, but she *does not make the least* attempt to determine *what* historical stage in the development of capitalism *Russia* is passing through at the beginning of the twentieth century, or what the *specific features* of the national question in this country are. Rosa Luxemburg gives examples of how *others* have treated the question in a Marxist fashion, as if deliberately stressing how often the road to hell is paved with good intentions and how often good counsel covers up unwillingness or inability to follow such advice in practice.

Here is one of her edifying comparisons. In protesting against the demand for the independence of Poland, Rosa Luxemburg refers to a

pamphlet she wrote in 1898, proving the rapid “industrial development of Poland,” with the latter’s manufactured goods being marketed in Russia. Needless to say, no conclusion whatever can be drawn from this on the question of the *right* to self-determination; it only proves the disappearance of the old Poland of the landed gentry, etc. 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. 12¹). 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.

Thus, Rosa Luxemburg does not get her arguments to hang together even on the question of the social structure of the government in Russia with regard to bourgeois Poland; as for the concrete, historical, specific features of the national movements in Russia—she does not even raise that question.

That is a point we must now deal with.

Note

1. See pp. 45–51 of this volume.—*Ed.*

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

“Despite the elasticity of the principle of ‘the right of nations to self-determination’, which is a mere platitude, and, obviously, equally applicable, not only to the nations inhabiting Russia, but also to the nations inhabiting Germany and Austria, Switzerland and Sweden, America and Australia, we do not find it in the programmes of any of the present-day socialist parties. . . .” (*Przeгляд*No. 6, p. 483)

This is how Rosa Luxemburg opens her attack upon §9 of the Marxist programme. In trying to foist on us the conception that this clause in the programme is a “mere platitude,” Rosa Luxemburg herself falls victim to this error, alleging with amusing boldness that this point is, “obviously, equally applicable” to Russia, Germany, etc.

Obviously, we shall reply, Rosa Luxemburg has decided to make her article a collection, of errors in logic that could be used for schoolboy exercises. For Rosa Luxemburg’s tirade is sheer nonsense and a mockery of the historically concrete presentation of the question.

If one interprets the Marxist programme in Marxist fashion, not in a childish way, one will without difficulty grasp the fact that it refers to bourgeois-democratic national movements. That being the case, it is “obvious” that this programme “sweepingly,” and as a “mere platitude,” etc., covers *all* instances of bourgeois-democratic national movements. No less obvious to Rosa Luxemburg, if she gave the slightest thought to it, is the conclusion that our programme refers *only* to cases where such a movement is actually in existence.

Had she given thought to these obvious considerations, Rosa Luxemburg would have easily perceived what non sense she was talking. In accusing us of uttering a “platitude” she has used *against us* the argument that no mention is made of the right to self-determination in the programmes of countries where there are no bourgeois-democratic national movements. A remarkably clever argument!

A comparison of the political and economic development of various countries, as well as of their Marxist programmes, is of tremendous importance from the standpoint of Marxism, for there can be no doubt that all modern states are of a common capitalist nature and are therefore subject to a common law of development. But such a comparison must be drawn in a sensible way. The elementary condition for comparison is to find out whether the historical periods of development of the countries concerned are at all *comparable*. For instance, only absolute ignoramuses (such as Prince Y. Trubetskoi in *Russkaya Mysl*) are capable of “comparing” the Russian Marxists’

agrarian programme with the programmes of Western Europe, since our programme replies to questions that concern the *bourgeois-democratic* agrarian reform, whereas in the Western countries no such question arises.

The same applies to the national question. In most Western countries it was settled long ago. It is ridiculous to seek an answer to non-existent questions in the programmes of Western Europe. In this respect Rosa Luxemburg has lost sight of the most important thing—the difference between countries, where bourgeois-democratic reforms have long been completed, and those where they have not.

The crux of the matter lies in this difference. Rosa Luxemburg's complete disregard of it transforms her verbose article into a collection of empty and meaningless platitudes.

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 ABCs 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.

But let us continue the quotation from Rosa Luxemburg's article a little more. She writes:

“In particular, the programme of a party which is operating in a state with an extremely varied national composition, and for which the national question is a matter of first-rate importance—the programme of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party—does not contain the principle of the right of nations to self-determination.” (Ibid.)

Thus, an attempt is made to convince the reader by the example of Austria “in particular.” Let us examine this example in the light of concrete historical facts and see just how sound it is.

In the first place, let us pose the fundamental question of the completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. In Austria, this revolution began in 1848 and was over in 1867. Since then, a more or less fully established bourgeois constitution has dominated, for nearly half a century, and on its basis a legal workers' party is legally functioning.

Therefore, in the internal conditions of Austria's development (i.e., from the standpoint of the development of capitalism in Austria in general, and among its various nations in particular), there are *no* factors that produce leaps and bounds, a concomitant of which might be the formation of nationally independent states. In assuming, by her comparison, that Russia is in an analogous position in this respect, Rosa Luxemburg not only makes a fundamentally erroneous and anti-historical assumption, but also involuntarily slips into liquidationism.

Secondly, the profound difference in the relations between the nationalities in Austria and those in Russia is particularly important for the question we are concerned with. Not only was Austria for a long time a state in which the Germans preponderated, but the Austrian Germans laid claim to hegemony in the German nation as a whole. This "claim," as Rosa Luxemburg (who is seemingly so averse to commonplaces, platitudes, abstractions . . .) will perhaps be kind enough to remember, was shattered in the war of 1866. The German nation predominating in Austria found itself *outside the pale* of the independent German state which finally took shape in 1871. On the other hand, the Hungarians' attempt to create an independent national state collapsed under the blows of the Russian serf army as far back as 1849.

A very peculiar situation was thus created—a striving on the part of the Hungarians and then of the Czechs, not for separation from Austria, but, on the contrary, for the preservation of Austria's integrity, precisely in order to preserve national independence, which might have been completely crushed by more rapacious and powerful neighbours! Owing to this peculiar situation, Austria assumed the form of a dual state, and she is now being transformed into a triple state (Germans, Hungarians, Slavs).

Is there anything like this in Russia? Is there in our country a striving of the "subject peoples" for unity with the Great Russians in face of the danger of *worse* national oppression?

One need only pose this question in order to see that the comparison between Russia and Austria on the question of self-determination of nations is meaningless, platitudinous and ignorant.

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.

Incidentally, even from the purely factual angle, Rosa Luxemburg’s assertion that the Austrian Social-Democrats’ programme does not contain any recognition of the right of nations to self-determination is incorrect. We need only open the Minutes of the Brünn Congress, which adopted the national programme,¹ to find the statements by the Ruthenian Social-Democrat Hankiewicz on behalf of the entire Ukrainian (Ruthenian) delegation (p. 85 of the Minutes), and by the Polish Social-Democrat Reger on behalf of the entire Polish delegation (p. 108), to the effect that one of the aspirations of the Austrian Social-Democrats of both the above-mentioned nations is to secure national unity, and the freedom and independence of their nations. Hence, while the Austrian Social-Democrats did not include the right of nations to self-determination directly in their programme, they did nevertheless allow the demand for national independence to be advanced by *sections* of the party. In effect, this means, of course, the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination! Thus, Rosa Luxemburg’s reference to Austria speaks *against* Rosa Luxemburg in *all* respects.

Note

1. See Note 11. p. 408

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 mere 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 population¹ 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 cut 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.

This propaganda may be “unpractical” from the point of view of the Great-Russian oppressors, as well as from the point of view of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations (both demand a *definite* “yes” or “no,” and accuse the Social-Democrats of being “vague”). In reality it is this propaganda, and this propaganda alone, that ensures the genuinely democratic, the genuinely socialist education of the masses. This is the only propaganda to ensure the greatest chances of national peace in Russia, should she remain a multi-national state, and the most peaceful (and for the proletarian class struggle, harmless) division into separate national states, should the question of such a division arise.

To explain this policy—the only proletarian policy—in the national question more concretely, we shall examine the attitude of Great-Russian liberalism towards the “self-determination of nations,” and the example of Norway’s secession from Sweden.

Notes

1. A certain L.VI.² 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!). — *Lenin*
2. *L. VI.*—L. Vladimirov (pseudonym of M. K. Sheinfinkel)—a Social-Democrat.

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

We have seen that the following argument is one of Rosa Luxemburg's "trump cards" in her struggle against the programme of the Marxists in Russia: recognition of the right to self-determination is tantamount to supporting the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nations. On the other hand, she says, if we take this right to mean no more than combating all violence against other nations, there is no need for a special clause in the programme, for Social-Democrats are, in general, opposed to all national oppression and inequality.

The first argument, as Kautsky irrefutably proved nearly twenty years ago, is a case of blaming other people for one's own nationalism; in her fear of the nationalism of the bourgeoisie of oppressed nations, Rosa Luxemburg is *actually* playing into the hands of the Black-Hundred nationalism of the Great Russians! Her second argument is actually a timid evasion of the question whether or not recognition of national equality includes recognition of the right to secession. If it does, then Rosa Luxemburg admits that, in principle, §9 of our Programme is correct. If it does not, then she does not recognise national equality. Shuffling and evasions will not help matters here!

However, the best way to test these and all similar arguments is to study the attitude of the *various classes* of society towards this question. For the Marxist this test is obligatory. We must proceed from what is objective; we must examine the relations between the classes on this point. In failing to do so, Rosa Luxemburg is guilty of those very sins of metaphysics, abstractions, platitudes, and sweeping statements, etc., of which she vainly tries to accuse her opponents.

We are discussing the Programme of the Marxists *in Russia*, i.e., of the Marxists of all the nationalities in Russia. Should we not examine the position of the *ruling* classes of Russia?

The position of the "bureaucracy" (we beg pardon for this inaccurate term) and of the feudal landlords of our united-nobility type is well known. They definitely reject both the equality of nationalities and the right to self-determination. Theirs is the old motto of the days of serfdom: autocracy, orthodoxy, and the national essence—the last term applying only to the Great-Russian nation. Even the Ukrainians are declared to be an "alien" people and their very language is being suppressed.

Let us glance at the Russian bourgeoisie, which was "called upon" to take part—a very modest part, it is true, but nevertheless some part—in

the government, under the “June Third” legislative and administrative system. It will not need many words to prove that the Octobrists are following the Rights in this question. Unfortunately, some Marxists pay much less attention to the stand of the Great-Russian liberal bourgeoisie, the Progressists and the Cadets. Yet he who fails to study that stand and give it careful thought will inevitably flounder in abstractions and groundless statements in discussing the question of the right of nations to self-determination.

Skilled though it is in the art of diplomatically evading direct answers to “unpleasant” questions, *Rech*, the principal organ of the Constitutional-Democratic Party, was compelled, in its controversy with *Pravda* last year, to make certain valuable admissions. The trouble started over the All-Ukraine Students’ Congress held in Lvov in the summer of 1913.⁴ Mr. Mogilyansky, the “Ukrainian expert” or Ukrainian correspondent of *Rech*, wrote an article in which he poured vitriolic abuse (“ravings,” “adventurism,” etc.) on the idea that the Ukraine should secede, an idea which Dontsov, a nationalist-socialist, had advocated and the above-mentioned congress approved.

While in no way identifying itself with Mr. Dontsov, and declaring explicitly that he was a nationalist-socialist and that many Ukrainian Marxists did not agree with him, *Rabochaya Pravda* stated that the *tone of Rech*, or, rather, the *way it formulated the question in principle*, was improper and reprehensible for a Great-Russian democrat, or for anyone desiring to pass as a democrat.¹ Let *Rech* repudiate the Dontsovs if it likes, but, *from the standpoint of principle*, a Great-Russian organ of democracy, which it claims to be, cannot be oblivious of the *freedom* to secede, the *right* to secede.

A few months later, *Rech*, No. 331, published an “explanation” from Mr. Mogilyansky, who had learned from the Ukrainian newspaper *Shlyakhi*,⁵ published in Lvov, of Mr. Dontsov’s reply, in which, incidentally, Dontsov stated that “the chauvinist attacks in *Rech* have been properly sullied [branded?] only in the Russian Social-Democratic press.” This “explanation” consisted of the thrice-repeated statement that “criticism of Mr. Dontsov’s recipes” “has nothing in common with the repudiation of the right of nations to self-determination.”

“It must be said,” wrote Mr. Mogilyansky, “that even ‘the right of nations to self-determination’ is not a fetish [mark this!] beyond criticism: unwholesome conditions in the life of nations may give rise to unwholesome tendencies in national self-determination, and the fact that these are brought to light does not mean that the right of nations to self-determination has been rejected.”

As you see, this liberal's talk of a "fetish" was quite in keeping with Rosa Luxemburg's. It was obvious that Mr. Mogilyansky was trying to evade a direct reply to the question whether or not he recognised the right to political self-determination, i.e., to secession.

The newspaper *Proletarskaya Pravda*, issue No. 4, for December 11, 1913, also put this question *point-blank* to Mr. Mogilyansky and to the Constitutional-Democratic Party.²

Thereupon *Rech* (No. 340) published an unsigned, i.e., official, editorial statement replying to this question. This reply boils down to the following three points:

- 1) §11 of the Constitutional-Democratic Party's programme speaks bluntly, precisely and clearly of the "right of nations to free *cultural* self-determination."
- 2) *Rech* affirms that *Proletarskaya Pravda* "hopelessly confuses" self-determination with separatism, with the secession of a given nation.
- 3) "Actually, the Cadets have never pledged themselves to advocate the right of 'nations to secede' from the Russian state." (See the article "National-Liberalism and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," in *Proletarskaya Pravda* No. 12, December 20, 1913.³)

Let us first consider the second point in the *Rech* statement. How strikingly it shows to the Semkovskys, Liebmans, Yurkeviches and other opportunists that the hue and cry they have raised about the alleged "vagueness," or "indefiniteness," of the term "self-determination" is *in fact*, i.e., from the standpoint of objective class relationships and the class struggle in Russia, *simply a rehash* of the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie's utterances!

Proletarskaya Pravda put the following *three* questions to the enlightened "Constitutional-Democratic" gentlemen of *Rech*: (1) do they deny that, throughout the entire history of international democracy, and especially since the middle of the nineteenth century, self-determination of nations has been understood to mean precisely political self-determination, the right to form an independent national state? (2) do they deny that the well-known resolution adopted by the International Socialist Congress in London in 1896 has the same meaning? and (3) do they deny that Plekhanov, in writing about self-determination as far back as 1902, meant precisely political self-determination? When *Proletarskaya Pravda* posed these three questions, *the Cadets fell silent!*

Not a word did they utter in reply, for they had nothing to say. They had to admit tacitly that *Proletarskaya Pravda* was absolutely right.

The liberals' outcries that the term "self-determination" is vague and that the Social-Democrats "hopelessly confuse" it with separatism are nothing more than attempts to *confuse* the issue, and evade recognition of a universally established democratic principle. If the Semkovskys, Liebman and Yurkeviches were not so ignorant, they would be ashamed to address the Workers in a *liberal* vein.

But to proceed. *Proletarskaya Pravda* compelled *Rech* to admit that, in the programme of the Constitutional-Democrats, the term "cultural" self-determination means in effect the *repudiation of political* self-determination.

"Actually, the Cadets have never pledged themselves to advocate the right of 'nations to secede' from the Russian state"—it was not without reason that *Proletarskaya Pravda* recommended to *Novoye Vremya* and *Zemshchina* these words from *Rech* as an example of our Cadets' "loyalty." In its issue No. 13563, *Novoye Vremya*, which never, of course, misses an opportunity of mentioning "the Yids" and taking digs at the Cadets, nevertheless stated:

"What, to the Social-Democrats, is an axiom of political wisdom [i.e., recognition of the right of nations to self-determination, to secede], is today beginning to cause disagreement even among the Cadets."

By declaring that they "have never pledged themselves to advocate the right of nations to secede from the Russian state," the Cadets have, in principle, taken exactly the same stand as *Novoye Vremya*. This is precisely one of the fundamentals of Cadet *national-liberalism*, of their kinship with the Purishkeviches, and of their dependence, political, ideological and practical, on the latter. *Proletarskaya Pravda* wrote: "The Cadets have studied history and know only too well what—to put it mildly—pogrom-like actions the practice of the ancient right of the Purishkeviches to 'grab 'em and hold 'em' has often led to." Although perfectly aware of the feudal source and nature of the Purishkeviches' omnipotence; the Cadets are, nevertheless, taking their stand *on the basis* of the relationships and frontiers created by that very class. Knowing full well that there is much in the relationships and frontiers created or fixed by this class that is un-European and anti-European (we would say Asiatic if this did not sound undeservedly slighting to the Japanese and Chinese), the Cadets, nevertheless, accept them as the utmost limit.

Thus, they are adjusting themselves to the Purishkeviches, cringing to them, fearing to jeopardise their position, protecting them from the people's movement, from the democracy. As *Proletarskaya Pravda* wrote: "In effect, this means adapting oneself to the interests of the feudal-minded

landlords and to the worst nationalist prejudices of the dominant nation, instead of systematically combating those prejudices.”

Being men who are familiar with history and claim to be democrats, the Cadets do not even attempt to assert that the democratic movement, which is today characteristic of both Eastern Europe and Asia and is striving to change both on the model of the civilised capitalist countries, is bound to leave intact the boundaries fixed by the feudal epoch, the epoch of the omnipotence of the Purishkeviches and the disfranchisement of wide strata of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.

The fact that the question raised in the controversy between *Proletarskaya Pravda* and *Rech* was not merely a literary question, but one that involved a real political issue of the day, was proved, among other things, by the last conference of the Constitutional-Democratic Party held on March 23–25, 1914; in the official report of this conference in *Rech* (No. 83, of March 26, 1914) we read:

“A particularly lively discussion also took place on national problems. The Kiev deputies, who were supported by N. V. Nekrasov and A. M. Kolyubakin, pointed out that the national question was becoming a key issue, which would have to be faced up to more resolutely than hitherto. F. F. Kokoshkin pointed out, however [this “however” is like Shchedrin’s “but”—“the ears never grow higher than the forehead, never!”] that both the programme and past political experience demanded that ‘elastic formulas’ of ‘political self-determination of nationalities’ should be handled very carefully.”

This most remarkable line of reasoning at the Cadet conference deserves serious attention from all Marxists and all democrats. (We will note in parentheses that *Kievskaya Mysl*, which is evidently very well informed and no doubt presents Mr. Kokoshkin’s ideas correctly, added that, of course, as a warning to his opponents, he laid special stress on the danger of the “disintegration” of the state.)

The official report in *Rech* is composed with consummate diplomatic skill designed to lift the veil as little as possible and to conceal as much as possible. Yet, in the main, what took place at the Cadet conference is quite clear. The liberal-bourgeois delegates, who were familiar with the state of affairs in the Ukraine, and the “Left” Cadets raised the question *precisely of the political* self-determination of nations. Otherwise, there would have been no need for Mr. Kokoshkin to urge that this “formula” should be “handled carefully.”

The Cadet programme, which was of course known to the delegates at the Cadet conference, speaks of “cultural,” *not* of political self-determination.

Hence, Mr. Kokoshkin was *defending* the programme *against* the Ukrainian delegates, and *against* the Left Cadets; he was defending “cultural” self-determination *as opposed* to “political” self-determination. It is perfectly clear that in opposing “political” self-determination, in playing up the danger of the “disintegration of the state,” and in calling the formula “political self-determination” an “*elastic*” one (quite in keeping with Rosa Luxemburg!), Mr. Kokoshkin was defending Great-Russian national-liberalism against the more “Left” or more democratic elements of the Constitutional-Democratic Party and also against the Ukrainian bourgeoisie.

Mr. Kokoshkin won the day at the Cadet conference, as is evident from the treacherous little word “however” in the *Rech* report; Great-Russian national-liberalism has triumphed among the Cadets. Will not this victory help to clear the minds of those misguided individuals among the Marxists in Russia who, like the Cadets, have also begun to fear the “elastic formulas of political self-determination of nationalities”?

Let us, “however,” examine the substance of Mr. Kokoshkin’s line of thought. By referring to “past political experience” (i.e., evidently, the experience of 1905, when the Great-Russian bourgeoisie took alarm for its national privileges and scared the Cadet Party with its fears), and also by playing up the danger of the “disintegration of the state,” Mr. Kokoshkin showed that he understood perfectly well that political self-determination can mean nothing else but the right to secede and form an independent national state. The question is—how should Mr. Kokoshkin’s fears be appraised in the light of democracy in general, and the proletarian class struggle in particular?

Mr. Kokoshkin would have us believe that recognition of the right to secession increases the danger of the “disintegration of the state.” This is the viewpoint of Constable Mymretsov, whose motto was “grab ’em and hold ’em.” From the viewpoint of democracy in general, the very opposite is the case: recognition of the right to secession *reduces* the danger of the “disintegration of the state.”

Mr. Kokoshkin argues exactly like the nationalists do. At their last congress they attacked the Ukrainian “Mazepists.” The Ukrainian movement, Mr. Savenko and Co. exclaimed, threatens to weaken the ties between the Ukraine and Russia, since Austrian Ukrainophilism is strengthening the Ukrainians’ ties with Austria! It remains unexplained why Russia cannot try to “strengthen” her ties with the Ukrainians *through the same method* that the Savenkos blame Austria for using, i.e., by granting the Ukrainians freedom to use their own language, self-government and an autonomous Diet.

The arguments of the Savenkos and Kokoshkins are exactly alike, and from the purely logical point of view they are equally ridiculous and absurd. Is it not clear that the more liberty the Ukrainian nationality enjoys in any particular country, the stronger its ties with that country will be? One would think that this truism could not be disputed without totally abandoning all the premises of democracy. Can there be greater freedom of nationality, as such, than the freedom to secede, the freedom to form an independent national state?

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 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”⁶ 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.

Thus, from whatever angle we approach Mr. Kokoshkin’s arguments, they prove to be the height of absurdity and a mockery of the principles of democracy. And yet there is a modicum of logic in these arguments, the logic of the class interests of the Great-Russian bourgeoisie. Like most members of the Constitutional-Democratic Party, Mr. Kokoshkin is a lackey of the money-bags of that bourgeoisie. He defends its privileges in general, and its *state* privileges in particular. He defends them hand in hand and shoulder to shoulder with Purishkevich, the only difference being that Purishkevich puts more faith in the feudalist cudgel, while Kokoshkin and Co. realise that this cudgel was badly damaged in 1905, and rely more on bourgeois methods of fooling the masses, such as frightening the petty bourgeoisie and the peasants with the spectre of the “disintegration of the state,” and deluding them with phrases about blending “people’s freedom” with historical tradition, etc.

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.

We will get even more striking confirmation of this if we take the concrete case of Norway’s secession from Sweden.

Notes

1. See present edition, Vol. 19, pp. 268–69.—*Ed.*
2. See present edition, Vol. 19, pp. 525–27.—*Ed.*
3. See pp. 56–58 of this volume.—*Ed.*
4. This refers to the *Second All-Ukraine Students’ Congress* held in Lvov on June 19–22 (July 2–5), 1913, to coincide with anniversary celebrations in honour of Ivan Franko, the great Ukrainian writer, scholar, public figure, and revolutionary democrat. A report “The Ukrainian Youth and the Present Status of the Nations” was made at the Congress by the Ukrainian Social-Democrat Dontsov, who supported the slogan of an “independent” Ukraine.
5. *Shlyakhi (Paths)*—organ of the Ukrainian Students’ Union (nationalistic trend), published in Lvov from April 1913 to March 1914.
6. Lenin is quoting from Griboyedov’s comedy *Wit Works Woe*.

6. Norway's Secession From Sweden

Rosa Luxemburg cites precisely this example, and discusses it as follows:

“The latest event in the history of federative relations, the secession of Norway from Sweden—which at the time was hastily seized upon by the social-patriotic Polish press (see the Cracow *Naprzod*²) as a gratifying sign of the strength and progressive nature of the tendency towards state secession—at once provided striking proof that federalism and its concomitant, separation, are in no way an expression of progress or democracy. After the so-called Norwegian ‘revolution’, which meant that the Swedish king was deposed and compelled to leave Norway, the Norwegians coolly proceeded to choose another king, formally rejecting, by a national referendum, the proposal to establish a republic. That which superficial admirers of all national movements and of all semblance of independence proclaimed to be a ‘revolution’ was simply a manifestation of peasant and petty-bourgeois particularism, the desire to have a king ‘of their own’ for their money instead of one imposed upon them by the Swedish aristocracy, and was, consequently, a movement that had absolutely nothing in common with revolution. At the same time, the dissolution of the union between Sweden and Norway showed once more to what extent, in this case also, the federation which had existed until then was only an expression of purely dynastic interests and, therefore, merely a form of monarchism and reaction.” (*Przeglad.*)

That is literally all that Rosa Luxemburg has to say on this score! Admittedly, it would have been difficult for her to have revealed the hopelessness of her position more saliently than she has done in this particular instance.

The question was, and is: do the Social-Democrats in a mixed national state need a programme that recognises the right to self-determination or secession?

What does the example of Norway, cited by Rosa Luxemburg, tell us on this point?

Our author twists and turns, exercises her wit and rails at *Naprzod*, but she does not answer the question! Rosa Luxemburg speaks about everything under the sun so as to *avoid saying a single word* about the actual point at issue!

Undoubtedly, in wishing to have a king of their own for their money, and in rejecting, in a national referendum, the proposal to establish a republic, the Norwegian petty bourgeoisie displayed exceedingly bad philistine qualities. Undoubtedly, *Naprzod* displayed equally bad and equally philistine qualities in failing to notice this.

But what has all this to do with the case?

The question under discussion was the right of nations to self-determination and the attitude to be adopted by the socialist proletariat towards this right! Why, then, does not Rosa Luxemburg answer this question instead of beating about the bush?

To a mouse there is no stronger beast than the cat, it is said. To Rosa Luxemburg there is evidently no stronger beast than the “Fracy.” “Fracy” is the popular term for the “Polish Socialist Party,” its so-called revolutionary section, and the Cracow newspaper *Naprzod* shares the views of that “section.” Rosa Luxemburg is so blinded by her fight against the nationalism of that “section” that she loses sight of everything except *Naprzod*.

If *Naprzod* says “yes,” Rosa Luxemburg considers it her sacred duty to say an immediate “no,” without stopping to think that by so doing she does not reveal independence of *Naprzod*, but, on the contrary, her ludicrous dependence on the “Fracy” and her inability to see things from a view point any deeper and broader than that of the Cracow ant hill. *Naprzod*, of course, is a wretched and by no means Marxist organ; but that should not prevent us from properly analysing the example of Norway, once we have chosen it.

To analyse this example in Marxist fashion, we must deal, not with the vices of the awfully terrible “Fracy,” but, first, with the concrete historical features of the secession of Norway from Sweden, and secondly, with the tasks which confronted the *proletariat* of both countries in connection with this secession.

The geographic, economic and language ties between Norway and Sweden are as intimate as those between the Great Russians and many other Slav nations. But the union between Norway and Sweden was not a voluntary one, and in dragging in the question of “federation” Rosa Luxemburg was talking at random, simply because she did not know what to say. Norway was *ceded* to Sweden by the monarchs during the Napoleonic wars, against the will of the Norwegians; and the Swedes had to bring troops into Norway to subdue her.

Despite the very extensive autonomy which Norway enjoyed (she had her own parliament, etc.), there was constant friction between Norway and Sweden for many decades after the union, and the Norwegians strove hard to throw off the yoke of the Swedish aristocracy. At last, in August 1905, they succeeded: the Norwegian parliament resolved that the Swedish king was no longer king of Norway, and in the referendum held later among the Norwegian people, the overwhelming majority (about 200,000 as against a few hundred) voted for complete separation from Sweden. After a short period of indecision, the Swedes resigned themselves to the fact of secession.

This example shows us on what grounds cases of the secession of nations are practicable, and actually occur, under modern economic and political relationships, and the *form* secession sometimes assumes under conditions of political freedom and democracy.

No Social-Democrat will deny—unless he would profess indifference to questions of political freedom and democracy (in which case he is naturally no longer a Social-Democrat)—that this example *virtually* proves that it is the *bounden duty* of class-conscious workers to conduct systematic propaganda and prepare the ground for the settlement of conflicts that may arise over the secession of nations, not in the “Russian way,” but *only in the way* they were settled in 1905 between Norway and Sweden. This is exactly what is meant by the demand in the programme for the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination. But Rosa Luxemburg tried to get around a fact that was repugnant to her theory by violently attacking the philistinism of the Norwegian philistines and the Cracow *Naprzod*; for she understood perfectly well that this historical fact *completely refutes* her phrases about the right of nations to self-determination being a “utopia,” or like the right “to eat off gold plates,” etc. Such phrases only express a smug and opportunist belief in the immutability of the present alignment of forces among the nationalities of Eastern Europe.

To proceed. In the question of the self-determination of nations, as in every other question, we are interested, first and foremost, in the self-determination of the proletariat within a given nation. Rosa Luxemburg modestly evaded this question too, for she realised that an analysis of it on the basis of the example of Norway, which she herself had chosen, would be disastrous to her “theory.”

What position did the Norwegian and Swedish proletariat take, and indeed had to take, in the conflict over secession? *After* Norway seceded, the class-conscious workers of Norway would naturally have voted for a republic,¹ and if some socialists voted otherwise it only goes to show how much dense, philistine opportunism there sometimes is in the European socialist movement. There can be no two opinions about that, and we mention the point only because Rosa Luxemburg is trying to obscure the issue by speaking *off the mark*. We do not know whether the Norwegian socialist programme made it obligatory for Norwegian Social-Democrats to hold particular views on the question of secession. We will assume that it did not, and that the Norwegian socialists left it an open question as to what extent the autonomy of Norway gave sufficient scope to wage the class struggle freely, or to what extent the eternal friction and conflicts with the Swedish aristocracy hindered freedom of economic life. But it cannot be disputed

that the Norwegian proletariat had to oppose this aristocracy and support Norwegian peasant democracy (with all its philistine limitations).

And the Swedish proletariat? It is common knowledge that the Swedish landed proprietors, abetted by the Swedish clergy, advocated war against Norway. Inasmuch as Norway was much weaker than Sweden, had already experienced a Swedish invasion, and the Swedish aristocracy carries enormous weight in its own country, this advocacy of war presented a grave danger. We may be sure that the Swedish Kokoshkins spent much time and energy in trying to corrupt the minds of the Swedish people by appeals to “handle” the “elastic formulas of political self-determination of nations carefully,” by painting horrific pictures of the danger of the “disintegration of the state” and by assuring them that “people’s freedom” was compatible with the traditions of the Swedish aristocracy. There cannot be the slightest doubt that the Swedish Social-Democrats would have betrayed the cause of socialism and democracy if they had not fought with all their might to combat both the landlord and the “Kokoshkin” ideology and policy, and if they had failed to demand, *not only* equality of nations in general (to which the Kokoshkins also subscribe), but also the right of nations to self-determination, Norway’s freedom to secede.

The close alliance between the Norwegian and Swedish workers, their complete fraternal class solidarity, *gained* from the Swedish workers’ recognition of the right of the Norwegians to secede. This convinced the Norwegian workers that the Swedish workers were not infected with Swedish nationalism, and that they placed fraternity with the Norwegian proletarians above the privileges of the Swedish bourgeoisie and aristocracy. The dissolution of the ties imposed upon Norway by the monarchs of Europe and the Swedish aristocracy strengthened the ties between the Norwegian and Swedish workers. The Swedish workers have proved that in spite of *all* the vicissitudes of bourgeois policy—bourgeois relations may quite possibly bring about a repetition of the forcible subjection of the Norwegians to the Swedes!—they will be able to preserve and defend the complete equality and class solidarity of the workers of both nations in the struggle against both the Swedish and the Norwegian bourgeoisie.

Incidentally, this reveals how groundless and even frivolous are the attempts sometimes made by the “Fracy” to “use” our disagreements with Rosa Luxemburg against Polish Social-Democracy. The “Fracy” are not a proletarian or a socialist party, but a petty-bourgeois nationalist party, something like Polish Social-Revolutionaries. There never has been, nor could there be, any question of unity between the Russian Social-Democrats and this party. On the other hand, no Russian Social-Democrat has ever “repented” of the close relations and unity that have been established with

the Polish Social-Democrats. The Polish Social-Democrats have rendered a great historical service by creating the first really Marxist, proletarian party in Poland, a country imbued with nationalist aspirations and passions. Yet the service the Polish Social-Democrats have rendered is a great one, not because Rosa Luxemburg has talked a lot of nonsense about §9 of the Russian Marxists' Programme, but despite that sad circumstance.

The question of the "right to self-determination" is of course not so important to the Polish Social-Democrats as it is to the Russian. It is quite understandable that in their zeal (sometimes a little excessive, perhaps) to combat the nationalistically blinded petty bourgeoisie of Poland the Polish Social-Democrats should overdo things. No Russian Marxist has ever thought of blaming the Polish Social-Democrats for being opposed to the secession of Poland. These Social-Democrats err only when, like Rosa Luxemburg, they try to deny the necessity of including the recognition of the right to self-determination in the Programme of the *Russian* Marxists.

Virtually, this is like attempting to apply relationships, understandable by Cracow standards, to all the peoples and nations inhabiting Russia, including the Great Russians. It means being "Polish nationalists the wrong way round," not Russian, not international Social-Democrats.

For international Social-Democracy stands for the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination. This is what we shall now proceed to discuss.

Notes

1. Since the majority of the Norwegian nation was in favour of a monarchy while the proletariat wanted a republic, the Norwegian proletariat was, generally speaking, confronted with the alternative: either revolution, if conditions were ripe for it, or submission to the will of the majority and prolonged propaganda and agitation work. —*Lenin*
2. *Naprzod* (Forward)—central organ of the Social-Democratic Party of Galicia and Silesia, published in Cracow beginning with 1892. The newspaper, which was a vehicle of petty-bourgeois nationalist ideas, was described by Lenin as "a very bad, and not at all Marxist organ."

7. 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.”¹

As we have already pointed out, our opportunists—Semkovsky, Liebman and Yurkevich—are simply unaware of this resolution. But Rosa Luxemburg knows it and quotes the full text, which contains the same expression as that contained in our programme, viz., “self-determination.”

How does Rosa Luxemburg remove this obstacle from the path of her “original” theory?

Oh, quite simply . . . the whole emphasis lies in the second part of the resolution . . . its declarative character . . . one can refer to it only by mistake!

The feebleness and utter confusion of our author are simply amazing. Usually it is only the opportunists who talk about the consistent democratic and socialist points in the programme being mere declarations, and cravenly avoid an open debate on them. It is apparently not without reason that Rosa Luxemburg has this time found herself in the deplorable company of the Semkovskys, Liebmanns and Yurkeviches. Rosa Luxemburg does not venture to state openly whether she regards the above resolution as correct or erroneous. She shifts and shuffles as if counting on the inattentive or ill-informed reader, who forgets the first part of the resolution by the time he has started reading the second, or who has never heard of the discussion that took place in the socialist press *prior* to the London Congress.

Rosa Luxemburg is greatly mistaken, however, if she imagines that, in the sight of the class-conscious workers of Russia, she can get away with trampling upon the resolution of the International on such an important fundamental issue, without even deigning to analyse it critically.

Rosa Luxemburg’s point of view was voiced during the discussions which took place prior to the London Congress, mainly in the columns of *Die Neue Zeit*, organ of the German Marxists; *in essence this point of view was defeated in the International!* That is the crux of the matter, which the Russian reader must particularly bear in mind.

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 that this resolution is absolutely correct, and that, to the countries 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,³ 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.^{2,4}

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, or 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 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, Koshkin 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.

Notes

1. See the official German report of the London Congress: *Verhandlungen und Beschlüsse des internationalen sozialistischen Arbeiterund Gewerkschafts-Kongresses zu London, vom 27. Juli bis 1. August 1896*, Berlin, 1896, 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.” —*Lenin*
2. 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. —*Lenin*
3. This refers to the abolition of serfdom in Russia in 1861.
4. Lenin is referring to the Polish national liberation insurrection of 1863–64 against the yoke of the tsarist autocracy. The original cause of the rising was the tsarist government’s decision to carry out a special recruitment aimed at removing the revolutionary-minded youth *en masse* from the cities. At first the rising was led by a Central National Committee formed by the petty-nobles’ party of the “Reds” in 1862. Its programme demanding national independence for Poland, equal rights for all men in the land, irrespective of religion or birth, transfer to the peasants of the land tilled by them with full right of ownership and without redemption payments, abolition of the *corvée*, compensation for the landlords for the alienated lands out of the state funds, etc., attracted to the uprising diverse sections of the Polish population—artisans,

workers, students, intellectuals from among the gentry, part of the peasantry and the clergy.

In the course of the insurrection, elements united around the party of the “Whites” (the party of the big landed aristocracy and the big bourgeoisie) joined it with the intention of using it in their own interests and, with the help of Britain and France, securing a profitable deal with the tsarist government.

The attitude of the revolutionary democrats of Russia towards the rebels was one of deep sympathy, the members of *Zemlya i Volya* secret society associated with N. G. Chernyshevsky trying to give them every possible assistance. The Central Committee of *Zemlya i Volya* issued an appeal “To the Russian Officers and Soldiers,” which was distributed among the troops sent to suppress the insurrection. A. I. Herzen and N. P. Ogaryov published a number of articles in *Kolokol* devoted to the struggle of the Polish people, and rendered material aid to the rebels.

Owing to the inconsistency of the party of the “Reds,” which failed to hold the revolutionary initiative, the leadership of the uprising passed into the hands of the “Whites,” who betrayed it. By the summer of 1864, the insurrection was brutally crushed by the tsarist troops.

Marx and Engels, who regarded the Polish insurrection of 1863–64 as a progressive movement, were fully in sympathy with it and wished the Polish people victory in its struggle for national liberation. On behalf of the German emigrant colony in London, Marx wrote an appeal for aid to the Poles.

8. The Utopian Karl Marx and the Practical Rosa Luxemburg

Calling Polish independence a “utopia” and repeating this *ad nauseam*, Rosa Luxemburg exclaims ironically: Why not raise the demand for the independence of Ireland?

The “practical” Rosa Luxemburg evidently does not know what Karl Marx’s attitude to the question of Irish independence was. It is worth while dwelling upon this, so as to show how a *concrete* demand for national independence was analysed from a genuinely Marxist, not opportunist, standpoint.

It was Marx’s custom to “sound out” his socialist acquaintances, as he expressed it, to test their intelligence and the strength of their convictions.³ After making the acquaintance of Lopatin, Marx wrote to Engels on July 5, 1870, expressing a highly flattering opinion of the young Russian socialist but adding at the same time:

“*Poland* is his weak point. On this point he speaks quite like an Englishman—say, an English Chartist of the old school—about Ireland.”⁴

Marx questions a socialist belonging to an oppressor nation about his attitude to the oppressed nation and at once reveals a defect *common* to the socialists of the dominant nations (the English and the Russian): failure to understand their socialist duties towards the downtrodden nations, their echoing of the prejudices acquired from the bourgeoisie of the “dominant nation.”

Before passing on to Marx’s positive declarations on Ireland, we must point out that in general the attitude of Marx and Engels to the national question was strictly critical, and that they recognised its historically conditioned importance. Thus, Engels wrote to Marx on May 23, 1851, that the study of history was leading him to pessimistic conclusions in regard to Poland, that the importance of Poland was temporary—only until the agrarian revolution in Russia. The role of the Poles in history was one of “bold (hotheaded) foolishness.” “And one cannot point to a single instance in which Poland has successfully represented progress, even in relation to Russia, or done anything at all of historical importance.” Russia contains more of civilisation, education, industry and the bourgeoisie than “the Poland of the indolent gentry.” “What are Warsaw and Cracow compared to St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa!” Engels had no faith in the success of the Polish gentry’s insurrections.

But all these thoughts, showing the deep insight of genius, by no means prevented Engels and Marx from treating the Polish movement with the most profound and ardent sympathy twelve years later, when Russia was still dormant and Poland was seething.

When drafting the Address of the International in 1864, Marx wrote to Engels (on November 4, 1864) that he had to combat Mazzini’s nationalism, and went on to say: “Inasmuch as international politics occurred in the Address, I spoke of countries, not of nationalities, and denounced Russia, not the *minores gentium*.” Marx had no doubt as to the subordinate position of the national question as compared with the “labour question.” But his theory is as far from ignoring national movements as heaven is from earth.

Then came 1866. Marx wrote to Engels about the “Proudhonist clique” in Paris which “declares nationalities to be an absurdity, attacks Bismarck and Garibaldi. As polemics against chauvinism their doings are useful and explicable. But as believers in Proudhon (Lafargue and Longuet, two very good friends of mine here, also belong to them), who think all Europe must and will sit quietly on their hind quarters until the gentlemen in France abolish poverty and ignorance—they are grotesque.” (Letter of June 7, 1866.)

“Yesterday,” Marx wrote on June 20, 1866,

“there was a discussion in the International Council on the present war. . . . The discussion wound up, as was to be foreseen, with ‘the question

of nationality' in general and the attitude we take towards it. . . . The representatives of 'Young France' (*non workers*) came out with the announcement that all nationalities and even nations were 'antiquated prejudices'. Proud-honoured Stürnerism. . . . The whole world waits until the French are ripe for a social revolution. . . . The English laughed very much when I began my speech by saying that our friend Lafargue and others, who had done away with nationalities, had spoken 'French' to us, i.e., a language which nine-tenths of the audience did not understand. I also suggested that by the negation of nationalities he appeared, quite unconsciously, to understand their absorption by the model French nation."

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).¹

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. . . . I used to think the separation of Ireland from England impossible. I now think it inevitable, although 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:

"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 proceedings 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 workingmen’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* [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.)

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 in 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 bourgeois-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,² *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 and socialists, and a concession to *English* reaction and the *English* bourgeoisie.

Notes

1. Cf. also Marx’s letter to Engels of June 3, 1867: “...I have learned with real pleasure from the Paris letters to *The Times* about the pro-Polish exclamations of the Parisians against Russia...Mr. Proudhon and his little doctrinaire clique are not the French people.” —*Lenin*
2. 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 (a though, 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.” —*Lenin*
3. Lenin refers to W. Liebknecht’s reminiscences of Man. (See the symposium *Reminiscences of Marx and Engels*, Moscow, 1957, p. 98.)
4. See Man’s letter to Engels dated July 5, 1870.
5. *The New York Daily Tribune*—an American newspaper published from 1841 to 1924. Until the middle fifties it was the organ of the Left wing of the American Whigs, and thereafter the organ of the Republican Party. Karl Marx contributed to the paper from August 1851 to March 1862, and at his request Freder-

ick Engels wrote numerous articles for it. During the period of reaction that set in in Europe, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels used this widely circulated and at that time progressive newspaper to publish concrete material exposing the evils of capitalist society. During the American Civil War Marx's contributions to the newspaper stopped. His break with *The New York Daily Tribune* was largely due to the growing influence on the editorial board of the advocates of compromise with the slam-owners, and the papers's departure from progressive positions. Eventually the newspaper swung still more to the right.

9. The 1903 Programme and its Liquidators

The Minutes of the 1903 Congress, at which the Programme of the Russian Marxists was adopted, have become a great rarity, and the vast majority of the active members of the working-class movement today are unacquainted with the motives underlying the various points (the more so since not all the literature relating to it enjoys the blessings of legality . . .). It is therefore necessary to analyse the debate that took place at the 1903 Congress on the question under discussion.

Let us state first of all that however meagre the Russian Social-Democratic literature on the "right of nations to self-determination" may be, it nevertheless shows clearly that this right has always been understood to mean the right to secession. The Semkovskys, Liebman and Yurkeviches who doubt this and declare that §9 is "vague," etc., do so only because of their sheer ignorance or carelessness. As far back as 1902, Plekhanov, in *Zarya*, defended "the right to self-determination" in the draft programme, and wrote that this demand, while not obligatory upon bourgeois democrats, was "obligatory upon Social-Democrats." "If we were to for got it or hesitate, to advance it," Plekhanov wrote, "for fear of offending the national prejudices of our fellow-countrymen of Great-Russian nationality, the call . . . 'workers of all countries, unite!' would be a shameful lie on our lips. . . ."³

This is a very apt description of the fundamental argument in favour of the point under consideration; so apt that it is not surprising that the "anythingarian" critics of our programme have been timidly avoiding it. The abandonment of this point, no matter for what motives, is *actually* a "shameful" concession to *Great-Russian* nationalism. But why Great-Russian, when it is a question of the right of *all* nations to self-determination? Because it refers to secession *from* the Great Russians. The interests of the *unity of the proletarians*, the interests of their class solidarity call for recognition of the right of *nations to secede*—that is what Plekhanov admitted twelve years ago

in the words quoted above. Had our opportunists given thought to this they would probably not have talked so much nonsense about self-determination.

At the 1903 Congress, which adopted the draft programme that Plekhanov advocated, the main work was done by the *Programme Commission*. Unfortunately no Minutes of its proceedings were kept; they would have been particularly interesting on this point, for it was *only* in the Commission that the representatives of the Polish Social-Democrats, Warszawski and Hanecki, tried to defend their views and to dispute “recognition of the right to self-determination.” Any reader who goes to the trouble of comparing their arguments (set forth in the speech by Warszawski and the statement by him and Hanecki, pp. 134–36 and 388–90 of the Congress Minutes) with those which Rosa Luxemburg advanced in her Polish article, which we have analysed, will find them identical.

How were these arguments treated by the Programme Commission of the Second Congress, where Plekhanov, more than anyone else, spoke against the Polish Marxists? They were mercilessly ridiculed! The absurdity of proposing to the Marxists of *Russia* that they should reject the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination was demonstrated so plainly and clearly that the Polish Marxists *did not even venture to repeat their arguments at the plenary meeting of the Congress!* They left the Congress, convinced of the hopelessness of their case at the supreme assembly of Marxists—Great-Russian, Jewish, Georgian, and Armenian.

Needless to say, this historic episode is of very great importance to everyone seriously interested in *his own* programme. The fact that the Polish Marxists’ arguments were completely defeated at the Programme Commission of the Congress, and that the Polish Marxists gave up the attempt to defend their views at the plenary meeting of the Congress is very significant. No wonder Rosa Luxemburg maintained a “modest” silence about it in her article in 1908—the recollection of the Congress must have been too unpleasant! She also kept quiet about the ridiculously inept proposal made by Warszawski and Hanecki in 1903, on behalf of all Polish Marxists, to “amend” §9 of the Programme, a proposal which neither Rosa Luxemburg nor the other Polish Social-Democrats have ventured (or will ever venture) to repeat.

But although Rosa Luxemburg, concealing her defeat in 1903, has maintained silence over these facts, those who take an interest in the history of their Party will make it their business to ascertain them and give thought to their significance.

On leaving the 1903 Congress, Rosa Luxemburg’s friends submitted the following statement:

“We propose that Clause 7 [now Clause 9] of the draft programme read as follows: § 7. *Institutions guaranteeing full freedom of cultural development to all nations incorporated in the state.*” (P. 390 of the Minutes.)

Thus, the Polish Marxists at that time put forward views on the national question that were so vague that *instead of* self-determination they practically proposed the notorious “cultural-national autonomy,” only under another name!

This sounds almost incredible, but unfortunately it is a fact. At the Congress itself, attended though it was by five Bundists with five votes and three Caucasians with six votes, without counting Kostrov’s consultative voice, *not a single* vote was cast for the *rejection* of the clause about self-determination. Three votes were cast for the proposal to add “cultural-national autonomy” to this clause (in favour of Goldblatt’s formula: “the establishment of institutions guaranteeing the nations full freedom of cultural development”) and four votes for Lieber’s formula (“the right of nations to freedom in their cultural development”).

Now that a Russian liberal party—the Constitutional-Democratic Party—has appeared on the scene, we know that in *its* programme the political self-determination of nations has been replaced by “cultural self-determination.” Rosa Luxemburg’s Polish friends, therefore, were “*combating*” the nationalism of the P.S.P., and, did it so successfully that they proposed the substitution of a *liberal* programme for the Marxist programme! And in the same breath they accused our programme of being opportunist; no wonder this accusation was received with laughter by the Programme Commission of the Second Congress!

How was “self-determination” understood by the delegates to the Second Congress, of whom, as we have seen, *not one* was opposed to “self-determination of nations”?

The following three extracts from the Minutes provide the answer:

“*Martynov* is of the opinion that the term ‘self-determination’ should not be given a broad interpretation; it merely means the right of a nation to establish itself as a separate polity, not regional self-government” (p. 171). *Martynov* was a member of the Programme Commission, in which the arguments of Rosa Luxemburg’s friends were repudiated and ridiculed. *Martynov* was then an Economist in his views, and a violent opponent of *Iskra*; had he expressed an opinion that was not shared by the majority of the Programme Commission he would certainly have been repudiated.

Bundist Goldblatt was the first to speak when the Congress, after the Commission had finished its work, discussed §8 (the present Clause 9) of the Programme.

He said:

“No objections can be raised to the ‘right to self-determination’. When a nation is fighting for independence, that should not be opposed. If Poland refuses to enter into lawful marriage with Russia, she should not be interfered with, as Plekhanov put it. I agree with this opinion within these limits” (pp. 175–76).

Plekhanov had not spoken on this subject at all at the plenary meeting of the Congress. Goldblatt was referring to what Plekhanov had said at the Programme Commission, where the “right to self-determination” had been explained in a simple yet detailed manner to mean the right to secession. Lieber, who spoke after Goldblatt, remarked:

“Of course, if any nationality finds that it cannot live within the frontiers of Russia, the *Party* will not place any obstacles in its way” (p. 176).

The reader will see that at the Second Congress of the Party, which adopted the programme, it was unanimously understood that self-determination meant “only” the right to secession. Even the Bundists grasped this truth at the time, and it is only in our own deplorable times of continued counter-revolution and all sorts of “apostasy” that we can find people who, bold in their ignorance, declare that the programme is “vague.” But before devoting time to these sorry would-be Social-Democrats, let us first finish with the attitude of the Poles to the programme.

They came to the Second Congress (1903) declaring that unity was necessary and imperative. But they left the Congress after their “reverses” in the Programme Commission, and their *last word* was a written statement, printed in the Minutes of the Congress, containing the above-mentioned proposal to *substitute* cultural-national autonomy for self-determination.

In 1906 the Polish Marxists joined the Party; *neither* upon joining *nor* afterwards (at the Congress of 1907, the conferences of 1907 and 1908, or the plenum of 1910) *did they introduce* a single proposal to amend §9 of the Russian Programme!

That is a fact.

And, despite all utterances and assurances, this fact definitely proves that Rosa Luxemburg’s friends regarded the question as having been settled by the debate at the Programme Commission of the Second Congress,

as well as by the decision of that Congress, and that they tacitly acknowledged their mistake and corrected it by joining the Party in 1906, after they had left the Congress in 1903, without a single attempt to raise the question of amending §9 of the Programme through *Party* channels.

Rosa Luxemburg's article appeared over her signature in 1908—of course, it never entered anyone's head to deny Party publicists the right to criticise the programme—and, *since* the Writing of this article, *not a single* official body of the Polish Marxists has raised the question of revising §9.

Trotsky was therefore: rendering a great disservice to certain admirers of Rosa Luxemburg when he wrote, on behalf of the editors of *Borba*, in issue No. 2 of that publication (March 1914):

“The Polish Marxists consider that ‘the right to national self-determination’ is entirely devoid of political content and should be deleted from the programme.” (p. 25)

The obliging Trotsky is more dangerous than an enemy! Trotsky could produce *no* proof, except “private conversations” (i.e., simply gossip, on which Trotsky always subsists), for classifying “Polish Marxists” in general as supporters of every article by Rosa Luxemburg. Trotsky presented the “Polish Marxists” as people devoid of honour and conscience, incapable of respecting even their own convictions and the programme of their Party. How obliging Trotsky is!

When, in 1903, the representatives of the Polish Marxists walked out of the Second Congress *over* the right to self-determination, Trotsky could have said at *the time* that they regarded this right as devoid of content and subject to deletion from the programme.

But after that the Polish Marxists *joined* the Party whose programme this was, and they have never introduced a motion to amend it.¹

Why did Trotsky withhold these facts from the readers of his journal? Only because it pays him to speculate on fomenting differences between the Polish and the Russian opponents of liquidationism and to deceive the Russian workers on the question of the programme.

Trotsky has never yet held a firm opinion on any important question of Marxism. He always contrives to worm his way into the cracks of any given difference of opinion, and desert one side for the other. At the present moment he is in the company of the Bundists and the liquidators. And these gentlemen do not stand on ceremony where the Party is concerned.

Listen to the Bundist Liebman.

“When, fifteen years ago,” this gentleman writes, “the Russian Social-Democrats included the point about the right of every nationality to ‘self-determination’ in their programme, everyone [!] asked himself: What does this fashionable [!] term really mean? No answer was forthcoming [!]. This word was left [!] wrapped in mist. And indeed, at the time, it was difficult to dispel that mist. The moment had not come when this point could be made concrete—it was said—so let it remain wrapped in mist [!] for the time being and practice will show what content should be put into it.”

Isn't it magnificent, the way this “ragamuffin”⁴ mocks at the Party programme?

And why does he mock at it?

Because he is an absolute ignoramus, who has never learnt anything or even read any Party history, but merely happened to land in liquidationist circles where going about in the nude is considered the “right” thing to do as far as knowledge of the Party and everything it stands for is concerned.

Pomyalovsky's seminary student boasts of having “spat into a barrel of sauerkraut.”⁵ The Bundist gentlemen have gone one better. They let the Liebmans loose to spit publicly into their own barrel. What do the Liebmans care about the fact that the International Congress has passed a decision, that at the Congress of their own Party the representatives of their own Bund proved that they were quite able (and what “severe” critics and determined enemies of *Iskra* they were!) to understand the meaning of “self-determination” and were even in agreement with it? And will it not be easier to liquidate the Party if the “Party publicists” (no jokes, please!) treat its history and programme after the fashion of the seminary student?

Here is a second “ragamuffin,” Mr. Yurkevich of *Dzvin*. Mr. Yurkevich must have had the Minutes of the Second Congress before him, because he quotes Plekhanov, as repeated by Goldblatt, and shows that he is aware of the fact that self-determination can only mean the right to secession. This, however, does not prevent him from spreading slander about the Russian Marxists among the Ukrainian petty bourgeoisie, alleging that they stand for the “state integrity” of Russia. (No. 7–8, 1913, p. 83, etc.) Of course, the Yurkeviches could not have invented a better method than such slander to alienate the Ukrainian democrats from the Great-Russian democrats. And such alienation is in line with the entire policy of the group of *Dzvin* publicists who advocate the *separation* of the Ukrainian workers *in a special* national organisation!²

It is quite appropriate, of course, that a group of nationalist philistines, who are engaged in splitting the ranks of the proletariat—and objectively this is the role of *Dzvin*—should disseminate such hopeless confusion on

the national question. Needless to say, the Yurkeviches and Liebman, who are “terribly” offended when they are called “near Party men,” do not say a word, not a single word, as to how *they* would like the problem of the right to secede to be settled in the programme.

But here is the third and principal “ragamuffin,” Mr. Semkovsky, who, addressing a Great-Russian audience through the columns of a liquidationist newspaper, lashes at §9 of the Programme and at the same time declares that “for certain reasons he does not approve of the proposal” to delete this clause!

This is incredible, but it is a fact.

In August 1912, the liquidators’ conference raised the national question officially. For eighteen months not a single article has appeared on the question of §9, except the one written by Mr. Semkovsky. And in this article the author *repudiates* the programme, “without approving,” however, “for *certain* reasons” (is this a secrecy disease?) the proposal to amend it! We may be sure that it would be difficult to find anywhere in the world similar examples of opportunism, or even worse—renunciation of the Party, and a desire to liquidate it.

A single example will suffice to show what Semkovsky’s arguments are like:

“What are we to do,” he writes, “if the Polish proletariat wants to fight side by side with the proletariat of all Russia within the framework of a single state, while the reactionary classes of Polish society, on the contrary, want to separate Poland from Russia and obtain a majority of votes in favour of secession by referendum? Should we, Russian Social-Democrats in the central parliament, vote together with our Polish comrades *against* secession, or—in order not to violate the ‘right to self-determination’—vote *for* secession?” (*Novaya Rabochaya Gazeta* No. 71.)

From this it is evident that Mr. Semkovsky does not even understand the *point at issue!* It did not occur to him that the right to secession presupposes the settlement of the question by a parliament (Diet, referendum, etc.) of the *seceding* region, *not* by a central parliament.

The childish perplexity over the question “What are we to do,” if under democracy the majority are for reaction, serves to screen the real and live issue when *both* the Purishkeviches and the Kokoshkins consider the very idea of secession criminal! Perhaps the proletarians of *all* Russia ought not to fight the Purishkeviches and the Kokoshkins today, but should by-pass them and fight the reactionary classes of Poland!

Such is the sheer rubbish published in the liquidators' organ of which Mr. L. Martov is one of the ideological leaders, the selfsame L. Martov who drafted the programme and spoke in favour of its adoption in 1903, and even subsequently wrote in favour of the right to secede. Apparently L. Martov is now arguing according to the rule:

*No clever man is needed there;
Better send Read,
And I shall wait and see.*⁶

He sends Read-Semkovsky along and allows our programme to be distorted, and endlessly muddled up in a daily paper whose new readers are unacquainted with it!

Yes. Liquidationism has gone a long way—there are even very many prominent ex-Social-Democrats who have not a trace of Party spirit left in them.

Rosa Luxemburg cannot, of course, be classed with the Liebman, Yurkeviches and Semkovskys, but the fact that it was this kind of people who seized upon her error shows with particular clarity the opportunism she has lapsed into.

Notes

1. We are informed that the Polish Marxists attended the Summer Conference of the Russian Marxists in 1913 with *only* a consultative voice and did not vote at all on the right to self-determination (secession), declaring their opposition to this right in general. Of course, they had a perfect right to act the way they did, and, as hitherto, to agitate in Poland against secession. But this is not quite what Trotsky said; for the Polish Marxists did not demand the “deletion” of §9 “from the programme.” —*Lenin*
2. See particularly Mr. Yurkevich's preface to Mr. Levinsky's book (written in Ukrainian) *Outline of the Development of the Ukrainian Working-Class Movement in Galicia*, Kiev, 1914. —*Lenin*
3. Lenin is quoting from G. V. Plekhanov's article “The Draft Programme of the Russian Social-Democratic Party” published in *Zarya* No. 4, 1902.

Zarya —a Marxist scientific and political journal published legally in Stuttgart in 1901–02 by the Editorial Board of *Iskra*. Altogether four numbers (three issues) of *Zarya* appeared: No. 1 in April 1901 (actually on March 23, new style); No. 2–3 in December 1901, and No. 4 in August 1902. The aims of the publication were set forth in the “Draft of a Declaration of the Editorial Board of *Iskra* and *Zarya*” written by Lenin in Russia. (See present edition, Vol. 4.) In 1902, during the disagreement and conflicts that arose on the Editorial Board of *Iskra* and *Zarya*, Plekhanov proposed a plan for separating the newspaper from the journal (with *Zarya* remaining under his editorship), but this

proposal was not accepted, and the two publications continued under a single editorial board.

Zarya criticised international and Russian revisionism, and defended the theoretical principles of Marxism. The following articles by Lenin were published in this journal: “Casual Notes,” “The Persecutors of the Zemstvo and the Hannibals of Liberalism,” “The ‘Critics’ on the Agrarian Question” (the first four chapters of “The Agrarian Question and the ‘Critics of Marx’ (this-space”), “Review of Home Affairs,” and “The Agrarian Programme of Russian Social-Democracy,” as well as Plekhanov’s articles “Criticism of Our Critics. Part I. Mr. P. Struve in the Role of Critic of the Marxian Theory of Social Development,” “Cant versus Kant, or the Testament of Mr. Bernstein” and others.

4. A quotation from the sketch “Abroad” by the Russian satirist Saltykov-Shchedrin.
5. Lenin quotes an expression from *Seminary Sketches* by the Russian writer N. G. Pomyalovsky.
6. Lenin quotes the words of a Sevastopol soldiers’ song written by Leo Tolstoy. The song is about the unsuccessful operation of the Russian troops at the river Chornaya on August 4, 1855, during the Crimean War. In that action General Read commanded two divisions.

10. 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 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 snakes 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,¹ it is inexcusable today, when nationalism and, above all, governmental 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 *inevitably* appear later on. Mr. Peshekhonov, one of the founders of the “Popular Socialist” Party, already expressed this point of view (in the issue of *Russkoye Bogatstvo* 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).² 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, 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.

* * *

This article had been set up when I received No. 3 of *Nasha Rabochaya Gazeta*, in which Mr. Vl. Kosovsky writes the following about the recognition of the right of all nations to self-determination:

“Taken mechanically from the resolution of the First Congress of the Party (1898), which in turn had borrowed it from the decisions of international socialist congresses, it was given, as is evident from the debate, the same meaning at the 1903 Congress as was ascribed to it by the Socialist International, i.e., political self-determination, the self-determination of nations in the field of political independence. Thus the formula: national self-determination, which implies the right to territorial separation, does not in any way

affect the question of how national relations *within* a given state organism should be regulated for nationalities that cannot or have no desire to leave the existing state.”

It is evident from this that Mr. Vl. Kosovsky has teen the Minutes of the Second Congress of 1903 and understands perfectly well the real (and only) meaning of the term self-determination. Compare this with the fact that the editors of the Bund newspaper *Zeit* let Mr. Liebman loose to scoff at the programme and to declare that it is vague! Queer “party” ethics among these Bundists. . . . The Lord alone knows why Kosovsky should declare that the Congress took over the principle of self-determination *mechanically*. Some people want to “object,” but how, why, and for what reason—they do not know.

Notes

1. 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. —*Lenin*
2. 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. —*Lenin*

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12

Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism

Study and Discussion Guide

Preface

1. Why do you think Lenin found it necessary to focus the whole Preface on the way that Tsarist censorship impacted the writing of *Imperialism* in 1916?
2. What does this tell us about the context in which the Russian Revolution emerged?
3. How does that context compare to our context?

Preface to French and German Editions

4. What connection is Lenin making between the inevitability of imperialist wars under capitalism and the role of railways as a summation of the basic capitalist industries?

5. Why does Lenin argue that the treaties that signaled the end of WWI greatly contributed to an emerging global revolutionary situation?
6. What reason and explanation does Lenin offer the reader the understand why he deemed it so necessary to spend so much time in Imperialism challenging Kautsky?
7. Why does Lenin argue that the labor aristocracy are the real agents of the bourgeoisie in the labor movement? Does such a stratum still exist in oppressor nations? If so, how are they similar or different today?

Concentration of Production and Monopolies

8. How does Lenin connect the way capitalism develops toward the greater concentration of productive forces to the emergence of imperialism?
9. Discuss how the competition phase of capitalism gives way to the monopoly phase.
10. How does the ability to make production estimates in the monopoly phase of capitalism already embody a socialist potential, to become its opposite?
11. Why is it significant that the competition between capitalists gives way to monopolists over powering and choking out capitalists outside the cartels?
12. Lenin notes how bourgeois economists, desperate to show capitalism in a positive light, argue that cartels are able to overcome crisis. The opposite is in fact true. Why is this important to understand?

Banks and Their New Role

13. Lenin identifies the growing power and influence of banks as one of the primary shifts that resulted in capitalism developing into capitalist imperialism. Explain and discuss this process.
14. Why does Lenin argue that the decline of the significance or importance of the Stock Exchange accompanies the transition from competitive to monopoly capitalism?
15. How did the Stock Exchange function as a regulator of capital?
16. Lenin understood education to be extremely important because of the need to counter bourgeois propaganda. Another example of the need to counter the confusion sowed by bourgeois professors Lenin observes: “The task of a bourgeois professor is not to lay bare the entire mechanism, or to expose all the machinations of the bank monopolists, but rather to present them in a favorable light.” Discuss the contemporary relevance of Lenin’s observation. How

- were bankers portrayed during the 2008 housing market crash?
How many bankers went to prison?
17. While bourgeois professors and economists work to deceive the masses, their efforts are only ever partially successful. There has always been people in every era that have fought back and refused to accept the official narrative. What does this resistance look like today?
 18. Discuss the process of concentration and its effect on banking.
 19. How did banks come to dominate industrialists?
 20. Lenin points to the way monopolized banks, concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, like never before possible, influence the development of technology and knowledge by funding “technical research societies.” We see that banks have been directly influencing the direction of education now for well over 100 years. This process has only intensified. How do bankers control education today? Think of all the ways and areas, from content/curriculum to access and student debt.

Finance Capital and the Financial Oligarchy

21. What is finance capital? How does it tend to transform the industrialist and the banker?
22. Discuss why Lenin argues that the so-called “democratization” of the ownership of stocks or shares actually increases “the power of the financial oligarchy”? Why is it in their interest to permit “the issue of shares of smaller denomination”?
23. How does finance capital operate as such? That is, explain how it “extracts enormous and ever-increasing profits from the floating of companies, issue of stock, state loans, etc. . . . and levies tribute from the whole of society”?
24. How and why does finance capital tend to dramatically expand its holdings during times of crisis, during depressions?
25. Explain why Lenin argues, in the following passage, that the tendency for the separation of different forms of capital “reaches vast proportions” with the domination of finance capital (i.e. imperialism): “It is characteristic of capitalism in general that the ownership of capital is separated from the application of capital to production, that money capital is separated from industrial or productive capital, and that the rentier who lives entirely on income obtained from money capital, is separated from the entrepreneur and from all who are directly concerned in the management of capital. Imperialism, or the domination of finance capital, is that highest stage of capitalism in which this separation reaches vast proportions.”

Export of Capital

26. Explain why imperialism signals a shift from the export of goods to the export of capital.
27. Why does Lenin include, early on in this chapter, a discussion of why degree of productiveness or development of capital has nothing to do with eliminating poverty?
28. This issue of productiveness, Lenin points out, tends to be used by bourgeois economists to make it seem like general abundance is always just around the corner. Relief is perpetually not far off. Why is this an important education issue Lenin alluded to in his speeches on the indispensable nature of education?
29. What characteristics of “underdeveloped” countries make them particularly profitable for finance capital?
30. What conditions within the most advanced capitalist countries led to the drive to export capital?
31. What impact does imperialism have on the capital-exporting countries versus the capital-importing countries, which tend to be the colonies?

Division of the World Among Capitalist Associations

32. How does Lenin explain why “The electrical industry is highly typical of the latest technical achievements and is most typical of capitalism at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries”?
33. Discuss the 1907 agreement between electric monopolies in the US and Germany. How was this an example of a global monopoly?
34. The agreement between global trusts, however, is only the product of a given balance of forces. If the balance of forces changes, so too could the agreement between trusts. This “struggle for the division of the world,” is one of the driving forces behind imperialist wars. What do we know about the global balances of forces today? Is it shifting, or showing signs of movement? If so, how, in what direction?
35. Of course a major force in this balance of power is labor. Education, for Lenin, is extremely important in terms of how this great force is oriented. What can we say about this force’s shifting tendencies today?
36. Discuss the significance of the following passage: “Certain bourgeois writers (now joined by Karl Kautsky, who has completely abandoned the Marxist position he had held, for example, in 1909) have expressed the opinion that international cartels, being one of the most striking expressions of the internationalisation of capital,

give the hope of peace among nations under capitalism. Theoretically, this opinion is absolutely absurd, while in practice it is sophistry and a dishonest defense of the worst opportunism.”

37. Why is it significant that Lenin points out that while the relative conditions effecting the struggle between imperialists changes, “its class *content*, positively *cannot* change while classes exist”?

Division of the World Among the Great Powers

38. Discuss the significance of the following passage, which makes even more clear, the tendency toward war between imperialist powers in the imperialist era, “the characteristic feature of the period under review is the final partitioning of the globe—final, not in the sense that *repartition* is impossible; on the contrary, repartitions are possible and inevitable—but in the sense that the colonial policy of the capitalist countries has *completed* the seizure of the unoccupied territories on our planet. For the first time the world is completely divided up, so that in the future *only* redivision is possible, i.e., territories can only pass from one “owner” to another, instead of passing as ownerless territory to an owner.”
39. Why did British bourgeois politicians oppose colonial policy between 1840 and 1860 believing they should be independent? Why did their views so dramatically change by the end of the nineteenth century?
40. How was it that finance capital, as a force, was able to dominate world affairs by the end of the nineteenth century?
41. Lenin offers a concise summary here of the stage that imperialism was at when he wrote the pamphlet in 1916 worth reading together and discussing its insights: “The principal feature of the latest stage of capitalism is the domination of monopolist associations of big employers. These monopolies are most firmly established when *all* the sources of raw materials are captured by one group, and we have seen with what zeal the international capitalist associations exert every effort to deprive their rivals of all opportunity of competing, to buy up, for example, iron fields, oilfields, etc. Colonial possession alone gives the monopolies complete guarantee against all contingencies in the struggle against competitors, including the case of the adversary wanting to be protected by a law establishing a state monopoly. The more capitalism is developed, the more strongly the shortage of raw materials is felt, the more intense the competition and the hunt for sources of raw materials throughout the whole world, the more desperate the struggle for the acquisition of colonies.”

42. Reflecting on the above quote, imperialism has moved through a number of stages since 1916. For example, the world's colonies erupted in a series of anti-colonial national liberation movements after WWII. The resulting rise of a global proletarian class camp, with the Soviet Union and China playing central roles shifting the global balance of power tremendously. After the fall of the Soviet Union and the so-called socialist bloc, a new balance of power led to decades of a global imperialist uni-power that is now showing signs of decay. The imperialist center, which is still the US, since the fall of the proletarian class camp, has been focused on regime in independent bourgeois nationalist countries (i.e. Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Iran, and Russia) and in socialist countries as well, especially North Korea, Cuba, and Venezuela. What aspects of imperialism have changed since Lenin and what have remained consistent (i.e. the dominance of finance capital), and why? What does this suggest about the development of imperialism and building a mass movement against it thinking about the role of education?
43. Why was it important for understanding the internal logic of capital for Lenin to point out the tendency of shortages of raw materials causing more hunger among workers than food shortages? Why would bourgeois economists try to distort or deny this tendency?

Imperialism as a Special Stage of Capitalism

44. How does Lenin summarize why imperialism is a special stage of capitalism?
45. Discuss the five features of imperialism Lenin outlines: (1) the concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life; (2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this "finance capital," of a financial oligarchy; (3) the export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance; (4) the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves, and (5) the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed. Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun, in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed.

46. After offering the above definition Lenin offers a disclaimer noting that it is limited in that it does not include its relation to the two primary trends or tendencies within the labor movement. Lenin frequently points to the power held by labor as central in the balance of forces. If we understand these places of intervention as places of pedagogical decision, how might we respond?
47. Why does imperialism tend toward war, and why have bourgeois apologists gone to such lengths to deny this?

Parasitism and Decay of Capitalism

48. Why does Lenin argue that imperialism tends toward stagnation and decay?
49. Explain and discuss this sentence: “The rentier state is a state of parasitic, decaying capitalism, and this circumstance cannot fail to influence all the socio-political conditions of the countries concerned, in general, and the two fundamental trends in the working-class movement, in particular.”
50. How do the super profits obtained through parasitism tend to lead to working-class opportunism in the imperialist countries?
51. Why do you think statements like this appear every few chapters throughout Lenin’s text? Referring to the workers’ movement Lenin reminds his readers that, “We must not, however, lose sight of the forces which counteract imperialism in general, and opportunism in particular.”
52. Shifting the burden of toil on oppressed nationalities, imperialism paves the way for the national liberation movements. While it was clear to Lenin and others that imperialism was creating its own opposition, what kind of resistance is imperialism creating today, many decades after the era of national liberation movements?

Critique of Imperialism

53. Why was there a petty-bourgeois opposition to imperialism coming from within the imperialist countries themselves during the early stages of the development of imperialism in the late nineteenth century? For example, why did competing bourgeois politicians in Congress accuse each other of being imperialists in debates over the invasion and annexation of half of Mexico between 1846 and 1848 and Puerto Rico in 1898?
54. But this bourgeois anti-imperialism stopped short of connecting imperialism to the heart of capitalism. Why? Think about those capitalists being destroyed by new imperialist developments in mo-

- nopoly (i.e. the further concentration or centralization of capital) crying in vain for time to stand still, wishing for an ontological shift where movement is no longer inevitably perpetual. Believing that capitalism, something dynamic, could become static.
55. Why does Lenin refer to Kautsky's so-called Marxist critique of imperialism, which is based on the assumption that capitalist expansion can best be promoted not by violence but by peaceful democracy, a "reformist swindle"?

The place of Imperialism in History

56. Discuss the four types of monopoly Lenin identifies: the monopoly of production; the monopoly of raw materials; the monopoly of the banks; and the monopoly of raw materials, export of capital, and spheres of influence that have grown out of colonial policy. The fourth type or manifestation of monopoly is therefore the monopoly of colonies and the "particularly intense struggle for the division and redivision of the world."
57. One of the results of monopoly is "the high cost of living." Having eliminated competition, cartels artificially inflate prices and rents. A high cost of living is therefore nothing more than a mechanism to extract ever larger sums of socially-necessary value from labor (i.e. increase the rate of exploitation). How do bourgeois propagandists today justify the resulting horrendous living conditions? How might communist or progressive activists counter this bourgeois propaganda?
58. How does Lenin come to the conclusion that capitalism is parasitic and decaying?
59. Lenin using the phrase "clipping coupons" throughout *Imperialism*. What does it mean? How can we see it being employed today?
60. Explain why the following passage was correct in 1916 for Britain and why it is correct today, although in different or more regions/countries: "... capitalism is growing far more rapidly than before; but this growth is not only becoming more and more uneven in general, its unevenness also manifests itself, in particular, in the decay of the countries which are richest in capital . . ."
61. What role does the bribing of workers play in the process outlined by Lenin? The fact that he mentions it several times throughout the book, speaks to the significance Lenin afforded it.
62. While revolutionary optimism is indispensable, how does Lenin discuss the optimism that "serves to conceal opportunism"?

Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism

Written: January-June, 1916

Source: Lenin's *Selected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1963, Moscow, Volume 1, pp. 667–766.

Preface

The pamphlet here presented to the reader was written in the spring of 1916, in Zurich. In the conditions in which I was obliged to work there I naturally suffered somewhat from a shortage of French and English literature and from a serious dearth of Russian literature. However, I made use of the principal English work on imperialism, the book by J. A. Hobson, with all the care that, in my opinion, that work deserves.

This pamphlet was written with an eye to the tsarist censorship. Hence, I was not only forced to confine myself strictly to an exclusively theoretical, specifically economic analysis of facts, but to formulate the few necessary observations on politics with extreme caution, by hints, in an allegorical language—in that accursed Aesopian language—to which tsarism compelled all revolutionaries to have recourse whenever they took up the pen to write a “legal” work.

It is painful, in these days of liberty, to re-read the passages of the pamphlet which have been distorted, cramped, compressed in an iron vice on account of the censor. That the period of imperialism is the eve of the socialist revolution; that social-chauvinism (socialism in words, chauvinism in deeds) is the utter betrayal of socialism, complete desertion to the side of the bourgeoisie; that this split in the working-class movement is bound up with the objective conditions of imperialism, etc.—on these matters I had to speak in a “slavish” tongue, and I must refer the reader who is interested in the subject to the articles I wrote abroad in 1914–17, a new edition of which is soon to appear. In order to show the reader, in a guise acceptable to the censors, how shamelessly untruthful the capitalists and the social-chauvinists who have deserted to their side (and whom Kautsky opposes so inconsistently) are on the question of annexations; in order to show how shamelessly they *screen* the annexations of *their* capitalists, I was forced to quote as an example—Japan! The careful reader will easily substitute Russia for Japan, and Finland, Poland, Courland, the Ukraine, Khiva, Bokhara, Estonia or other regions peopled by non-Great Russians, for Korea.

I trust that this pamphlet will help the reader to understand the fundamental economic question, that of the economic essence of imperialism, for unless this is studied, it will be impossible to understand and appraise modern war and modern politics.

Author

Petrograd, April 26, 1917

Preface to the French and German Editions

I

As was indicated in the preface to the Russian edition, this pamphlet was written in 1916, with an eye to the tsarist censorship. I am unable to revise the whole text at the present time, nor, perhaps, would this be advisable, since the main purpose of the book was, and remains, to present, on the basis of the summarised returns of irrefutable bourgeois statistics, and the admissions of bourgeois scholars of all countries, *a composite picture* of the world capitalist system in its international relationships at the beginning of the twentieth century—on the eve of the first world imperialist war.

To a certain extent it will even be useful for many Communists in advanced capitalist countries to convince themselves by the example of this pamphlet, legal from the standpoint of the tsarist censor, of the possibility, and necessity, of making use of even the slight remnants of legality which still remain at the disposal of the Communists, say, in contemporary America or France, after the recent almost wholesale arrests of Communists, in order to explain the utter falsity of social-pacifist views and hopes for “world democracy.” The most essential of what should be added to this censored pamphlet I shall try to present in this preface.

II

It is proved in the pamphlet that the war of 1914–18 was imperialist (that is, an annexationist, predatory, war of plunder) on the part of both sides; it was a war for the division of the world, for the partition and repartition of colonies and spheres of influence of finance capital, etc.

Proof of what was the true social, or rather, the true class character of the war is naturally to be found, not in the diplomatic history of the war, but in an analysis of the *objective* position of the ruling *classes* in *all* the belligerent countries. In order to depict this objective position one must not take examples or isolated data (in view of the extreme complexity of the phenomena of social life it is always possible to select any number of examples or separate data to prove any proposition), but *all* the data on the *basis* of economic life in *all* the belligerent countries and the whole world.

It is precisely irrefutable summarised data of this kind that I quoted in describing the *partition of the world* in 1876 and 1914 (in Chapter VI) and the division of the world’s *railways* in 1890 and 1913 (in Chapter VII). Railways are a summation of the basic capitalist industries, coal, iron and steel; a summation and the most striking index of the development of world

trade and bourgeois-democratic civilisation. How the railways are linked up with large-scale industry, with monopolies, syndicates, cartels, trusts, banks and the financial oligarchy is shown in the preceding chapters of the book. The uneven distribution of the railways, their uneven development—sums up, as it were, modern monopolist capitalism on a world-wide scale. And this summary proves that imperialist wars are absolutely inevitable under *such* an economic system, *as long as* private property in the means of production exists.

The building of railways seems to be a simple, natural, democratic, cultural and civilising enterprise; that is what it is in the opinion of the bourgeois professors who are paid to depict capitalist slavery in bright colours, and in the opinion of petty-bourgeois philistines. But as a matter of fact the capitalist threads, which in thousands of different intercrossings bind these enterprises with private property in the means of production in general, have converted this railway construction into an instrument for oppressing *a thousand million* people (in the colonies and semicolonies), that is, more than half the population of the globe that inhabits the dependent countries, as well as the wage-slaves of capital in the “civilised” countries.

Private property based on the labour of the small proprietor, free competition, democracy, all the catchwords with which the capitalists and their press deceive the workers and the peasants are things of the distant past. Capitalism has grown into a world system of colonial oppression and of the financial strangulation of the overwhelming majority of the population of the world by a handful of “advanced” countries. And this “booty” is shared between two or three powerful world plunderers armed to the teeth (America, Great Britain, Japan), who are drawing the whole world into *their* war over the division of *their* booty.

III

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk dictated by monarchist Germany, and the subsequent much more brutal and despicable Treaty of Versailles dictated by the “democratic” republics of America and France and also by “free” Britain, have rendered a most useful service to humanity by exposing both imperialism’s hired coolies of the pen and petty-bourgeois reactionaries who, although they call themselves pacifists and socialists, sang praises to “Wilsonism,” and insisted that peace and reforms were possible under imperialism.

The tens of millions of dead and maimed left by the war—a war to decide whether the British or German group of financial plunderers is to receive the

most booty—and those two “peace treaties,” are with unprecedented rapidity opening the eyes of the millions and tens of millions of people who are downtrodden, oppressed, deceived and duped by the bourgeoisie. Thus, out of the universal ruin caused by the war a world-wide revolutionary crisis is arising which, however prolonged and arduous its stages may be, cannot end otherwise than in a proletarian revolution and in its victory.

The Basle Manifesto of the Second International, which in 1912 gave an appraisal of the very war that broke out in 1914 and not of war in general (there are different kinds of wars, including revolutionary wars)—this Manifesto is now a monument exposing to the full the shameful bankruptcy and treachery of the heroes of the Second International.

That is why I reproduce this Manifesto (This Manifesto is not given as an appendix to this edition—Ed) as a supplement to the present edition, and again and again I urge the reader to note that the heroes of the Second International are as assiduously avoiding the passages of this Manifesto which speak precisely, clearly and definitely of the connection between that impending war and the proletarian revolution, as a thief avoids the scene of his crime.

IV

Special attention has been devoted in this pamphlet to a criticism of Kautskyism, the international ideological trend represented in all countries of the world by the “most prominent theoreticians,” the leaders of the Second International (Otto Bauer and Co. in Austria, Ramsay MacDonald and others in Britain, Albert Thomas in France, etc., etc.) and a multitude of socialists, reformists, pacifists, bourgeois democrats and parsons.

This ideological trend is, on the one hand, a product of the disintegration and decay of the Second International, and, on the other hand, the inevitable fruit of the ideology of the petty bourgeoisie, whose entire way of life holds them captive to bourgeois and democratic prejudices.

The views held by Kautsky and his like are a complete renunciation of those same revolutionary principles of Marxism that writer has championed for decades, especially, by the way, in his struggle against socialist opportunism (of Bernstein, Millerand, Hyndman, Gompers, etc.). It is not a mere accident, therefore, that Kautsky’s followers all over the world have now united in practical politics with the extreme opportunists (through the Second, or Yellow International) and with the bourgeois governments (through bourgeois coalition governments in which socialists take part).

The growing world proletarian revolutionary movement in general, and the communist movement in particular, cannot dispense with an analysis and exposure of the theoretical errors of Kautskyism. The more so since pacifism and “democracy” in general, which lay no claim to Marxism whatever, but which, like Kautsky and Co., are obscuring the profundity of the contradictions of imperialism and the inevitable revolutionary crisis to which it gives rise, are still very widespread all over the world. To combat these tendencies is the bounden duty of the party of the proletariat, which must win away from the bourgeoisie the small proprietors who are duped by them, and the millions of working people who enjoy more or less petty-bourgeois conditions of life.

V

A few words must be said about Chapter VIII, “Parasitism and Decay of Capitalism.” As already pointed out in the text, Hilferding, ex-“Marxist,” and now a comrade-in-arms of Kautsky and one of the chief exponents of bourgeois, reformist policy in the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, has taken a step backward on this question compared with the *frankly* pacifist and reformist Englishman, Hobson. The international split of the entire working-class movement is now quite evident (the Second and the Third Internationals). The fact that armed struggle and civil war is now raging between the two trends is also evident—the support given to Kolchak and Denikin in Russia by the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries against the Bolsheviks; the fight the Scheidemanns and Noskes have conducted in conjunction with the bourgeoisie against the Spartacists in Germany; the same thing in Finland, Poland, Hungary, etc. What is the economic basis of this world-historical phenomenon?

It is precisely the parasitism and decay of capitalism, characteristic of its highest historical stage of development, i.e., imperialism. As this pamphlet shows, capitalism has now singled out a *handful* (less than one-tenth of the inhabitants of the globe; less than one-fifth at a most “generous” and liberal calculation) of exceptionally rich and powerful states which plunder the whole world simply by “clipping coupons.” Capital exports yield an income of eight to ten thousand million francs per annum, at pre-war prices and according to pre-war bourgeois statistics. Now, of course, they yield much more.

Obviously, out of such enormous *superprofits* (since they are obtained over and above the profits which capitalists squeeze out of the workers of their “own” country) it is *possible to bribe* the labour leaders and the upper stratum of the labour aristocracy. And that is just what the capitalists of the

“advanced” countries are doing: they are bribing them in a thousand different ways, direct and indirect, overt and covert.

This stratum of workers-turned-bourgeois, or the labour aristocracy, who are quite philistine in their mode of life, in the size of their earnings and in their entire outlook, is the principal prop of the Second International, and in our days, the principal *social* (not military) *prop of the bourgeoisie*. For they are the real *agents of the bourgeoisie in the working-class* movement, the labour lieutenants of the capitalist class, real vehicles of reformism and chauvinism. In the civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie they inevitably, and in no small numbers, take the side of the bourgeoisie, the “Versaillese” against the “Communards.”

Unless the economic roots of this phenomenon are understood and its political and social significance is appreciated, not a step can be taken toward the solution of the practical problem of the communist movement and of the impending social revolution.

Imperialism is the eve of the social revolution of the proletariat. This has been confirmed since 1917 on a world-wide scale.

N. Lenin

July 6, 1920

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During the last fifteen to twenty years, especially since the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), the economic and also the political literature of the two hemispheres has more and more often adopted the term “imperialism” in order to describe the present era. In 1902, a book by the English economist J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism*, was published in London and New York. This author, whose point of view is that of bourgeois social-reformism and pacifism which, in essence, is identical with the present point of view of the ex-Marxist, Karl Kautsky, gives a very good and comprehensive description of the principal specific economic and political features of imperialism. In 1910, there appeared in Vienna the work of the Austrian Marxist, Rudolf Hilferding, *Finance Capital* (Russian edition, Moscow, 1912). In spite of the mistake the author makes on the theory of money, and in spite of a certain inclination on his part to reconcile Marxism with opportunism, this work gives a very valuable theoretical analysis of “the latest phase of capitalist development,” as the subtitle runs. Indeed, what has been said of imperialism during the last few years, especially in an enormous number of magazine and newspaper articles, and also in the resolutions, for example, of the Chemnitz and Basle congresses which took

place in the autumn of 1912, has scarcely gone beyond the ideas expounded, or more exactly, summed up by the two writers mentioned above . . .

Later on, I shall try to show briefly, and as simply as possible, the connection and relationships between the *principal* economic features of imperialism. I shall not be able to deal with the non-economic aspects of the question, however much they deserve to be dealt with. References to literature and other notes which, perhaps, would not interest all readers, are to be found at the end of this pamphlet.

I. Concentration of Production and Monopolies

The enormous growth of industry and the remarkably rapid concentration of production in ever-larger enterprises are one of the most characteristic features of capitalism. Modern production censuses give most complete and most exact data on this process.

In Germany, for example, out of every 1,000 industrial enterprises, large enterprises, i.e., those employing more than 50 workers, numbered three in 1882, six in 1895 and nine in 1907; and out of every 100 workers employed, this group of enterprises employed, 22, 30, and 37, respectively. Concentration of production, however, is much more intense than the concentration of workers, since labour in the large enterprises is much more productive. This is shown by the figures on steam-engines and electric motors. If we take what in Germany is called industry in the broad sense of the term, that is, including commerce, transport, etc., we get the following picture. Large-scale enterprises, 30,588 out of a total of 3,265,623, that is to say, 0.9 per cent. These enterprises employ 5,700,000 workers out of a total of 14,400,000, i.e., 39.4 per cent; they use 6,600,000 steam horse power out of a total of 8,800,000, i.e., 75.3 per cent, and 1,200,000 kilowatts of electricity out of a total of 1,500,000, i.e., 77.2 per cent.

Less than one-hundredth of the total number of enterprises utilise *more than three-fourths* of the total amount of steam and electric power! Two million nine hundred and seventy thousand small enterprises (employing up to five workers), constituting 91 per cent of the total, utilise only 7 per cent of the total amount of steam and electric power! Tens of thousands of huge enterprises are everything; millions of small ones are nothing.

In 1907, there were in Germany 586 establishments employing one thousand and more workers, nearly *one-tenth* (1,380,000) of the total number of workers employed in industry, and they consumed *almost one-third*

(32 per cent) of the total amount of steam and electric power.¹ As we shall see, money capital and the banks make this superiority of a handful of the largest enterprises still more overwhelming, in the most literal sense of the word, i.e., millions of small, medium and even some big “proprietors” are in fact in complete subjection to some hundreds of millionaire financiers.

In another advanced country of modern capitalism, the United States of America, the growth of the concentration of production is still greater. Here statistics single out industry in the narrow sense of the word and classify enterprises according to the value of their annual output. In 1904 large-scale enterprises with an output valued at one million dollars and over, numbered 1,900 (out of 216,180, i.e., 0.9 per cent). These employed 1,400,000 workers (out of 5,500,000, i.e., 25.6 per cent) and the value of their output amounted to \$5,600,000,000 (out of \$14,800,000,000, i.e., 38 per cent). Five years later, in 1909, the corresponding figures were: 3,060 enterprises (out of 268,491, i.e., 1.1 per cent) employing 2,000,000 workers (out of 6,600,000, i.e., 30.5 per cent) with an output valued at \$9,000,000,000 (out of \$20,700,000,000, i.e., 43.8 per cent).²

Almost half the total production of all the enterprises of the country was carried on by *one-hundredth part* of these enterprises! These 3,000 giant enterprises embrace 258 branches of industry. From this it can be seen that at a certain stage of its development concentration itself, as it were, leads straight to monopoly, for a score or so of giant enterprises can easily arrive at an agreement, and on the other hand, the hindrance to competition, the tendency towards monopoly, arises from the huge size of the enterprises. This transformation of competition into monopoly is one of the most important—if not the most important—phenomena of modern capitalist economy, and we must deal with it in greater detail. But first we must clear up one possible misunderstanding.

American statistics speak of 3,000 giant enterprises in 250 branches of industry, as if there were only a dozen enterprises of the largest scale for each branch of industry.

But this is not the case. Not in every branch of industry are there large-scale enterprises; and moreover, a very important feature of capitalism in its highest stage of development is so-called *combination* of production, that is to say, the grouping in a single enterprise of different branches of industry, which either represent the consecutive stages in the processing of raw materials (for example, the smelting of iron ore into pig-iron, the conversion of pig-iron into steel, and then, perhaps, the manufacture of steel goods)—or are auxiliary to one another (for example, the utilisation of scrap, or of by-products, the manufacture of packing materials, etc.).

“Combination,” writes Hilferding, “levels out the fluctuations of trade and therefore assures to the combined enterprises a more stable rate of profit. Secondly, combination has the effect of eliminating trade. Thirdly, it has the effect of rendering possible technical improvements, and, consequently, the acquisition of superprofits over and above those obtained by the ‘pure’ (i.e., non-combined) enterprises. Fourthly, it strengthens the position of the combined enterprises relative to the ‘pure’ enterprises, strengthens them in the competitive struggle in periods of serious depression, when the fall in prices of raw materials does not keep pace with the fall in prices of manufactured goods.”³

The German bourgeois economist, Heymann, who has written a book especially on “mixed,” that is, combined, enterprises in the German iron industry, says: “Pure enterprises perish, they are crushed between the high price of raw material and the low price of the finished product.” Thus we get the following picture: “There remain, on the one hand, the big coal companies, producing millions of tons yearly, strongly organised in their coal syndicate, and on the other, the big steel plants, closely allied to the coal mines, having their own steel syndicate. These giant enterprises, producing 400,000 tons of steel per annum, with a tremendous output of ore and coal and producing finished steel goods, employing 10,000 workers quartered in company houses, and sometimes owning their own railways and ports, are the typical representatives of the German iron and steel industry. And concentration goes on further and further. Individual enterprises are becoming larger and larger. An ever-increasing number of enterprises in one, or in several different industries, join together in giant enterprises, backed up and directed by half a dozen big Berlin banks. In relation to the German mining industry, the truth of the teachings of Karl Marx on concentration is definitely proved; true, this applies to a country where industry is protected by tariffs and freight rates. The German mining industry is ripe for expropriation.”⁴

Such is the conclusion which a bourgeois economist who, by way of exception, is conscientious, had to arrive at. It must be noted that he seems to place Germany in a special category because her industries are protected by higher tariffs. But this is a circumstance which only accelerates concentration and the formation of monopolist manufacturers’ associations, cartels, syndicates, etc. It is extremely important to note that in free-trade Britain, concentration also leads to monopoly, although somewhat later and perhaps in another form. Professor Hermann Levy, in his special work of research entitled *Monopolies, Cartels and Trusts*, based on data on British economic development, writes as follows:

“In Great Britain it is the size of the enterprise and its high technical level which harbour a monopolist tendency. This, for one thing, is due to the great investment of capital per enterprise, which gives rise to increasing demands for new capital for the new enterprises and thereby renders their launching more difficult. Moreover (and this seems to us to be the more important point), every new enterprise that wants to keep pace with the gigantic enterprises that have been formed by concentration would here produce such an enormous quantity of surplus goods that it could dispose of them only by being able to sell them profitably as a result of an enormous increase in demand; otherwise, this surplus would force prices down to a level that would be unprofitable both for the new enterprise and for the monopoly combines.” Britain differs from other countries where protective tariffs facilitate the formation of cartels in that monopolist manufacturers’ associations, cartels and trusts arise in the majority of cases only when the number of the chief competing enterprises has been reduced to “a couple of dozen or so.” “Here the influence of concentration on the formation of large industrial monopolies in a whole sphere of industry stands out with crystal clarity.”⁵

Half a century ago, when Marx was writing *Capital*, free competition appeared to the overwhelming majority of economists to be a “natural law.” Official science tried, by a conspiracy of silence, to kill the works of Marx, who by a theoretical and historical analysis of capitalism had proved that free competition gives rise to the concentration of production, which, in turn, at a certain stage of development, leads to monopoly. Today, monopoly has become a fact. Economists are writing mountains of books in which they describe the diverse manifestations of monopoly, and continue to declare in chorus that “Marxism is refuted.” But facts are stubborn things, as the English proverb says, and they have to be reckoned with, whether we like it or not. The facts show that differences between capitalist countries, e.g., in the matter of protection or free trade, only give rise to insignificant variations in the form of monopolies or in the moment of their appearance; and that the rise of monopolies, as the result of the concentration of production, is a general and fundamental law of the present stage of development of capitalism.

For Europe, the time when the new capitalism *definitely* superseded the old can be established with fair precision; it was the beginning of the twentieth century. In one of the latest compilations on the history of the “formation of monopolies,” we read:

“Isolated examples of capitalist monopoly could be cited from the period preceding 1860; in these could be discerned the embryo of the forms that are so common today; but all this undoubtedly represents the prehistory of the cartels. The real beginning of modern monopoly goes back, at the earli-

est, to the sixties. The first important period of development of monopoly commenced with the international industrial depression of the seventies and lasted until the beginning of the nineties.” “If we examine the question on a European scale, we will find that the development of free competition reached its apex in the sixties and seventies. It was then that Britain completed the construction of her old-style capitalist organisation. In Germany, this organisation had entered into a fierce struggle with handicraft and domestic industry, and had begun to create for itself its own forms of existence.”

“The great revolution commenced with the crash of 1873, or rather, the depression which followed it and which, with hardly discernible interruptions in the early eighties, and the unusually violent, but short-lived boom round about 1889, marks twenty-two years of European economic history . . . During the short boom of 1889–90, the system of cartels was widely resorted to in order to take advantage of favourable business conditions. An ill-considered policy drove prices up still more rapidly and still higher than would have been the case if there had been no cartels. and nearly all these cartels perished ingloriously in the smash. Another five-year period of bad trade and low prices followed, but a new spirit reigned in industry; the depression was no longer regarded as something to be taken for granted: it was regarded as nothing more than a pause before another boom.

“The cartel movement entered its second epoch: instead of being a transitory phenomenon, the cartels have become one of the foundations of economic life. They are winning one field of industry after another, primarily, the raw materials industry. At the beginning of the nineties the cartel system had already acquired—in the organisation of the coke syndicate on the model of which the coal syndicate was later formed—a cartel technique which has hardly been improved on. For the first time the great boom at the close of the nineteenth century and the crisis of 1900–03 occurred entirely—in the mining and iron industries at least—under the aegis of the cartels. And while at that time it appeared to be something novel, now the general public takes it for granted that large spheres of economic life have been, as a general rule, removed from the realm of free competition.”⁶

Thus, the principal stages in the history of monopolies are the following: (1) 1860–70, the highest stage, the apex of development of free competition; monopoly is in the barely discernible, embryonic stage. (2) After the crisis of 1873, a lengthy period of development of cartels; but they are still the exception. They are not yet durable. They are still a transitory phenomenon. (3) The boom at the end of the nineteenth century and the crisis of 1900–03. Cartels become one of the foundations of the whole of economic life. Capitalism has been transformed into imperialism.

Cartels come to an agreement on the terms of sale, dates of payment, etc. They divide the markets among themselves. They fix the quantity of goods to be produced. They fix prices. They divide the profits among the various enterprises, etc.

The number of cartels in Germany was estimated at about 250 in 1896 and at 385 in 1905, with about 12,000 firms participating.⁷ But it is generally recognised that these figures are underestimations. From the statistics of German industry for 1907 we quoted above, it is evident that even these 12,000 very big enterprises probably consume more than half the steam and electric power used in the country. In the United States of America, the number of trusts in 1900 was estimated at 185 and in 1907, 250. American statistics divide all industrial enterprises into those belonging to individuals, to private firms or to corporations. The latter in 1904 comprised 23.6 per cent, and in 1909, 25.9 per cent, i.e., more than one-fourth of the total industrial enterprises in the country. These employed in 1904, 70.6 per cent, and in 1909, 75.6 per cent, i.e., more than three-fourths of the total wage-earners. Their output at these two dates was valued at \$10,900,000,000 and \$16,300,000,000, i.e., 73.7 per cent and 79.0 per cent of the total, respectively.

At times cartels and trusts concentrate in their hands seven- or eight-tenths of the total output of a given branch of industry. The Rhine-Westphalian Coal Syndicate, at its foundation in 1893, concentrated 86.7 per cent of the total coal output of the area, and in 1910 it already concentrated 95.4 per cent.⁸ The monopoly so created assures enormous profits, and leads to the formation of technical production units of formidable magnitude. The famous Standard Oil Company in the United States was founded in 1900: "It has an authorised capital of \$150,000,000. It issued \$100,000,000 common and \$106,000,000 preferred stock. From 1900 to 1907 the following dividends were paid on the latter: 48, 48, 45, 44, 36, 40, 40, 40 per cent in the respective years, i.e., in all, \$367,000,000. From 1882 to 1907, out of total net profits amounting to \$889,000,000, \$606,000,000 were distributed in dividends, and the rest went to reserve capital."⁹ "In 1907 the various works of the United States Steel Corporation employed no less than 210,180 people. The largest enterprise in the German mining industry, Gelsenkirchener Bergwerksgesellschaft, in 1908 had a staff of 46,048 workers and office employees."¹⁰ In 1902, the United States Steel Corporation already produced 9,000,000 tons of steel.¹¹ Its output constituted in 1901, 66.3 per cent, and in 1908, 56.1 per cent of the total output of steel in the United States.¹² The output of ore was 43.9 per cent and 46.3 per cent, respectively.

The report of the American Government Commission on Trusts states: “Their superiority over competitors is due to the magnitude of their enterprises and their excellent technical equipment. Since its inception, the Tobacco Trust has devoted all its efforts to the universal substitution of mechanical for manual labour. With this end in view it has bought up all patents that have anything to do with the manufacture of tobacco and has spent enormous sums for this purpose. Many of these patents at first proved to be of no use, and had to be modified by the engineers employed by the trust. At the end of 1906, two subsidiary companies were formed solely to acquire patents. With the same object in view, the trust has built its own foundries, machine shops and repair shops. One of these establishments, that in Brooklyn, employs on the average 300 workers; here experiments are carried out on inventions concerning the manufacture of cigarettes, cheroots, snuff, tinfoil for packing, boxes, etc. Here, also, inventions are perfected.”¹³ “Other trusts also employ what are called development engineers whose business it is to devise new methods of production and to test technical improvements. The United States Steel Corporation grants big bonuses to its workers and engineers for all inventions that raise technical efficiency, or reduce cost of production.”¹⁴

In German large-scale industry, e.g., in the chemical industry, which has developed so enormously during these last few decades, the promotion of technical improvement is organised in the same way. By 1908 the process of concentration of production had already given rise to two main “groups” which, in their way, were also in the nature of monopolies. At first these groups constituted “dual alliances” of two pairs of big factories, each having a capital of from twenty to twenty-one million marks—on the one hand, the former Meister Factory in Höchst and the Casella Factory in Frankfurt am Main; and on the other hand, the aniline and soda factory at Ludwigshafen and the former Bayer Factory at Elberfeld. Then, in 1905, one of these groups, and in 1908 the other group, each concluded an agreement with yet another big factory. The result was the formation of two “triple alliances,” each with a capital of from forty to fifty million marks. And these “alliances” have already begun to “approach” each other, to reach “an understanding” about prices, etc.¹⁵

Competition becomes transformed into monopoly. The result is immense progress in the socialisation of production. In particular, the process of technical invention and improvement becomes socialised.

This is something quite different from the old free competition between manufacturers, scattered and out of touch with one another, and producing for an unknown market. Concentration has reached the point at which it is possible to make an approximate estimate of all sources of

raw materials (for example, the iron ore deposits) of a country and even, as we shall see, of several countries, or of the whole world. Not only are such estimates made, but these sources are captured by gigantic monopolist associations. An approximate estimate of the capacity of markets is also made, and the associations “divide” them up amongst themselves by agreement. Skilled labour is monopolised, the best engineers are engaged; the means of transport are captured—railways in America, shipping companies in Europe and America. Capitalism in its imperialist stage leads directly to the most comprehensive socialisation of production; it, so to speak, drags the capitalists, against their will and consciousness, into some sort of a new social order, a transitional one from complete free competition to complete socialisation.

Production becomes social, but appropriation remains private. The social means of production remain the private property of a few. The general framework of formally recognised free competition remains, and the yoke of a few monopolists on the rest of the population becomes a hundred times heavier, more burdensome and intolerable.

The German economist, Kestner, has written a book especially devoted to “the struggle between the cartels and outsiders,” i.e., the capitalists outside the cartels. He entitled his work *Compulsory Organisation*, although, in order to present capitalism in its true light, he should, of course, have written about compulsory submission to monopolist associations. It is instructive to glance at least at the list of the methods the monopolist associations resort to in the present-day, the latest, the civilised struggle for “organisation”: (1) stopping supplies of raw materials . . . “one of the most important methods of compelling adherence to the cartel”); (2) stopping the supply of labour by means of “alliances” (i.e., of agreements between the capitalists and the trade unions by which the latter permit their members to work only in cartelised enterprises); (3) stopping deliveries; (4) closing trade outlets; (5) agreements with the buyers, by which the latter undertake to trade only with the cartels; (6) systematic price cutting (to ruin “outside” firms, i.e., those which refuse to submit to the monopolists. Millions are spent in order to sell goods for a certain time below their cost price; there were instances when the price of petrol was thus reduced from 40 to 22 marks, i.e., almost by half!); (7) stopping credits; (8) boycott.

Here we no longer have competition between small and large, between technically developed and backward enterprises. We see here the monopolists throttling those who do not submit to them, to their yoke, to their dictation. This is how this process is reflected in the mind of a bourgeois economist:

“Even in the purely economic sphere,” writes Kestner, “a certain change is taking place from commercial activity in the old sense of the word towards organisational-speculative activity. The greatest success no longer goes to the merchant whose technical and commercial experience enables him best of all to estimate the needs of the buyer, and who is able to discover and, so to speak, ‘awaken’ a latent demand; it goes to the speculative genius [?!] who knows how to estimate, or even only to sense in advance, the organisational development and the possibilities of certain connections between individual enterprises and the banks . . .”

Translated into ordinary human language this means that the development of capitalism has arrived at a stage when, although commodity production still “reigns” and continues to be regarded as the basis of economic life, it has in reality been undermined and the bulk of the profits go to the “geniuses” of financial manipulation. At the basis of these manipulations and swindles lies socialised production; but the immense progress of mankind, which achieved this socialisation, goes to benefit . . . the speculators. We shall see later how “on these grounds” reactionary, petty-bourgeois critics of capitalist imperialism dream of going *back* to “free,” “peaceful,” and “honest” competition.

“The prolonged raising of prices which results from the formation of cartels,” says Kestner, “has hitherto been observed only in respect of the most important means of production, particularly coal, iron and potassium, but never in respect of manufactured goods. Similarly, the increase in profits resulting from this raising of prices has been limited only to the industries which produce means of production. To this observation we must add that the industries which process raw materials (and not semi-manufactures) not only secure advantages from the cartel formation in the shape of high profits, to the detriment of the finished goods industry, but have also secured a *dominating position* over the latter, which did not exist under free competition.”¹⁶

The words which I have italicised reveal the essence of the case which the bourgeois economists admit so reluctantly and so rarely, and which the present-day defenders of opportunism, led by Kautsky, so zealously try to evade and brush aside. Domination, and the violence that is associated with it, such are the relationships that are typical of the “latest phase of capitalist development”; this is what inevitably had to result, and has resulted, from the formation of all-powerful economic monopolies.

I shall give one more example of the methods employed by the cartels. Where it is possible to capture all or the chief sources of raw materials, the rise of cartels and formation of monopolies is particularly easy. It would be wrong, however, to assume that monopolies do not arise in other industries in which it is impossible to corner the sources of raw materials. The cement

industry, for instance, can find its raw materials everywhere. Yet in Germany this industry too is strongly cartelised. The cement manufacturers have formed regional syndicates: South German, Rhine-Westphalian, etc. The prices fixed are monopoly prices: 230 to 280 marks a car-load, when the cost price is 180 marks! The enterprises pay a dividend of 12 to 16 per cent—and it must not be forgotten that the “geniuses” of modern speculation know how to pocket big profits besides what they draw in dividends. In order to prevent competition in such a profitable industry, the monopolists even resort to various stratagems: they spread false rumours about the bad situation in their industry; anonymous warnings are published in the newspapers, like the following: “Capitalists, don’t invest your capital in the cement industry!”; lastly, they buy up “outsiders” (those outside the syndicates) and pay them compensation of 60,000, 80,000 and even 150,000 marks.¹⁷ Monopoly hews a path for itself everywhere without scruple as to the means, from paying a “modest” sum to buy off competitors, to the American device of employing dynamite against them.

The statement that cartels can abolish crises is a fable spread by bourgeois economists who at all costs desire to place capitalism in a favourable light. On the contrary, the monopoly created in *certain* branches of industry increases and intensifies the anarchy inherent in capitalist production *as a whole*. The disparity between the development of agriculture and that of industry, which is characteristic of capitalism in general, is increased. The privileged position of the most highly cartelised, so-called *heavy* industry, especially coal and iron, causes “a still greater lack of co-ordination” in other branches of industry—as Jeidels, the author of one of the best works on “the relationship of the German big banks to industry,” admits.¹⁸

“The more developed an economic system is,” writes Liefmann, an unblushing apologist of capitalism, “the more it resorts to risky enterprises, or enterprises in other countries, to those which need a great deal of time to develop, or finally, to those which are only of local importance.”¹⁹ The increased risk is connected in the long run with a prodigious increase of capital, which, as it were, overflows the brim, flows abroad, etc. At the same time the extremely rapid rate of technical progress gives rise to increasing elements of disparity between the various spheres of national economy, to anarchy and crises. Liefmann is obliged to admit that: “In all probability mankind will see further important technical revolutions in the near future which will also affect the organisation of the economic system” . . . electricity and aviation. . . . “As a general rule, in such periods of radical economic change, speculation develops on a large scale.” . . .²⁰

Crises of every kind—economic crises most frequently, but not only these—in their turn increase very considerably the tendency towards

concentration and towards monopoly. In this connection, the following reflections of Jeidels on the significance of the crisis of 1900, which, as we have already seen, marked the turning-point in the history of modern monopoly, are exceedingly instructive:

“Side by side with the gigantic plants in the basic industries, the crisis of 1900 still found many plants organised on lines that today would be considered obsolete, the ‘pure’ (non-combined) plants, which were brought into being at the height of the industrial boom. The fall in prices and the falling off in demand put these ‘pure’ enterprises in a precarious position, which did not affect the gigantic combined enterprises at all or only affected them for a very short time. As a consequence of this the crisis of 1900 resulted in a far greater concentration of industry than the crisis of 1873: the latter crisis also produced a sort of selection of the best-equipped enterprises, but owing to the level of technical development at that time, this selection could not place the firms which successfully emerged from the crisis in a position of monopoly. Such a durable monopoly exists to a high degree in the gigantic enterprises in the modern iron and steel and electrical industries owing to their very complicated technique, far-reaching organisation and magnitude of capital, and, to a lesser degree, in the engineering industry, certain branches of the metallurgical industry, transport, etc.”²¹

Monopoly! This is the last word in the “latest phase of capitalist development.” But we shall only have a very insufficient, incomplete, and poor notion of the real power and the significance of modern monopolies if we do not take into consideration the part played by the banks.

Notes

1. Figures taken from *Annalen des deutschen Reichs*, 1911, Zahn —*Lenin*
2. *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1912, p. 202 —*Lenin*
3. *Finance Capital*, Russ. ed., pp. 286–87 —*Lenin*
4. Hans Gideon Heymann, *Die gemischten Werke im deutschen Grosseisen- und Stahlgewerbe*, Stuttgart, 1904, (S. 256, 278). —*Lenin*
5. Hermann Levy, *Monopole, Kartelle und Trusts*, Jena, 1909, S. 286, 290, —*Lenin*
6. Th. Vogelstein, “*Die finanzielle Organisation der kapitalistischen Industrie und die Monopolbildungen*” in *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik*, VI. Abt., Tübingen, 1914. Cf., also by the same author: *Organisationsformen der Eisenindustrie und Textilindustrie in England und Amerika*, Bd. 1, Lpz., 1910. —*Lenin*
7. Dr. Riesser, *Die deutschen Grossbanken und ihre Konzentration im Zusammenhange mit der Entwicklung der Gesamtwirtschaft in Deutschland*, 4. Aufl., 1912, S. 149; Robert Liefmann, *Kartelle und Trusts und die Weiterbildung der volkswirtschaftlichen Organisation*, 2. Aufl., 1910, S. 25. —*Lenin*
8. Dr. Fritz Kestner, *Der Organisationszwang. Eine Untersuchung über die Kämpfe zwischen Kartellen und Aussenseitern*, Berlin, 1912, S. 11. —*Lenin*

9. R. Liefmann, *Beteiligungs- und Finanzierungsgesellschaften. Eine Studie über den modernen Kapitalismus und das Effektenwesen*, 1. Aufl., Jena, 1909, S. 212. —*Lenin*
10. *Ibid.*, S. 218. —*Lenin*
11. Dr. S. Tschierschky, *Kartell und Trust*, Göttingen, 1903, S. 13. —*Lenin*
12. Tr. Vogelstein, *Organisationsformen*, S. 275. —*Lenin*
13. *Report of the Commissioner of Corporations on the Tobacco Industry*, Washington, 1909, p. 266, cited according to Dr. Paul Tafel, *Die nordamerikanischen Trusts und ihre Wirkungen auf den Fortschritt der Technik*, Stuttgart, 1913, S. 48. —*Lenin*
14. Dr. P. Tafel, *ibid.*, S. 49. —*Lenin*
15. Riesser, op. cit., third edition, p. 547 et seq. The newspapers (June 1916) report the formation of a new gigantic trust which combines the chemical industry of Germany. —*Lenin*
16. Kestner, op. cit., S. 254 —*Lenin*
17. L. Eschwege, "Zement" in *Die Bank*, 1909, S. 115 et. seq. —*Lenin*
18. Jeidels, *Das Verhältnis der deutschen Grossbanken zur Industrie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Eisenindustrie*, Leipzig, 1905, S. 271 —*Lenin*
19. *Liefmann, Beteiligungs- und Finanzierungsgesellschaften*, S, 434. —*Lenin*
20. *Ibid*, S. 465–66 —*Lenin*
21. Jeidels, op. cit., S. 108. —*Lenin*

II. Banks and Their New Role

The principal and primary function of banks is to serve as middlemen in the making of payments. In so doing they transform inactive money capital into active, that is, into capital yielding a profit; they collect all kinds of money revenues and place them at the disposal of the capitalist class.

As banking develops and becomes concentrated in a small number of establishments, the banks grow from modest middlemen into powerful monopolies having at their command almost the whole of the money capital of all the capitalists and small businessmen and also the larger part of the means of production and sources of raw materials in any one country and in a number of countries. This transformation of numerous modest middlemen into a handful of monopolists is one of the fundamental processes in the growth of capitalism into capitalist imperialism; for this reason we must first of all examine the concentration of banking.

In 1907–08, the combined deposits of the German joint-stock banks, each having a capital of more than a million marks, amounted to 7,000 million marks; in 1912–13, these deposits already amounted to 9,800 million marks, an increase of 40 per cent in five years; and of the 2,800 million increase, 2,750 million was divided among 57 banks, each having a capital of more than 10 million marks. The distribution of the deposits between big and small banks was as follows:¹

Percentage of Total Deposits				
	In 9 big Berlin banks	In the other 48 banks with a capital of more than 10 million marks	In 115 banks with a capital of 1–10 million marks	In small banks (with a capital of less than a million marks)
1907–08...	47	32.5	16.5	4
1912–13...	49	36.0	12.0	3

The small banks are being squeezed out by the big banks, of which only nine concentrate in their hands almost half the total deposits. But we have left out of account many important details, for instance, the transformation of numerous small banks into actual branches of the big banks, etc. Of this I shall speak later on.

At the end of 1913, Schulze-Gaevernitz estimated the deposits in the nine big Berlin banks at 5,100 million marks, out of a total of about 10,000 million marks. Taking into account not only the deposits, but the total bank capital, this author wrote: “At the end of 1909, the nine big Berlin banks, *together*

with their affiliated banks, controlled 11,300 million marks, that is, about 83 per cent of the total German bank capital. The Deutsche Bank, which *together with its affiliated banks* controls nearly 3,000 million marks, represents, parallel to the Prussian State Railway Administration, the biggest and also the most decentralised accumulation of capital in the Old World.”²

I have emphasised the reference to the “affiliated” banks because it is one of the most important distinguishing features of modern capitalist concentration. The big enterprises, and the banks in particular, not only completely absorb the small ones, but also “annex” them, subordinate them, bring them into their “own” group or “concern” (to use the technical term) by acquiring “holdings” in their capital, by purchasing or exchanging shares, by a system of credits, etc., etc. Professor Liefmann has written a voluminous “work” of about 500 pages describing modern “holding and finance companies,”³ unfortunately adding very dubious “theoretical” reflections to what is frequently undigested raw material. To what results this “holding” system leads in respect of concentration is best illustrated in the book written on the big German banks by Riesser, himself a banker. But before examining his data, let us quote a concrete example of the “holding” system.

The Deutsche Bank “group” is one of the biggest, if not the biggest, of the big banking groups. In order to trace the main threads which connect all the banks in this group, a distinction must be made between holdings of the first and second and third degree, or what amounts to the same thing, between dependence (of the lesser banks on the Deutsche Bank) in the first, second and third degree. We then obtain the following picture:⁴

The Deutsche Bank has holdings:	Direct or 1st degree dependence	2nd degree dependence	3rd degree dependence
Permanently	in 17 other banks	9 of the 17 have holdings in 34 other banks	4 of the 9 have holdings in 7 other banks
For an indefinite period...	in 5 other banks	—	—
Occasionally...	in 8 other banks	5 of the 8 have holdings in 14 other banks	2 of the 5 have holdings in 2 other banks
Totals...	in 30 other banks	14 of the 30 have holdings in 48 other banks	6 of the 14 have holdings in 9 other banks

Included in the eight banks “occasionally” dependent on the Deutsche Bank in the “first degree,” are three foreign banks: one Austrian (the Wiener Bankverein) and two Russian (the Siberian Commercial Bank and the

Russian Bank for Foreign Trade). Altogether, the Deutsche Bank group comprises, directly and indirectly, partially and totally, 87 banks; and the total capital—its own and that of others which it controls—is estimated at between two and three thousand million marks.

It is obvious that a bank which stands at the head of such a group, and which enters into agreement with half a dozen other banks only slightly smaller than itself for the purpose of conducting exceptionally big and profitable financial operations like floating state loans, has already outgrown the part of “middleman” and has become an association of a handful of monopolists.

The rapidity with which the concentration of banking proceeded in Germany at the turn of the twentieth century is shown by the following data which we quote in an abbreviated form from Riesser:

Six Big Berlin Banks				
Year	Branches in Germany	Deposit banks and exchange offices	Constant holdings in German joint-stock banks	Total establishments
1895...	16	14	1	42
1900...	21	40	8	80
1911...	104	276	63	450

We see the rapid expansion of a close network of channels which cover the whole country, centralising all capital and all revenues, transforming thousands and thousands of scattered economic enterprises into a single national capitalist, and then into a world capitalist economy. The “decentralisation” that SchuIze-Gaevernitz, as an exponent of present-day bourgeois political economy, speaks of in the passage previously quoted, really means the subordination to a single centre of an increasing number of formerly relatively “independent,” or rather, strictly local economic units. In reality it is *centralisation*, the enhancement of the role, importance and power of monopolist giants.

In the older capitalist countries this “banking network” is still more close. In Great Britain and Ireland, in 1910, there were in all 7,151 branches of banks. Four big banks had more than 400 branches each (from 447 to 689); four had more than 200 branches each, and eleven more than 100 each.

In France, *three* very big banks, Crédit Lyonnais, the Comptoir National and the Société Générale extended their operations and their network of branches in the following manner.⁵

Number of branches and offices				Capital (000,000 francs)	
Year	In the provinces	In Paris	Total	Own Capital	Deposits used as capital
1870	47	17	64	200	427
1890	192	66	258	265	1,245
1909	1,033	196	1,229	887	4,363

In order to show the “connections” of a big modern bank, Riesser gives the following figures of the number of letters dispatched and received by the Disconto-Gesellschaft, one of the biggest banks in Germany and in the world (its capital in 1914 amounted to 300 million marks):

Year	Letters received	Letters dispatched
1852...	6,135	6,292
1870...	85,800	87,513
1900...	533,102	626,043

The number of accounts of the big Paris bank, the Crédit Lyonnais, increased from 28,535 in 1875 to 633,539 in 1912.⁶

These simple figures show perhaps better than lengthy disquisitions how the concentration of capital and the growth of bank turnover are radically changing the significance of the banks. Scattered capitalists are transformed into a single collective capitalist. When carrying the current accounts of a few capitalists, a bank, as it were, transacts a purely technical and exclusively auxiliary operation. When, however, this operation grows to enormous dimensions we find that a handful of monopolists subordinate to their will all the operations, both commercial and industrial, of the whole of capitalist society; for they are enabled—by means of their banking connections, their current accounts and other financial operations—first, to *ascertain exactly* the financial position of the various capitalists, then to *control* them, to influence them by restricting or enlarging, facilitating or hindering credits, and finally to *entirely determine* their fate, determine their income, deprive them of capital, or permit them to increase their capital rapidly and to enormous dimensions, etc.

We have just mentioned the 300 million marks capital of the Disconto-Gesellschaft of Berlin. This increase of the capital of the bank was one of the incidents in the struggle for hegemony between two of the biggest Berlin banks—the Deutsche Bank and the Disconto. In 1870, the first was still a novice and had a capital of only 15 million marks, while the second had a

capital of 30 million marks. In 1908, the first had a capital of 200 million, while the second had 170 million. In 1914, the first increased its capital to 250 million and the second, by merging with another first-class big bank, the Schaaffhausenscher Bankverein, increased its capital to 300 million. And, of course, this struggle for hegemony went hand in hand with the more and more frequent conclusion of “agreements” of an increasingly durable character between the two banks. The following are the conclusions that this development forces upon banking specialists who regard economic questions from a standpoint which does not in the least exceed the bounds of the most moderate and cautious bourgeois reformism.

Commenting on the increase of the capital of the Disconto Gesellschaft to 300 million marks, the German review, *Die Bank*, wrote: “Other banks will follow this same path and in time the three hundred men, who today govern Germany economically, will gradually be reduced to fifty, twenty-five or still fewer. It cannot be expected that this latest move towards concentration will be confined to banking. The close relations that exist between individual banks naturally lead to the bringing together of the industrial syndicates which these banks favour. . . . One fine morning we shall wake up in surprise to see nothing but trusts before our eyes, and to find ourselves faced with the necessity of substituting state monopolies for private monopolies. However, we have nothing to reproach ourselves with, except that we have allowed things to follow their own course, slightly accelerated by the manipulation of stocks.”⁷

This is an example of the impotence of bourgeois journalism which differs from bourgeois science only in that the latter is less sincere and strives to obscure the essence of the matter, to hide the forest behind the trees. To be “surprised” at the results of concentration, to “reproach” the government of capitalist Germany, or capitalist “society” (“ourselves”), to fear that the introduction of stocks and shares might “accelerate” concentration in the same way as the German “cartel” specialist Tschierschky fears the American trusts and “prefers” the German cartels on the grounds that they “may not, like the trusts, excessively accelerate technical and economic progress”⁸ —is not all this a sign of impotence?

But facts remain facts. There are no trusts in Germany; there are “only” cartels—but Germany is *governed* by not more than three hundred magnates of capital, and the number of these is constantly diminishing. At all events, banks greatly intensify and accelerate the process of concentration of capital and the formation of monopolies in all capitalist countries, notwithstanding all the differences in their banking laws.

The banking system “possesses, indeed, the form of universal book-keeping and distribution of means of production on a social scale, but solely the form,” wrote Marx in *Capital* half a century ago (Russ. trans., Vol. III, part II, p. 144²⁴). The figures we have quoted on the growth of bank capital, on the increase in the number of the branches and offices of the biggest banks, the increase in the number of their accounts, etc., present a concrete picture of this “universal book-keeping” of the *whole* capitalist class; and not only of the capitalists, for the banks collect, even though temporarily, all kinds of money revenues—of small businessmen, office clerks, and of a tiny upper stratum of the working class. “Universal distribution of means of production”—that, from the formal aspect, is what grows out of the modern banks, which, numbering some three to six of the biggest in France, and six to eight in Germany, control millions and millions. In *substance*, however, the distribution of means of production is not at all “universal,” but private, i.e., it conforms to the interests of big capital, and primarily, of huge, monopoly capital, which operates under conditions in which the masses live in want, in which the whole development of agriculture hopelessly lags behind the development of industry, while within industry itself the “heavy industries” exact tribute from all other branches of industry.

In the matter of socialising capitalist economy the savings-banks and post-offices are beginning to compete with the banks; they are more “decentralised,” i.e., their influence extends to a greater number of localities, to more remote places, to wider sections of the population. Here is the data collected by an American commission on the comparative growth of deposits in banks and savings-banks⁹:

Deposits (000,000,000 marks)							
Year	Britain		France		Germany		
	Banks	Savings-banks	Banks	Savings-banks	Banks	Credit Societies	Savings-banks
1880 ...	8.4	1.6	?	0.9	0.5	0.4	2.6
1888 ...	12.4	2.0	1.5	2.1	1.1	0.4	4.5
1908 ...	23.2	4.2	3.7	4.2	7.1	2.2	13.9

As they pay interest at the rate of 4 per cent and 4 1/4 per cent on deposits, the savings-banks must seek “profitable” investments for their capital, they must deal in bills, mortgages, etc. The boundaries between the banks and the savings-banks “become more and more obliterated.” The Chambers of Commerce of Bochum and Erfurt, for example, demand that savings-banks be “prohibited” from engaging in “purely” banking business, such as discounting bills; they demand the limitation of the “banking” operations

of the post-office.¹⁰ The banking magnates seem to be afraid that state monopoly will steal upon them, from an unexpected quarter. It goes without saying, however, that this fear is no more than an expression of the rivalry, so to speak, between two department managers in the same office; for, on the one hand, the millions entrusted to the savings-banks are in the final analysis actually controlled by *these very same* bank capital magnates, while, on the other hand, state monopoly in capitalist society is merely a means of increasing and guaranteeing the income of millionaires in some branch of industry who are on the verge of bankruptcy.

The change from the old type of capitalism, in which free competition predominated, to the new capitalism, in which monopoly reigns, is expressed, among other things, by a decline in the importance of the Stock Exchange. The review, *Die Bank*, writes: "The Stock Exchange has long ceased to be the indispensable medium of circulation that it formerly was when the banks were not yet able to place the bulk of new issues with their clients."¹¹

"Every bank is a Stock Exchange', and the bigger the bank, and the more successful the concentration of banking, the truer does this modern aphorism ring."¹² "While formerly, in the seventies, the Stock Exchange, flushed with the exuberance of youth" (a "subtle" allusion to the Stock Exchange crash of 1873, the company promotion scandals,²⁵ etc.), "opened the era of the industrialisation of Germany, nowadays the banks and industry are able to 'manage it alone'. The domination of our big banks over the Stock Exchange . . . is nothing else than the expression of the completely organised German industrial state. If the domain of the automatically functioning economic laws is thus restricted, and if the domain of conscious regulation by the banks is considerably enlarged, the national economic responsibility of a few guiding heads is immensely increased," so writes the German Professor Schulze-Gaevernitz,¹³ an apologist of German imperialism, who is regarded as an authority by the imperialists of all countries, and who tries to gloss over the "mere detail" that the "conscious regulation" of economic life by the banks consists in the fleecing of the public by a handful of "completely organised" monopolists. The task of a bourgeois professor is not to lay bare the entire mechanism, or to expose all the machinations of the bank monopolists, but rather to present them in a favourable light.

In the same way, Riesser, a still more authoritative economist and himself a banker, makes shift with meaningless phrases in order to explain away undeniable facts: ". . . the Stock Exchange is steadily losing the feature which is absolutely essential for national economy as a whole and for the circulation of securities in particular—that of being not only a most exact

measuring-rod, but also an almost automatic regulator of the economic movements which converge on it.”¹⁴

In other words, the old capitalism, the capitalism of free competition with its indispensable regulator, the Stock Exchange, is passing away. A new capitalism has come to take its place, bearing obvious features of something transient, a mixture of free competition and monopoly. The question naturally arises: into what is this new capitalism “developing”? But the bourgeois scholars are afraid to raise this question.

“Thirty years ago, businessmen, freely competing against one another, performed nine-tenths of the work connected with their business other than manual labour. At the present time, ninetenths of this ‘brain work’ is performed by *employees*. Banking is in the forefront of this evolution.”¹⁵ This admission by Schulze-Gaevernitz brings us once again to the question: into what is this new capitalism, capitalism in its imperialist stage, developing?

Among the few banks which remain at the head of all capitalist economy as a result of the process of concentration, there is naturally to be observed an increasingly marked tendency towards monopolist agreements, towards a *bank trust*. In America, not nine, but *two* very big banks, those of the multimillionaires Rockefeller and Morgan, control a capital of eleven thousand million marks.¹⁶ In Germany the absorption of the Schaaffhausenscher Bankverein by the Disconto-Gesellschaft to which I referred above, was commented on in the following terms by the *Frankfurter Zeitung*:²⁶ an organ of Stock Exchange interests:

“The concentration movement of the banks is narrowing the circle of establishments from which it is possible to obtain credits, and is consequently increasing the dependence of big industry upon a small number of banking groups. In view of the close connection between industry and the financial world, the freedom of movement of industrial companies which need banking capital is restricted. For this reason, big industry is watching the growing trustification of the banks with mixed feelings. Indeed, we have repeatedly seen the beginnings of certain agreements between the individual big banking concerns, which aim at restricting competition.”¹⁷

Again and again, the final word in the development of banking is monopoly.

As regards the close connection between the banks and industry, it is precisely in this sphere that the new role of the banks is, perhaps, most strikingly felt. When a bank discounts a bill for a firm, opens a current account for it, etc., these operations, taken separately, do not in the least diminish its independence, and the bank plays no other part than that of a modest middleman. But when such operations are multiplied and become an established

practice, when the bank “collects” in its own hands enormous amounts of capital, when the running of a current account for a given firm enables the bank—and this is what happens—to obtain fuller and more detailed information about the economic position of its client, the result is that the industrial capitalist becomes more completely dependent on the bank.

At the same time a personal link-up, so to speak, is established between the banks and the biggest industrial and commercial enterprises, the merging of one with another through the acquisition of shares, through the appointment of bank directors to the Supervisory Boards (or Boards of Directors) of industrial and commercial enterprises, and vice versa. The German economist, Jeidels, has compiled most detailed data on this form of concentration of capital and of enterprises. Six of the biggest Berlin banks were represented by their directors in 344 industrial companies; and by their board members in 407 others, making a total of 751 companies. In 289 of these companies they either had two of their representatives on each of the respective Supervisory Boards, or held the posts of chairmen. We find these industrial and commercial companies in the most diverse branches of industry: insurance, transport, restaurants, theatres, art industry, etc. On the other hand, on the Supervisory Boards of these six banks (in 1910) were fifty-one of the biggest industrialists, including the director of Krupp, of the powerful “Hapag” (Hamburg-Amerika Line), etc., etc. From 1895 to 1910, each of these six banks participated in the share and bond issues of many hundreds of industrial companies (the number ranging from 281 to 419).¹⁸

The “personal link-up” between the banks and industry is supplemented by the “personal link-up” between both of them and the government. “Seats on Supervisory Boards,” writes Jeidels, “are freely offered to persons of title, also to ex-civil servants, who are able to do a great deal to facilitate (!) relations with the authorities.” . . . “Usually, on the Supervisory Board of a big bank, there is a member of parliament or a Berlin city councillor.”

The building and development, so to speak, of the big capitalist monopolies is therefore going on full steam ahead in all “natural” and “supernatural” ways. A sort of division of labour is being systematically developed amongst the several hundred kings of finance who reign over modern capitalist society:

“Simultaneously with this widening of the sphere of activity of certain big industrialists (joining the boards of banks, etc.) and with the assignment of provincial bank managers to definite industrial regions, there is a growth of specialisation among the directors of the big banks. Generally speaking, this specialisation is only conceivable when banking is conducted on a large

scale, and particularly when it has widespread connections with industry. This division of labour proceeds along two lines: on the one hand, relations with industry as a whole are entrusted to one director, as his special function; on the other, each director assumes the supervision of several separate enterprises, or of a group of enterprises in the same branch of industry or having similar interests. . . . (Capitalism has already reached the stage of organised supervision of individual enterprises.) One specialises in German industry, sometimes even in West German industry alone (the West is the most industrialised part of Germany), others specialise in relations with foreign states and foreign industry, in information on the characters of industrialists and others, in Stock Exchange questions, etc. Besides, each bank director is often assigned a special locality or a special branch of industry; one works chiefly on Supervisory Boards of electric companies, another, on chemical, brewing, or beet sugar plants, a third, in a few isolated industrial enterprises, but at the same time works on the Supervisory Boards of insurance companies. . . . In short, there can be no doubt that the growth in the dimensions and diversity of the big banks' operations is accompanied by an increase in the division of labour among their directors with the object (and result) of, so to speak, lifting them somewhat out of pure banking and making them better experts, better judges of the general problems of industry and the special problems of each branch of industry, thus making them more capable of acting within the respective bank's industrial sphere of influence. This system is supplemented by the banks' endeavours to elect to their Supervisory Boards men who are experts in industrial affairs, such as industrialists, former officials, especially those formerly in the railway service or in mining," etc.¹⁹

We find the same system only in a slightly different form in French banking. For instance, one of the three biggest French banks, the *Crédit Lyonnais*, has organised a financial research service (*service des études financières*), which permanently employs over fifty engineers, statisticians, economists, lawyers, etc. This costs from six to seven hundred thousand francs annually. The service is in turn divided into eight departments: one specialises in collecting information on industrial establishments, another studies general statistics, a third, railway and steamship companies, a fourth, securities, a fifth, financial reports, etc.²⁰

The result is, on the one hand, the ever-growing merger, or, as N. I. Bukharin aptly calls it, coalescence, of bank and industrial capital and, on the other hand, the growth of the banks into institutions of a truly "universal character." On this question I find it necessary to quote the exact terms used by Jeidels, who has best studied the subject:

"An examination of the sum total of industrial relationships reveals the universal *character* of the financial establishments working on behalf of industry. Unlike other kinds of banks, and contrary to the demand sometimes ex-

pressed in the literature that banks should specialise in one kind of business or in one branch of industry in order to prevent the ground from slipping from under their feet—the big banks are striving to make their connections with industrial enterprises as varied as possible in respect of the locality or branches of industry and are striving to eliminate the unevenness in the distribution of capital among localities and branches of industry resulting from the historical development of individual enterprises.” “One tendency is to make the connections with industry general; another tendency is to make them durable and close. In the six big banks both these tendencies are realised, not in full, but to a considerable extent and to an equal degree.”

Quite often industrial and commercial circles complain of the “terrorism” of the banks. And it is not surprising that such complaints are heard, for the big banks “command,” as will be seen from the following example. On November 19, 1901, one of the big, so-called Berlin “D” banks (the names of the four biggest banks begin with the letter D) wrote to the Board of Directors of the German Central Northwest Cement Syndicate in the following terms: “As we learn from the notice you published in a certain newspaper of the 18th inst., we must reckon with the possibility that the next general meeting of your syndicate, to be held on the 30th of this month, may decide on measures which are likely to effect changes in your enterprise which are unacceptable to us. We deeply regret that, for these reasons, we are obliged henceforth to withdraw the credit which had hitherto been allowed you. . . . But if the said next general meeting does not decide upon measures which are unacceptable to us, and if we receive suitable guarantees on this matter for the future, we shall be quite willing to open negotiations with you on the grant of a new credit.”²¹

As a matter of fact, this is small capital’s old complaint about being oppressed by big capital, but in this case it was a whole syndicate that fell into the category of “small” capital! The old struggle between small and big capital is being resumed at a new and immeasurably higher stage of development. It stands to reason that the big banks’ enterprises, worth many millions, can accelerate technical progress with means that cannot possibly be compared with those of the past. The banks, for example, set up special technical research societies, and, of course, only “friendly” industrial enterprises benefit from their work. To this category belong the Electric Railway Research Association, the Central Bureau of Scientific and Technical Research, etc.

The directors of the big banks themselves cannot fail to see that new conditions of national economy are being created; but they are powerless in the face of these phenomena.

“Anyone who has watched, in recent years,” writes Jeidels, “the changes of incumbents of directorships and seats on the Supervisory Boards of the big banks, cannot fail to have noticed that power is gradually passing into the hands of men who consider the active intervention of the big banks in the general development of industry to be necessary and of increasing importance. Between these new men and the old bank directors, disagreements on this subject of a business and often of a personal nature are growing. The issue is whether or not the banks, as credit institutions, will suffer from this intervention in industry, whether they are sacrificing tried principles and an assured profit to engage in a field of activity which has nothing in common with their role as middlemen in providing credit, and which is leading the banks into a field where they are more than ever before exposed to the blind forces of trade fluctuations. This is the opinion of many of the older bank directors, while most of the young men consider active intervention in industry to be a necessity as great as that which gave rise, simultaneously with big modern industry, to the big banks and modern industrial banking. The two parties are agreed only on one point: that there are neither firm principles nor a concrete aim in the new activities of the big banks.”²²

The old capitalism has had its day. The new capitalism represents a transition towards something. It is hopeless, of course, to seek for “firm principles and a concrete aim” for the purpose of “reconciling” monopoly with free competition. The admission of the practical men has quite a different ring from the official praises of the charms of “organised” capitalism sung by its apologists, Schulze-Gaevernitz, Liefmann and similar “theoreticians.”

At precisely what period were the “new activities” of the big banks finally established? Jeidels gives us a fairly exact answer to this important question:

“The connections between the banks and industrial enterprises, with their new content, their new forms and their new organs, namely, the big banks which are organised on both a centralised and a decentralised basis, were scarcely a characteristic economic phenomenon before the nineties; in one sense, indeed, this initial date may be advanced to the year 1897, when the important mergers took place and when, for the first time, the new form of decentralised organisation was introduced to suit the industrial policy of the banks. This starting-point could perhaps be placed at an even later date, for it was the crisis of 1900 that enormously accelerated and intensified the process of concentration of industry and of banking, consolidated that process, for the first time transformed the connection with industry into the actual monopoly of the big banks, and made this connection much closer and more active.”²³

Thus, the twentieth century marks the turning-point from the old capitalism to the new, from the domination of capital in general to the domination of finance capital.

Notes

1. Alfred Lansburgh, "Fünf Jahre deutsches Bankwesen" in *Die Bank*, 1913, No. 8. —*Lenin*
2. Schulze-Gaevernitz, "Die deutsche Kreditbank" in "*Grundriss der Sozialökonomik*," Tübingen, 1915, 137. —*Lenin*
3. R. Liefmann, *Beteiligungs- und Finanzierungsgesellschaften. Eine Studie über den modernen Kapitalismus und das Effektenwesen*, I., Jena, 1909, 212. —*Lenin*
4. Alfred Lansburgh, "Das Beteiligungssystem im deutschen Bankwesen," in *Die Bank*, 1910, 500. —*Lenin*
5. Eugen Kaufmann, *Das französische Bankwesen*, Tübingen, 1911, 356 and 362 —*Lenin*
6. Jean Lescure, *L'épargne en France*, Paris, 1914, p. 52. —*Lenin*
7. A. Lansburgh, "Die Bank mit den 300 Millionen" in *Die Bank*, 1914, p. 426 —*Lenin*
8. S. Tschierschky, op. cit., 128. —*Lenin*
9. *Statistics of the National Monetary Commission*, quoted in *Die Bank*, 1910, S. 1200. —*Lenin*
10. *Die Bank*, 1913, S 811. —*Lenin*
11. *Die Bank*, 1914, S 316. —*Lenin*
12. Dr. Oscar Stüllich, *Geld- und Bankwesen*, Berlin, 1907, S. 169. —*Lenin*
13. Schulze-Gaevernitz, "Die deutsche Kreditbank" in *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik*, Tübingen, 1915, S. 101 —*Lenin*
14. Riesser, op. cit., 4th ed., S 629. —*Lenin*
15. Schulze-Gaevernitz, "Die deutsche Kreditbank" in *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik*, Tübingen, 1915, S. 151 —*Lenin*
16. *Die Bank*, 1912, S. 435. —*Lenin*
17. Quoted by Schulze-Gaevernitz, op. cit., S 155 —*Lenin*
18. Jeidels, op. cit.; Riesser, op. cit. —*Lenin*
19. Jeidels, op. cit., S 156–57 —*Lenin*
20. An article by Eug. Kaufmann on French banks in *Die Bank*, 1909, 2, S 851 et. seq. —*Lenin*
21. Dr. Oscar Stüllich, *Geld- und Bankwesen*, Berlin, 1907, S. 147. —*Lenin*
22. Jeidels, op. cit., S 183–84 —*Lenin*
23. *Ibid*, S. 181. —*Lenin*

III. Finance Capital and the Financial Oligarchy

“A steadily increasing proportion of capital in industry,” writes Hilferding, “ceases to belong to the industrialists who employ it. They obtain the use of it only through the medium of the banks which, in relation to them, represent the owners of the capital. On the other hand, the bank is forced to sink an increasing share of its funds in industry. Thus, to an ever greater degree the banker is being transformed into an industrial capitalist. This bank capital, i.e., capital in money form, which is thus actually transformed into industrial capital, I call ‘finance capital.’” “Finance capital is capital controlled by banks and employed by industrialists.”¹

This definition is incomplete insofar as it is silent on one extremely important fact—on the increase of concentration of production and of capital to such an extent that concentration is leading, and has led, to monopoly. But throughout the whole of his work, and particularly in the two chapters preceding the one from which this definition is taken, Hilferding stresses the part played by *capitalist monopolies*.

The concentration of production; the monopolies arising therefrom; the merging or coalescence of the banks with industry—such is the history of the rise of finance capital and such is the content of that concept.

We now have to describe how, under the general conditions of commodity production and private property, the “business operations” of capitalist monopolies inevitably lead to the domination of a financial oligarchy. It should be noted that German—and not only German—bourgeois scholars, like Riesser, Schulze-Gaevernitz, Liefmann and others, are all apologists of imperialism and of finance capital. Instead of revealing the “mechanics” of the formation of an oligarchy, its methods, the size of its revenues “impeccable and peccable,” its connections with parliaments etc., etc., they obscure or gloss over them. They evade these “vexed questions” by pompous and vague phrases, appeals to the “sense of responsibility” of bank directors, by praising “the sense of duty” of Prussian officials, giving serious study to the petty details of absolutely ridiculous parliamentary bills for the “supervision” and “regulation” of monopolies, playing spillikins with theories, like, for example, the following “scholarly” definition, arrived at by Professor Liefmann: “*Commerce is an occupation having for its object the collection, storage and supply of goods.*”² (The Professor’s bold-face italics.) . . . From this it would follow that commerce existed in the time of primitive man, who knew nothing about exchange, and that it will exist under socialism!

But the monstrous facts concerning the monstrous rule of the financial oligarchy are so glaring that in all capitalist countries, in America, France

and Germany, a whole literature has sprung up, written from the *bourgeois* point of view, but which, nevertheless, gives a fairly truthful picture and criticism—petty-bourgeois, naturally—of this oligarchy.

Paramount importance attaches to the “holding system,” already briefly referred to above. The German economist, Heymann, probably the first to call attention to this matter, describes the essence of it in this way:

“The head of the concern controls the principal company (literally: the “mother company”); the latter reigns over the subsidiary companies (“daughter companies”) which in their turn control still other subsidiaries (“grandchild companies”), etc. In this way, it is possible with a comparatively small capital to dominate immense spheres of production. Indeed, if holding 50 per cent of the capital is always sufficient to control a company, the head of the concern needs only one million to control eight million in the second subsidiaries. And if this ‘interlocking’ is extended, it is possible with one million to control sixteen million, thirty-two million, etc.”³

As a matter of fact, experience shows that it is sufficient to own 40 per cent of the shares of a company in order to direct its affairs,⁴ since in practice a certain number of small, scattered shareholders find it impossible to attend general meetings, etc. The “democratisation” of the ownership of shares, from which the bourgeois sophists and opportunist so-called “Social-Democrats” expect (or say that they expect) the “democratisation of capital,” the strengthening of the role and significance of small scale production, etc., is, in fact, one of the ways of increasing the power of the financial oligarchy. Incidentally, this is why, in the more advanced, or in the older and more “experienced” capitalist countries, the law allows the issue of shares of smaller denomination. In Germany, the law does not permit the issue of shares of less than one thousand marks denomination, and the magnates of German finance look with an envious eye at Britain, where the issue of one-pound shares (= 20 marks, about 10 rubles) is permitted. Siemens, one of the biggest industrialists and “financial kings” in Germany, told the Reichstag on June 7, 1900, that “the one-pound share is the basis of British imperialism.”⁵ This merchant has a much deeper and more “Marxist” understanding of imperialism than a certain disreputable writer who is held to be one of the founders of Russian Marxism²¹ and believes that imperialism is a bad habit of a certain nation. . . .

But the “holding system” not only serves enormously to increase the power of the monopolists; it also enables them to resort with impunity to all sorts of shady and dirty tricks to cheat the public, because formally the directors of the “mother company” are not legally responsible for the “daughter company,” which is supposed to be “independent,” and *through*

the medium of which they can “pull off” *anything*. Here is an example taken from the German review, *Die Bank*, for May 1914:

“The Spring Steel Company of Kassel was regarded some years ago as being one of the most profitable enterprises in Germany. Through bad management its dividends fell from 15 per cent to nil. It appears that the Board, without consulting the shareholders, had loaned *six million marks* to one of its ‘daughter companies’, the Hassia Company, which had a nominal capital of only some hundreds of thousands of marks. This commitment, amounting to nearly treble the capital of the ‘mother company’, was never mentioned in its balance-sheets. This omission was quite legal and could be hushed up for two whole years because it did not violate any point of company law. The chairman of the Supervisory Board, who as the responsible head had signed the false balance-sheets, was, and still is, the president of the Kassel Chamber of Commerce. The shareholders only heard of the loan to the Hassia Company long afterwards, when it had been proved to be a mistake” . . . (the writer should put this word in inverted commas) . . . “and when Spring Steel shares dropped nearly 100 per cent, because those in the know were getting rid of them. . . .

“*This typical example of balance-sheet jugglery, quite common* in joint-stock companies, explains why their Boards of Directors are willing to undertake risky transactions with a far lighter heart than individual businessmen. Modern methods of drawing up balance-sheets not only make it possible to conceal doubtful undertakings from the ordinary shareholder, but also allow the people most concerned to escape the consequence of unsuccessful speculation by selling their shares in time when the individual businessman risks his own skin in everything he does. . . .

“The balance-sheets of many joint-stock companies put us in mind of the palimpsests of the Middle Ages from which the visible inscription had first to be erased in order to discover beneath it another inscription giving the real meaning of the document. [Palimpsests are parchment documents from which the original inscription has been erased and another inscription imposed.]

“The simplest and, therefore, most common procedure for making balance-sheets indecipherable is to divide a single business into several parts by setting up ‘daughter companies’—or by annexing them. The advantages of this system for various purposes—legal and illegal—are so evident that big companies which do not employ it are quite the exception.”⁶

As an example of a huge monopolist company that extensively employs this system, the author quotes the famous General Electric Company (the A.E.G., to which I shall refer again later on). In 1912, it was calculated that this company held shares in 175 to 200 other companies, dominating them, of course, and thus controlling a total capital of about *1,500 million marks*.⁷

None of the rules of control, the publication of balance-sheets, the drawing up of balance-sheets according to a definite form, the public

auditing of accounts, etc., the things about which well-intentioned professors and officials—that is, those imbued with the good intention of defending and prettyfying capitalism—discourse to the public, are of any avail; for private property is sacred, and no one can be prohibited from buying, selling, exchanging or hypothecating shares, etc.

The extent to which this “holding system” has developed in the big Russian banks may be judged by the figures given by E. Agalid, who for fifteen years was an official of the Russo-Chinese Bank and who, in May 1914, published a book, not altogether correctly entitled *Big Banks and the World Market*.⁸ The author divides the big Russian banks into two main groups: (a) banks that come under the “holding system,” and (b) “independent” banks—“independence” however, being arbitrarily taken to mean independence of *foreign* banks. The author divides the first group into three subgroups: (1) German holdings, (2) British holdings, and (3) French holdings, having in view the “holdings” and domination of the big foreign banks of the particular country mentioned. The author divides the capital of the banks into “productively” invested capital (industrial and commercial undertakings), and “speculatively” invested capital (in Stock Exchange and financial operations), assuming, from his petty-bourgeois reformist point of view, that it is possible, under capitalism, to separate the first form of investment from the second and to abolish the second form.

Here are the figures he supplies:

Bank Assets				
(According to Reports for October—November 1912)				
Groups of Russian banks		Capital Invested (000,000 rubles)		
		Productively	Speculatively	Total
a 1)	Four banks: Siberian Commercial, Russian, International, and Discount Bank . . .	413.7	859.1	1,272.8
a 2)	Two banks: Commercial and Industrial, and Russo-British	239.3	169.1	408.4
a 3)	Five banks: Russian-Asiatic, St. Petersburg Private, Azov-Don, Union Moscow, Russo-French Commercial	711.8	661.2	1,373.0
	(11 banks) Total . . . a) =	1,364.8	1,689.4	3,054.2
b)	Eight banks: Moscow Merchants, Volga-Kama, Junker and Co., St. Petersburg Commercial (formerly Wawelberg), Bank of Moscow (formerly Ryabushinsky), Moscow Discount, Moscow Commercial, Moscow Private . . .	504.2	391.1	895.3
	(10 banks) Total . . .	1,869.0	2,080.5	3,949.5

According to these figures, of the approximately 4,000 million rubles making up the “working” capital of the big banks, *more than three-fourths*, more than 3,000 million, belonged to banks which in reality were only “daughter companies” of foreign banks, and chiefly of Paris banks (the famous trio: Union Parisienne, Paris et Pays-Bas and Société Générale), and of Berlin banks (particularly the Deutsche Bank and Disconto-Gesellschaft). Two of the biggest Russian banks, the Russian (Russian Bank for Foreign Trade) and the International (St. Petersburg International Commercial Bank), between 1906 and 1912 increased their capital from 44 to 98 million rubles, and their reserves from 15 million to 39 million “employing three-fourths German capital.” The first bank belongs to the Berlin Deutsche Bank “concern” and the second to the Berlin Disconto-Gesellschaft. The worthy Agahd is deeply indignant at the majority of the shares being held by the Berlin banks, so that the Russian shareholders are, therefore, powerless. Naturally, the country which exports capital skims the cream; for example, the Berlin Deutsche Bank, before placing the shares of the Siberian Commercial Bank on the Berlin market, kept them in its portfolio for a whole year, and then sold them at the rate of 193 for 100, that is, at nearly twice their nominal value, “earning” a profit of nearly six million rubles, which Hilferding calls “promoter’s profits.”

Our author puts the total “capacity” of the principal St. Petersburg banks at 8,235 million rubles, well over 8,000 million, and the “holdings,” or rather, the extent to which foreign banks dominated them, he estimates as follows: French banks, 55 per cent; British, 10 per cent; German, 35 per cent. The author calculates that of the total of 8,235 million rubles of functioning capital, 3,687 million rubles, or over 40 per cent, fall to the share of the Produgol and Prodamet syndicates²² and the syndicates in the oil, metallurgical and cement industries. Thus, owing to the formation of capitalist monopolies, the merging of bank and industrial capital has also made enormous strides in Russia.

Finance capital, concentrated in a few hands and exercising a virtual monopoly, exacts enormous and ever-increasing profits from the floating of companies, issue of stock, state loans, etc., strengthens the domination of the financial oligarchy and levies tribute upon the whole of society for the benefit of monopolists. Here is an example, taken from a multitude of others, of the “business” methods of the American trusts, quoted by Hilferding. In 1887, Havemeyer founded the Sugar Trust by amalgamating fifteen small firms, whose total capital amounted to 6,500,000 dollars. Suitably “watered,” as the Americans say, the capital of the trust was declared to be 50 million dollars. This “overcapitalisation” anticipated the monopoly profits, in the same way as the United States Steel Corporation anticipates

its monopoly profits in buying up as many iron ore fields as possible. In fact, the Sugar Trust set up monopoly prices, which secured it such profits that it could pay 10 per cent dividend on capital “watered” *sevenfold, or about 70 per cent on the capital actually invested at the time the trust was formed!* In 1909, the capital of the Sugar Trust amounted to 90 million dollars. In twenty-two years, it had increased its capital more than tenfold.

In France the domination of the “financial oligarchy” (*Against the Financial Oligarchy* in France, the title of the well-known book by Lysis, the fifth edition of which was published in 1908) assumed a form that was only slightly different. Four of the most powerful banks enjoy, not a relative, but an “absolute monopoly” in the issue of bonds. In reality, this is a “trust of big banks.” And monopoly ensures monopoly profits from bond issues. Usually a borrowing country does not get more than 90 per cent of the sum of the loan, the remaining 10 per cent goes to the banks and other middlemen. The profit made by the banks out of the Russo-Chinese loan of 400 million francs amounted to 8 per cent; out of the Russian (1904) loan of 800 million francs the profit amounted to 10 per cent; and out of the Moroccan (1904) loan of 62,500,000 francs it amounted to 18.75 per cent. Capitalism, which began its development with petty usury capital, is ending its development with gigantic usury capital. “The French,” says Lysis, “are the usurers of Europe.” All the conditions of economic life are being profoundly modified by this transformation of capitalism. With a stationary population, and stagnant industry, commerce and shipping, the “country” can grow rich by usury. “Fifty persons, representing a capital of eight million francs, can control 2,000 million francs deposited in four banks.” The “holding system,” with which we are already familiar, leads to the same result. One of the biggest banks, the Société Générale for instance, issues 64,000 bonds for its “daughter company,” the Egyptian Sugar Refineries. The bonds are issued at 150 per cent, i.e., the bank gains 50 centimes on the franc. The dividends of the new company were found to be fictitious, the “public” lost from 90 to 100 million francs. “One of the directors of the Société Générale was a member of the board of directors of the Sugar Refineries.” It is not surprising that the author is driven to the conclusion that “the French Republic is a financial monarchy”; “it is the complete domination of the financial oligarchy; the latter dominates over the press and the government.”⁹

The extraordinarily high rate of profit obtained from the issue of bonds, which is one of the principal functions of finance capital, plays a very important part in the development and consolidation of the financial oligarchy. “There is not a single business of this type within the country that brings in profits even approximately equal to those obtained from the floatation of foreign loans,” says *Die Bank*.¹⁰

“No banking operation brings in profits comparable with those obtained from the issue of securities!” According to the *German Economist*, the average annual profits made on the issue of industrial stock were as follows:

Year	Per cent
1895	38.6
1896	36.1
1897	66.7
1898	67.7
1899	66.9
1900	55.2

“In the ten years from 1891 to 1900, more than a thousand million marks were ‘earned’ by issuing German industrial stock.”¹¹

During periods of industrial boom, the profits of finance capital are immense, but during periods of depression, small and unsound businesses go out of existence, and the big banks acquire “holdings” in them by buying them up for a mere song, or participate in profitable schemes for their “reconstruction” and “reorganisation.” In the “reconstruction” of undertakings which have been running at a loss, “the share capital is written down, that is, profits are distributed on a smaller capital and continue to be calculated on this smaller basis. Or, if the income has fallen to zero, new capital is called in, which, combined with the old and less remunerative capital, will bring in an adequate return.” “Incidentally,” adds Hilferding, “all these reorganisations and reconstructions have a twofold significance for the banks: first, as profitable transactions; and secondly, as opportunities for securing control of the companies in difficulties.”¹²

Here is an instance. The Union Mining Company of Dortmund was founded in 1872. Share capital was issued to the amount of nearly 40 million marks and the market price of the shares rose to 170 after it had paid a 12 per cent dividend for its first year. Finance capital skimmed the cream and earned a trifle of something like 28 million marks. The principal sponsor of this company was that very big German Disconto-Gesellschaft which so successfully attained a capital of 300 million marks. Later, the dividends of the Union declined to nil; the shareholders had to consent to a “writing down” of capital, that is, to losing some of it in order not to lose it all. By a series of “reconstructions,” more than 73 million marks were written off the books of the Union in the course of thirty years. “At the present time, the original shareholders of the company possess only 5 per cent of the

nominal value of their shares”¹³ but the banks “earned something” out of every “reconstruction.”

Speculation in land situated in the suburbs of rapidly growing big towns is a particularly profitable operation for finance capital. The monopoly of the banks merges here with the monopoly of ground-rent and with monopoly of the means of communication, since the rise in the price of land and the possibility of selling it profitably in lots, etc., is mainly dependent on good means of communication with the centre of the town; and these means of communication are in the hands of large companies which are connected with these same banks through the holding system and the distribution of seats on the boards. As a result we get what the German writer, L. Eschwege, a contributor to *Die Bank* who has made a special study of real estate business and mortgages, etc., calls a “bog.” Frantic speculation in suburban building lots; collapse of building enterprises like the Berlin firm of Boswau and Knauer, which acquired as much as 100 million marks with the help of the “sound and solid” Deutsche Bank—the latter, of course, acting through the holding system, i.e., secretly, behind the scenes—and got out of it with a loss of “only” 12 million marks, then the ruin of small proprietors and of workers who get nothing from the fictitious building firms, fraudulent deals with the “honest” Berlin police and administration for the purpose of gaining control of the issue of cadastral certificates, building licences, etc., etc.¹⁴

“American ethics,” which the European professors and well-meaning bourgeois so hypocritically deplore, have, in the age of finance capital, become the ethics of literally every large city in any country.

At the beginning of 1914, there was talk in Berlin of the formation of a “transport trust,” i.e., of establishing “community of interests” between the three Berlin transport undertakings: the city electric railway, the tramway company and the omnibus company. “We have been aware,” wrote *Die Bank*, “that this plan was contemplated ever since it became known that the majority of the shares in the bus company had been acquired by the other two transport companies. . . . We may fully believe those who are pursuing this aim when they say that by uniting the transport services, they will secure economies, part of which will in time benefit the public. But the question is complicated by the fact that behind the transport trust that is being formed are the banks, which, if they desire, can subordinate the means of transportation, which they have monopolised, to the interests of their real estate business. To be convinced of the reasonableness of such a conjecture, we need only recall that the interests of the big banks that encouraged the formation of the Electric Railway Company were already involved in it at the time the company was formed. That is to say: the interests of this transport

undertaking were interlocked with the real estate interests. The point is that the eastern line of this railway was to run across land which this bank sold at an enormous profit for itself and for several partners in the transactions when it became certain the line was to be laid down.”¹⁵

A monopoly, once it is formed and controls thousands of millions, inevitably penetrates into *every* sphere of public life, regardless of the form of government and all other “details.” In German economic literature one usually comes across obsequious praise of the integrity of the Prussian bureaucracy, and allusions to the French Panama scandal²³ and to political corruption in America. But the fact is that even bourgeois literature devoted to German banking matters constantly has to go far beyond the field of purely banking operations; it speaks, for instance, about “the attraction of the banks” in reference to the increasing frequency with which public officials take employment with the banks, as follows: “How about the integrity of a state official who in his innermost heart is aspiring to a soft job in the Behrenstrasse?”¹⁶ (The Berlin street where the head office of the Deutsche Bank is situated.) In 1909, the publisher of *Die Bank*, Alfred Lansburgh, wrote an article entitled “The Economic Significance of Byzantinism,” in which he incidentally referred to Wilhelm II’s tour of Palestine, and to “the immediate result of this journey, the construction of the Baghdad railway, that fatal ‘great product of German enterprise’, which is more responsible for the ‘encirclement’ than all our political blunders put together.”¹⁷ (By encirclement is meant the policy of Edward VII to isolate Germany and surround her with an imperialist anti-German alliance.) In 1911, Eschwege, the contributor to this same magazine to whom I have already referred, wrote an article entitled “Plutocracy and Bureaucracy,” in which he exposed, for example, the case of a German official named Völker, who was a zealous member of the Cartel Committee and who, it turned out some time later, obtained a lucrative post in the biggest cartel, the Steel Syndicate. Similar cases, by no means casual, forced this bourgeois author to admit that “the economic liberty guaranteed by the German Constitution has become in many departments of economic life, a meaningless phrase” and that under the existing rule of the plutocracy, “even the widest political liberty cannot save us from being converted into a nation of unfree people.”¹⁸

As for Russia, I shall confine myself to one example. Some years ago, all the newspapers announced that Davydov, the director of the Credit Department of the Treasury, had resigned his post to take employment with a certain big bank at a salary which, according to the contract, would total over one million rubles in the course of several years. The Credit Department is an institution, the function of which is to “co-ordinate the activities of all the credit institutions of the country” and which grants subsidies to

banks in St. Petersburg and Moscow amounting to between 800 and 1,000 million rubles.”¹⁹

It is characteristic of capitalism in general that the ownership of capital is separated from the application of capital to production, that money capital is separated from industrial or productive capital, and that the rentier who lives entirely on income obtained from money capital, is separated from the entrepreneur and from all who are directly concerned in the management of capital. Imperialism, or the domination of finance capital, is that highest stage of capitalism in which this separation reaches vast proportions. The supremacy of finance capital over all other forms of capital means the predominance of the rentier and of the financial oligarchy; it means that a small number of financially “powerful” states stand out among all the rest. The extent to which this process is going on may be judged from the statistics on emissions, i.e., the issue of all kinds of securities.

In the *Bulletin of the International Statistical Institute*, A. Neymarck²⁰ has published very comprehensive, complete and comparative figures covering the issue of securities all over the world, which have been repeatedly quoted in part in economic literature. The following are the totals he gives for four decades:

Total Issues in Francs per Decade (000,000,000)	
1871–1880	76.1
1881–1890	64.5
1891–1900	100.4
1901–1910	197.8

In the 1870s the total amount of issues for the whole world was high, owing particularly to the loans floated in connection with, the Franco-Prussian War, and the company-promotion boom which set in in Germany after the war. On the whole, the increase was relatively not very rapid during the three last decades of the nineteenth century, and only in the first ten years of the twentieth century is an enormous increase of almost 100 per cent to be observed. Thus the beginning of the twentieth century marks the turning-point, not only in the growth of monopolies (cartels, syndicates, trusts), of which we have already spoken, but also in the growth of finance capital.

Neymarck estimates the total amount of issued securities current in the world in 1910 at about 815,000 million francs. Deducting from this sum amounts which might have been duplicated, he reduces the total to

575,000–600,000 million, which is distributed among the various countries as follows (I take 600,000 million):

Financial Securities Current in 1910 (000,000,000 Francs)			
Great Britain	142	Holland	12.5
United States	132	Belgium	7.5
France	110	Spain	7.5
Germany	95	Switzerland	6.25
Russia	31	Denmark	3.75
Austria-Hungary	24	Sweden, Norway, Rumania, etc.	2.5
Italy	14		
Japan	12		

From these figures we at once see standing out in sharp relief four of the richest capitalist countries, each of which holds securities to amounts ranging approximately from 100,000 to 150,000 million francs. Of these four countries, two, Britain and France, are the oldest capitalist countries, and, as we shall see, possess the most colonies; the other two, the United States and Germany, are capitalist countries leading in the rapidity of development and the degree of extension of capitalist monopolies in industry. Together, these four countries own 479,000 million francs, that is, nearly 80 per cent of the world's finance capital. In one way or another, nearly the whole of the rest of the world is more or less the debtor to and tributary of these international banker countries, these four "pillars" of world finance capital.

It is particularly important to examine the part which the export of capital plays in creating the international network of dependence on and connections of finance capital.

Notes

1. R. Hilferding, *Finance Capital*, Moscow, 1912 (in Russian), pp. 338–39. —*Lenin*
2. R. Liefmann, op. cit., S. 476. —*Lenin*
3. Hans Gideon Fleymann, *Die gemischten Werke im deutschen Grosseisengewerbe* Stuttgart, 1904, S. 268–69. —*Lenin*
4. Liefmann, *Beteiligungsgesellschaften*, etc., S. 258 of the first edition. —*Lenin*
5. Schulze-Gaevernitz in *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik*, V, 2, S. 110. —*Lenin*
6. L. Eschwege, "Tochtergesellschaften" in *Die Bank*, 1914, S.545 —*Lenin*
7. Kurt Heinig, "Der Weg des Elektrotrusts" in *Die Neue Zeit*, 1912, 30. S. 484 —*Lenin*

8. E. Agahd, *Grossbanken und Weltmarkt. Die wirtschaftliche und politische Bedeutung der Grossbanken im Weltmarkt unter Berücksichtigung ihres Einflusses auf Russlands Volkswirtschaft und die deutsche-russischen Beziehungen*, Berlin, 1914 —*Lenin*
9. Lysis, *Contre l'oligarchie financière en France*, 5 ed. Paris, 1908, pp. 11, 12, 26, 39, 40, 48. —*Lenin*
10. *Die Bank*, 1913, No. 7, S. 630. —*Lenin*
11. Stüllich, op. cit., S. 143, also W. Sombart, *Die deutsche Volkswirtschaft im 19. Jahrhundert*, 2. Aufl., 1909, S. 526, Anlage 8. —*Lenin*
12. *Finance Capital*, p. 172. —*Lenin*
13. Stüllich, op. cit., S. 138 and Liefmann, op. cit., S. 51. —*Lenin*
14. In *Die Bank*, 1913, S. 952, L. Eschwege, *Der Sumpf*; *ibid.*, 1912, 1, S. 223 et seq. —*Lenin*
15. "Verkehrstrust" in *Die Bank*, 1914, 1, S. 89. —*Lenin*
16. "Der Zug zur Bank" in *Die Bank*, 1909, 1, S. 79. —*Lenin*
17. *ibid.*, S. 301. —*Lenin*
18. *ibid.*, 1911, 2, S. 825; 1913, 2, S. 962. —*Lenin*
19. E. Agahd, op. cit., S. 202. —*Lenin*
20. *Bulletin de l'institut international de statistique*, t. XIX, livr. II, La Haye, 1912. Data concerning small states, second column, are estimated by adding 20 per cent to the 1902 figures. —*Lenin*

IV. Export of Capital

Typical of the old capitalism, when free competition held undivided sway, was the export of goods. Typical of the latest stage of capitalism, when monopolies rule, is the export of capital.

Capitalism is commodity production at its highest stage of development, when labour-power itself becomes a commodity. The growth of internal exchange, and, particularly, of international exchange, is a characteristic feature of capitalism. The uneven and spasmodic development of individual enterprises, individual branches of industry and individual countries is inevitable under the capitalist system. England became a capitalist country before any other, and by the middle of the nineteenth century, having adopted free trade, claimed to be the "workshop of the world," the supplier of manufactured goods to all countries, which in exchange were to keep her provided with raw materials. But in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, this monopoly was already undermined; for other countries, sheltering themselves with "protective" tariffs, developed into independent capitalist states. On the threshold of the twentieth century we see the formation of a new type of monopoly: firstly, monopolist associations of capitalists in all capitalistically developed countries; secondly, the monopolist position of a few very rich countries, in which the accumulation

of capital has reached gigantic proportions. An enormous “surplus of capital” has arisen in the advanced countries.

It goes without saying that if capitalism could develop agriculture, which today is everywhere lagging terribly behind industry, if it could raise the living standards of the masses, who in spite of the amazing technical progress are everywhere still half-starved and poverty-stricken, there could be no question of a surplus of capital. This “argument” is very often advanced by the petty-bourgeois critics of capitalism. But if capitalism did these things it would not be capitalism; for both uneven development and a semi-starvation level of existence of the masses are fundamental and inevitable conditions and constitute premises of this mode of production. As long as capitalism remains what it is, surplus capital will be utilised not for the purpose of raising the standard of living of the masses in a given country, for this would mean a decline in profits for the capitalists, but for the purpose of increasing profits by exporting capital abroad to the backward countries. In these backward countries profits are usually high, for capital is scarce, the price of land is relatively low, wages are low, raw materials are cheap. The export of capital is made possible by a number of backward countries having already been drawn into world capitalist intercourse; main railways have either been or are being built in those countries, elementary conditions for industrial development have been created, etc. The need to export capital arises from the fact that in a few countries capitalism has become “over-ripe” and (owing to the backward state of agriculture and the poverty of the masses) capital cannot find a field for “profitable” investment.

Here are approximate figures showing the amount of capital invested abroad by the three principal countries¹:

Capital Invested Abroad (000,000,000 francs)			
Year	Great Britain	France	Germany
1862	3.6	—	—
1872	15.0	10 (1869)	—
1882	22.0	15(1880)	?
1893	42.0	20(1890)	?
1902	62.0	27–37	12.5
1914	75–100.0	00	44.0

This table shows that the export of capital reached enormous dimensions only at the beginning of the twentieth century. Before the war the capital invested abroad by the three principal countries amounted to

between 175,000 million and 200,000 million francs. At the modest rate of 5 per cent, the income from this sum should reach from 8,000 to 10,000 million francs a year—a sound basis for the imperialist oppression and exploitation of most of the countries and nations of the world, for the capitalist parasitism of a handful of wealthy states!

How is this capital invested abroad distributed among the various countries? *Where* is it invested? Only an approximate answer can be given to these questions, but it is one sufficient to throw light on certain general relations and connections of modern imperialism.

Distribution (approximate) of Foreign Capital in Different Parts of the Globe (circa 1910)				
	Great Britain	France	Germany	Total
	(000,000,000 marks)			
Europe	4	23	18	45
America	37	4	10	51
Asia, Africa, and Australia	29	8	7	44
Total	70	35	35	140

The principal spheres of investment of British capital are the British colonies, which are very large also in America (for example, Canada), not to mention Asia, etc. In this case, enormous exports of capital are bound up most closely with vast colonies, of tile importance of which for imperialism I shall speak later. In the case of France the situation is different. French capital exports are invested mainly in Europe, primarily in Russia (at least ten thousand million francs). This is mainly loan capital, government loans, and not capital invested in industrial undertakings. Unlike British colonial imperialism, French imperialism might be termed usury imperialism. In the case of Germany, we have a third type; colonies are inconsiderable, and German capital invested abroad is divided most evenly between Europe and America.

The export of capital influences and greatly accelerates the development of capitalism in those countries to which it is exported. While, therefore, the export of capital may tend to a certain extent to arrest development in the capital-exporting countries, it can only do so by expanding and deepening the further development of capitalism throughout the world.

The capital-exporting countries are nearly always able to obtain certain “advantages,” the character of which throws light on the peculiarity of the epoch of finance capital and monopoly. The following passage, for instance, appeared in the Berlin review, *Die Bank*, for October 1913:

“A comedy worthy of the pen of Aristophanes is lately being played on the international capital market. Numerous foreign countries, from Spain to the Balkan states, from Russia to Argentina, Brazil and China, are openly or secretly coming into the big money market with demands, sometimes very persistent, for loans. The money markets are not very bright at the moment and the political outlook is not promising. But not a single money market dares to refuse a loan for fear that its neighbour may forestall it, consent to grant a loan and so secure some reciprocal service. In these international transactions the creditor nearly always manages to secure some extra benefit: a favourable clause in a commercial treaty, a coaling station, a contract to construct a harbour, a fat concession, or an order for guns.”²

Finance capital has created the epoch of monopolies, and monopolies introduce everywhere monopolist principles: the utilisation of “connections” for profitable transactions takes the place of competition on the open market. The most usual thing is to stipulate that part of the loan granted shall be spent on purchases in the creditor country, particularly on orders for war materials, or for ships, etc. In the course of the last two decades (1890–1910), France has very often resorted to this method. The export of capital thus becomes a means of encouraging the export of commodities. In this connection, transactions between particularly big firms assume a form which, as Schilder³ “mildly” puts it, “borders on corruption.” Krupp in Germany, Schneider in France, Armstrong in Britain are instances of firms which have close connections with powerful banks and governments and which cannot easily be “ignored” when a loan is being arranged.

France, when granting loans to Russia, “squeezed” her in the commercial treaty of September 16, 1905, stipulating for certain concessions to run till 1917. She did the same in the commercial treaty with Japan of August 19, 1911. The tariff war between Austria and Serbia, which lasted, with a seven months’ interval, from 1906 to 1911, was partly caused by Austria and France competing to supply Serbia with war materials. In January 1912, Paul Deschanel stated in the Chamber of Deputies that from 1908 to 1911 French firms had supplied war materials to Serbia to the value of 45 million francs.

A report from the Austro-Hungarian Consul at San-Paulo (Brazil) states: “The Brazilian railways are being built chiefly by French, Belgian, British and German capital. In the financial operations connected with the construction of these railways the countries involved stipulate for orders for the necessary railway materials.”

Thus finance capital, literally, one might say, spreads its net over all countries of the world. An important role in this is played by banks founded in the colonies and by their branches. German imperialists look with envy at the “old” colonial countries which have been particularly “successful”

in providing for themselves in this respect. In 1904, Great Britain had 50 colonial banks with 2,279 branches (in 1910 there were 72 banks with 5,449 branches), France had 20 with 136 branches; Holland, 16 with 68 branches; and Germany had “only” 13 with 70 branches.⁴ The American capitalists, in their turn, are jealous of the English and German: “In South America,” they complained in 1915, “five German banks have forty branches and five British banks have seventy branches. . . . Britain and Germany have invested in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay in the last twenty-five years approximately four thousand million dollars, and as a result together enjoy 46 per cent of the total trade of these three countries.”⁵

The capital-exporting countries have divided the world among themselves in the figurative sense of the term. But finance capital has led to the *actual* division of the world.

Notes

1. Hobson, *Imperialism*, London, 1902, p. 58; Riesser, op. cit., S. 395 und 404; P. Arndt in *Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv*, Bd. 7, 1916, S. 35; Neymarck in *Bulletin*; Hilferding, *Finance Capital*, p. 492; Lloyd George, Speech in the House of Commons, May 4, 1915. reported in the *Daily Telegraph*, May 5, 1915; B. Harms, *Probleme der Weltwirtschaft*, Jena, 1912, S. 235 et seq.; Dr. Siegmund Schilder, *Entwicklungstendenzen der Weltwirtschaft*, Berlin, 1912, Band 1, S. 150; George Paish, “Great Britain’s Capital Investments, etc.,” in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. LXXIV, 1910–11, P. 167 et seq.; Georges Diouritch, *L’Expansion des banques allemandes a l’étranger, ses rapports avec le développement économique de l’Allemagne*, Paris, 1909, p. 84. —*Lenin*
2. *Die Bank*, 1913, 2, S. 1024–25. —*Lenin*
3. Schilder, op. cit., S. 346, 350, 371. —*Lenin*
4. Riesser, op. cit., 4th ed., S. 375; Diouritch, p. 283. —*Lenin*
5. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. LIX, May 1915, p. 301. In the same volume on p. 3.31, we read that the well-known statistician Paish, in the last issue of the financial magazine *The Statist*, estimated the amount of capital exported by Britain, Germany, France, Belgium and Holland at \$40,000 million, i.e., 200,000 million francs. —*Lenin*

V. Division of the World Among Capitalist Associations

Monopolist capitalist associations, cartels, syndicates and trusts first divided the home market among themselves and obtained more or less complete possession of the industry of their own country. But under capitalism the home market is inevitably bound up with the foreign market. Capitalism long ago created a world market. As the export of capital increased, and as

the foreign and colonial connections and “spheres of influence” of the big monopolist associations expanded in all ways, things “naturally” gravitated towards an international agreement among these associations, and towards the formation of international cartels.

This is a new stage of world concentration of capital and production, incomparably higher than the preceding stages. Let us see how this super-monopoly develops.

The electrical industry is highly typical of the latest technical achievements and is most typical of capitalism at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. This industry has developed most in the two leaders of the new capitalist countries, the United States and Germany. In Germany, the crisis of 1900 gave a particularly strong impetus to its concentration. During the crisis, the banks, which by that time had become fairly well merged with industry, enormously accelerated and intensified the ruin of relatively small firms and their absorption by the large ones. “The banks,” writes Jeidels, “refused a helping hand to the very firms in greatest need of capital, and brought on first a frenzied boom and then the hopeless failure of the companies which had not been connected with them closely enough.”¹

As a result, after 1900, concentration in Germany progressed with giant strides. Up to 1900 there had been seven or eight “groups” in the electrical industry. Each consisted of several companies (altogether there were 28) and each was backed by from 2 to 11 banks. Between 1908 and 1912 all these groups were merged into two, or one. The following diagram shows the process:

Groups in the Electrical Industry				
Prior to 1900: Felten & Lahmeyer; Guillaume	Union A.E.G.	Siemens Schuckert & Halske & Co.	Bergmann	Kummer
	A.E.G. (G.E.C.)	Siemens & Halske-Schuckert	Bergman	Failed in 1900
	----		-----	
By 1912:	-----			
	A.E.G. (G.E.C.) Siemens & Halske Schuckert (in close “co-operation” since 1908)			

The famous A.E.G. (General Electric Company), which grew up in this way, controls 175 to 200 companies (through the “holding” system), and a total capital of approximately 1,500 million marks. Of direct agencies abroad

alone, it has thirty-four, of which twelve are joint-stock companies, in more than ten countries. As early as 1904 the amount of capital invested abroad by the German electrical industry was estimated at 233 million marks. Of this sum, 62 million were invested in Russia. Needless to say, the A.E.G. is a huge “combine”—its manufacturing companies alone number no less than sixteen—producing the most diverse articles, from cables and insulators to motor-cars and flying machines.

But concentration in Europe was also a component part of the process of concentration in America, which developed in the following way:

General Electric Company		
United States:	Thomas-Houston Co. establishes a firm in Europe	Edison Co. establishes in Europe the French Edison Co. which transfers its patents to the German firm
Germany:	Union Electric Co.	General Electric Co. (A.E.G.)

Thus, *two* electrical “great powers” were formed: “there are no other electrical companies in the world *completely* independent of them,” wrote Heinig in his article “The Path of the Electric Trust.” An idea, although far from complete, of the turnover and the size of the enterprises of the two “trusts” can be obtained from the following figures:

	Turnover (000,000 marks)	Number of employees	Net profits (000,000 marks)
America: General Electric Co: (G.E.C.)			
1907	252	28,000	35.4
1910	298	32,000	45.6
Germany: General Electric Co: (A.E.G.)			
1907	216	30,700	14.5
1911	362	60,800	21.7

And then, in 1907, the German and American trusts concluded an agreement by which they divided the world between them. Competition between them ceased. The American General Electric Company (G.E.C.) “got” the United States and Canada. The German General Electric Company (A.E.G.) “got” Germany, Austria, Russia, Holland, Denmark, Switzerland, Turkey and the Balkans. Special agreements, naturally secret, were concluded regarding the penetration of “daughter companies” into new branches of industry, into “new” countries formally not yet allotted. The two trusts were to exchange inventions and experiments.²

The difficulty of competing against this trust, actually a single world-wide trust controlling a capital of several thousand million, with “branches,” agencies, representatives, connections, etc., in every corner of the world, is self-evident. But the division of the world between two powerful trusts does not preclude redivision if the relation of forces changes as a result of uneven development, war, bankruptcy, etc.

An instructive example of an attempt at such a redivision, of the struggle for redivision, is provided by the oil industry.

“The world oil market,” wrote Jeidels in 1905, “is even today still divided between two great financial groups—Rockefeller’s American Standard Oil Co., and Rothschild and Nobel, the controlling interests of the Russian oilfields in Baku. The two groups are closely connected. But for several years five enemies have been threatening their monopoly”³: (1) the exhaustion of the American oilfields; (2) the competition of the firm of Mantashev of Baku; (3) the Austrian oilfields; (4) the Rumanian oilfields; (5) the overseas oilfields, particularly in the Dutch colonies (the extremely rich firms, Samuel, and Shell, also connected with British capital). The three last groups are connected with the big German banks, headed by the huge Deutsche Bank. These banks independently and systematically developed the oil industry in Rumania, for example, in order to have a foothold of their “own.” In 1907, the foreign capital invested in the Rumanian oil industry was estimated at 185 million francs, of which 74 million was German capital.⁴

A struggle began for the “division of the world,” as, in fact, it is called in economic literature. On the one hand, the Rockefeller “oil trust” wanted to lay its hands on *everything*; it formed a “daughter company” *right in* Holland, and bought up oilfields in the Dutch Indies, in order to strike at its principal enemy, the Anglo-Dutch Shell trust. On the other hand, the Deutsche Bank and the other German banks aimed at “retaining” Rumania “for themselves” and at uniting her with Russia against Rockefeller. The latter possessed far more capital and an excellent system of oil transportation and distribution. The struggle had to end, and did end in 1907, with the utter defeat of the Deutsche Bank, which was confronted with the alternative: either to liquidate its “oil interests” and lose millions, or submit. It chose to submit, and concluded a very disadvantageous agreement with the “oil trust.” The Deutsche Bank agreed “not to attempt anything which might injure American interests.” Provision was made, however, for the annulment of the agreement in the event of Germany establishing a state oil monopoly.

Then the “comedy of oil” began. One of the German finance kings, von Gwinner, a director of the Deutsche Bank, through his private secretary, Stauss, launched a campaign *for* a state oil monopoly. The gigantic

machine of the huge German bank and all its wide “connections” were set in motion. The press bubbled over with “patriotic” indignation against the “yoke” of the American trust, and, on March 15, 1911, the Reichstag, by an almost unanimous vote, adopted a motion asking the government to introduce a bill for the establishment of an oil monopoly. The government seized upon this “popular” idea, and the game of the Deutsche Bank, which hoped to cheat its American counterpart and improve its business by a state monopoly, appeared to have been won. The German oil magnates already saw visions of enormous profits, which would not be less than those of the Russian sugar refiners. . . . But, firstly, the big German banks quarrelled among themselves over the division of the spoils. The Disconto-Gesellschaft exposed the covetous aims of the Deutsche Bank; secondly, the government took fright at the prospect of a struggle with Rockefeller, for it was very doubtful whether Germany could be sure of obtaining oil from other sources (the Rumanian output was small); thirdly, just at that time the 1913 credits of a thousand million marks were voted for Germany’s war preparations. The oil monopoly project was postponed. The Rockefeller “oil trust” came out of the struggle, for the time being, victorious.

The Berlin review, *Die Bank*, wrote in this connection that Germany could fight the oil trust only by establishing an electricity monopoly and by converting water-power into cheap electricity. “But,” the author added, “the electricity monopoly will come when the producers need it, that is to say, when the next great crash in the electrical industry is imminent, and when the gigantic, expensive power stations now being put up at great cost everywhere by private electrical concerns, which are already obtaining certain franchises from towns, from states, etc., can no longer work at a profit. Water-power will then have to be used. But it will be impossible to convert it into cheap electricity at state expense; it will also have to be handed over to a ‘private monopoly controlled by the state’, because private industry has already concluded a number of contracts and has stipulated for heavy compensation. . . . So it was with the nitrate monopoly, so it is with the oil monopoly, so it will be with the electric power monopoly. It is time our state socialists, who allow themselves to be blinded by a beautiful principle, understood, at last, that in Germany the monopolies have never pursued the aim, nor have they had the result, of benefiting the consumer, or even of handing over to the state part of the promoter’s profits; they have served only to facilitate, at the expense of the state, the recovery of private industries which were on the verge of bankruptcy.”⁵

Such are the valuable admissions which the German bourgeois economists are forced to make. We see plainly here how private and state monopolies are interwoven in the epoch of finance capital; how both are but

separate links in the imperialist struggle between the big monopolists for the division of the world.

In merchant shipping, the tremendous development of concentration has ended also in the division of the world. In Germany two powerful companies have come to the fore: the Hamburg-Amerika and the Norddeutscher Lloyd, each having a capital of 200 million marks (in stocks and bonds) and possessing shipping tonnage to the value of 185 to 189 million marks. On the other hand, in America, on January 1, 1903, the International Mercantile Marine Co., known as the Morgan trust, was formed; it united nine American and British steamship companies, and possessed a capital of 120 million dollars (480 million marks). As early as 1903, the German giants and this American-British trust concluded an agreement to divide the world with a consequent division of profits. The German companies undertook not to compete in the Anglo-American traffic. Which ports were to be "allotted" to each was precisely stipulated; a joint committee of control was set up, etc. This agreement was concluded for twenty years, with the prudent provision for its annulment in the event of war.⁶

Extremely instructive also is the story of the formation of the International Rail Cartel. The first attempt of the British, Belgian and German rail manufacturers to form such a cartel was made as early as 1884, during a severe industrial depression. The manufacturers agreed not to compete with one another in the home markets of the countries involved, and they divided the foreign markets in the following quotas: Great Britain, 66 per cent; Germany, 27 per cent; Belgium, 7 per cent. India was reserved entirely for Great Britain. Joint war was declared against a British firm which remained outside the cartel, the cost of which was met by a percentage levy on all sales. But in 1886 the cartel collapsed when two British firms retired from it. It is characteristic that agreement could not be achieved during subsequent boom periods.

At the beginning of 1904, the German steel syndicate was formed. In November 1904, the International Rail Cartel was revived, with the following quotas: Britain, 53.5 per cent; Germany, 28.83 per cent; Belgium, 17.67 per cent. France came in later and received 4.8 per cent, 5.8 per cent and 6.4 per cent in the first, second and third year respectively, over and above the 100 per cent limit, i.e., out of a total of 104.8 per cent, etc. In 1905, the United States Steel Corporation entered the cartel; then Austria and Spain. "At the present time," wrote Vogelstein in 1910, "the division of the world is complete, and the big consumers, primarily the state railways—since the world has been parcelled out without consideration for their interests—can now dwell like the poet in the heavens of Jupiter."⁷

Let me also mention the International Zinc Syndicate which was established in 1909 and which precisely apportioned output among five groups of factories: German, Belgian, French, Spanish and British; and also the International Dynamite Trust, which, Liefmann says, is “quite a modern, close alliance of all the German explosives manufacturers who, with the French and American dynamite manufacturers, organised in a similar manner, have divided the whole world among themselves, so to speak.”⁸

Liefmann calculated that in 1897 there were altogether about forty international cartels in which Germany had a share, while in 1910 there were about a hundred.

Certain bourgeois writers (now joined by Karl Kautsky, who has completely abandoned the Marxist position he had held, for example, in 1909) have expressed the opinion that international cartels, being one of the most striking expressions of the internationalisation of capital, give the hope of peace among nations under capitalism. Theoretically, this opinion is absolutely absurd, while in practice it is sophistry and a dishonest defence of the worst opportunism. International cartels show to what point capitalist monopolies have developed, and *the object* of the struggle between the various capitalist associations. This last circumstance is the most important; it alone shows us the historico-economic meaning of what is taking place; for the *forms* of the struggle may and do constantly change in accordance with varying, relatively specific and temporary causes, but the *substance* of the struggle, its class *content*, positively *cannot* change while classes exist. Naturally, it is in the interests of, for example, the German bourgeoisie, to whose side Kautsky has in effect gone over in his theoretical arguments (I shall deal with this later), to obscure the *substance* of the present economic struggle (the division of the world) and to emphasise now this and now another *form* of the struggle. Kautsky makes the same mistake. Of course, we have in mind not only the German bourgeoisie, but the bourgeoisie all over the world. The capitalists divide the world, not out of any particular malice, but because the degree of concentration which has been reached forces them to adopt this method in order to obtain profits. And they divide it “in proportion to capital,” “in proportion to strength,” because there cannot be any other method of division under commodity production and capitalism. But strength varies with the degree of economic and political development. In order to understand what is taking place, it is necessary to know what questions are settled by the changes in strength. The question as to whether these changes are “purely” economic or non-economic (e.g., military) is a secondary one, which cannot in the least affect fundamental views on the latest epoch of capitalism. To substitute the question of the form of the struggle and agreements (today peaceful, tomorrow warlike, the next

day warlike again) for the question of the substance of the struggle and agreements between capitalist associations is to sink to the role of a sophist.

The epoch of the latest stage of capitalism shows us that certain relations between capitalist associations grow up, *based* on the economic division of the world; while parallel to and in connection with it, certain relations grow up between political alliances, between states, on the basis of the territorial division of the world, of the struggle for colonies, of the “struggle for spheres of influence.”

Notes

1. Jeidels, op. cit., S. 232. —*Lenin*
2. Riesser, op. cit.; Diouritch, op. cit., p. 239; Kurt Heinig, op. cit. —*Lenin*
3. Jeidels, op. cit., S. 192–93. —*Lenin*
4. Diouritch, op. cit., pp. 245–46. —*Lenin*
5. *Die Bank*, 1912, 1, S. 1036; 1912, 2, S. 629; 1913, 1, S. 388. —*Lenin*
6. Riesser, op. cit., S. 125. —*Lenin*
7. Vogelstein, *Organisationsformen*, S. 100. —*Lenin*
8. Liefmann, *Kartelle und Trusts*, 2. A., S. 161. —*Lenin*

VI. Division of the World Among the Great Powers

In his book, on “the territorial development of the European colonies,” A. Supan,¹ the geographer, gives the following brief summary of this development at the end of the nineteenth century:

Percentage of Territory Belonging to the European Colonial Powers (including the United States)			
	1876	1900	Increase or decrease
Africa	10.8	90.4	+79.6
Polynesia	56.8	98.9	+42.1
Asia	51.5	56.6	+5.1
Australia	100.0	100.0	—
America	27.5	27.2	-0.3

“The characteristic feature of this period,” he concludes, “is, therefore, the division of Africa and Polynesia.” As there are no unoccupied territories—that is, territories that do not belong to any state in Asia and America, it is necessary to amplify Supan’s conclusion and say that the characteristic feature of the period under review is the final partitioning of the globe—final,

not in the sense that *repartition* is impossible; on the contrary, repartitions are possible and inevitable—but in the sense that the colonial policy of the capitalist countries has *completed* the seizure of the unoccupied territories on our planet. For the first time the world is completely divided up, so that in the future *only* redivision is possible, i.e., territories can only pass from one “owner” to another, instead of passing as ownerless territory to an owner.

Hence, we are living in a peculiar epoch of world colonial policy, which is most closely connected with the “latest stage in the development of capitalism,” with finance capital. For this reason, it is essential first of all to deal in greater detail with the facts, in order to ascertain as exactly as possible what distinguishes this epoch from those preceding it, and what the present situation is. In the first place, two questions of fact arise here: is an intensification of colonial policy, a sharpening of the struggle for colonies, observed precisely in the epoch of finance capital? And how, in this respect, is the world divided at the present time?

The American writer, Morris, in his book on the history of colonisation,² made an attempt to sum up the data on the colonial possessions of Great Britain, France and Germany during different periods of the nineteenth century. The following is a brief summary of the results he has obtained:

Colonial Possessions						
Year	Great Britain		France		Germany	
	Area (000,000 sq. m.)	Population (000,000)	Area (000,000 sq. m.)	Population (000,000)	Area (000,000 sq. m.)	Population (000,000)
1815–30	?	126.4	0.02	0.5	—	—
1860	2.5	145.1	0.2	3.4	—	—
1880	7.7	267.9	0.7	7.5	—	—
1899	9.3	309.0	3.7	56.4	1.0	14.7

For Great Britain, the period of the enormous expansion of colonial conquests was that between 1860 and 1880, and it was also very considerable in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century. For France and Germany this period falls precisely in these twenty years. We saw above that the development of premonopoly capitalism, of capitalism in which free competition was predominant, reached its limit in the 1860s and 1870s. We now see that it is *precisely after that period* that the tremendous “boom” in colonial conquests begins, and that the struggle for the territorial division of the world becomes extraordinarily sharp. It is beyond doubt, therefore, that capitalism’s transition to the stage of monopoly capitalism, to finance capital, *is connected* with the intensification of the struggle for the partitioning of the world.

Hobson, in his work on imperialism, marks the years 1884–1900 as the epoch of intensified “expansion” of the chief European states. According to his estimate, Great Britain during these years acquired 3,700,000 square miles of territory with 57,000,000 inhabitants; France, 3,600,000 square miles with 36,500,000; Germany, 1,000,000 square miles with 14,700,000; Belgium, 900,000 square miles with 30,000,000; Portugal, 800,000 square miles with 9,000,000 inhabitants. The scramble for colonies by all the capitalist states at the end of the nineteenth century and particularly since the 1880s is a commonly known fact in the history of diplomacy and of foreign policy.

In the most flourishing period of free competition in Great Britain, i.e., between 1840 and 1860, the leading British bourgeois politicians were *opposed* to colonial policy and were of the opinion that the liberation of the colonies, their complete separation from Britain, was inevitable and desirable. M. Beer, in an article, “Modern British Imperialism,”³ published in 1898, shows that in 1852, Disraeli, a statesman who was generally inclined towards imperialism, declared: “The colonies are millstones round our necks.” But at the end of the nineteenth century the British heroes of the hour were Cecil Rhodes and Joseph Chamberlain, who openly advocated imperialism and applied the imperialist policy in the most cynical manner!

It is not without interest to observe that even then these leading British bourgeois politicians saw the connection between what might be called the purely economic and the socio-political roots of modern imperialism. Chamberlain advocated imperialism as a “true, wise and economical policy,” and pointed particularly to the German, American and Belgian competition which Great Britain was encountering in the world market. Salvation lies in monopoly, said the capitalists as they formed cartels, syndicates and trusts. Salvation lies in monopoly, echoed the political leaders of the bourgeoisie, hastening to appropriate the parts of the world not yet shared out. And Cecil Rhodes, we are informed by his intimate friend, the journalist Stead, expressed his imperialist views to him in 1895 in the following terms:

“I was in the East End of London (a working-class quarter) yesterday and attended a meeting of the unemployed. I listened to the wild speeches, which were just a cry for ‘bread! bread!’ and on my way home I pondered over the scene and I became more than ever convinced of the importance of imperialism. . . . My cherished idea is a solution for the social problem, i.e., in order to save the 40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population, to provide new markets for the goods produced in the factories and mines. The Empire, as I have always said, is a bread and butter question. If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists.”⁴

That was said in 1895 by Cecil Rhodes, millionaire, a king of finance, the man who was mainly responsible for the Anglo-Boer War. True, his defence of imperialism is crude and cynical, but in substance it does not differ from the “theory” advocated by Messrs. Maslov, Südekum, Potresov, David, the founder of Russian Marxism and others. Cecil Rhodes was a somewhat more honest social-chauvinist. . . .

To present as precise a picture as possible of the territorial division of the world and of the changes which have occurred during the last decades in this respect, I shall utilise the data furnished by Supan in the work already quoted on the colonial possessions of all the powers of the world. Supan takes the years 1876 and 1900; I shall take the year 1876—a year very aptly selected, for it is precisely by that time that the pre-monopolist stage of development of West-European capitalism can be said to have been, in the main, completed—and the year 1914, and instead of Supan’s figures I shall quote the more recent statistics of Hübner’s *Geographical and Statistical Tables*. Supan gives figures only for colonies; I think it useful, in order to present a complete picture of the division of the world, to add brief data on non-colonial and semi-colonial countries, in which category I place Persia, China and Turkey: the first of these countries is already almost completely a colony, the second and third are becoming such.

We thus get the following result:

Colonial Possessions of the Great Powers (000,000 square kilometers and 000,000 inhabitants)								
	Colonies				Metropolitan countries		Total	
	1876		1914		1914		1914	
	Area	Pop.	Area	Pop.	Area	Pop.	Area	Pop.
Great Britain	22.5	251.9	33.5	393.5	0.3	46.5	33.8	444.0
Russia	17.0	15.9	17.4	33.2	5.4	136.2	22.8	169.4
France	0.9	6.0	10.6	55.5	0.5	39.6	11.1	95.1
Germany	—	—	2.9	12.3	0.5	64.9	3.4	77.2
United States	—	—	0.3	9.7	9.4	97.0	9.7	106.7
Japan	—	—	0.3	19.2	0.4	53.0	0.7	72.2
Total for six great powers	40.4	273.8	65.0	523.4	16.5	437.2	81.5	960.6
Colonies of other powers (Belgium, Holland, etc.)					9.9	45.3		
Semi-colonial countries (Persia, China, Turkey)					14.5	361.2		
Other countries					28.0	289.9		
Total for the world					133.9	1,657.0		

We clearly see from these figures how “complete” was the partition of the world at the turn of the twentieth century. After 1876 colonial possessions increased to enormous dimensions, by more than fifty per cent, from 40,000,000 to 65,000,000 square kilometres for the six biggest powers; the increase amounts to 25,000,000 square kilometres, fifty per cent more than the area of the metropolitan countries (16,500,000 square kilometres). In 1876 three powers had no colonies, and a fourth, France, had scarcely any. By 1914 these four powers had acquired colonies with an area of 14,100,000 square kilometres, i.e., about half as much again as the area of Europe, with a population of nearly 100,000,000. The unevenness in the rate of expansion of colonial possessions is very great. If, for instance, we compare France, Germany and Japan, which do not differ very much in area and population, we see that the first has acquired almost three times as much colonial territory as the other two combined. In regard to finance capital, France, at the beginning of the period we are considering, was also, perhaps, several times richer than Germany and Japan put together. In addition to, and on the basis of, purely economic conditions, geographical and other conditions also affect the dimensions of colonial possessions. However strong the process of levelling the world, of levelling the economic and living conditions in different countries, may have been in the past decades as a result of the pressure of large-scale industry, exchange and finance capital, considerable differences still remain; and among the six countries mentioned we see, firstly, young capitalist countries (America, Germany, Japan) whose progress has been extraordinarily rapid; secondly, countries with an old capitalist development (France and Great Britain), whose progress lately has been much slower than that of the previously mentioned countries, and thirdly, a country most backward economically (Russia), where modern capitalist imperialism is enmeshed, so to speak, in a particularly close network of pre-capitalist relations.

Alongside the colonial possessions of the Great Powers, we have placed the small colonies of the small states, which are, so to speak, the next objects of a possible and probable “redivision” of colonies. These small states mostly retain their colonies only because the big powers are torn by conflicting interests, friction, etc., which prevent them from coming to an agreement on the division of the spoils. As to the “semi-colonial” states, they provide an example of the transitional forms which are to be found in all spheres of nature and society. Finance capital is such a great, such a decisive, you might say, force in all economic and in all international relations, that it is capable of subjecting, and actually does subject, to itself even states enjoying the fullest political independence; we shall shortly see examples of this. Of course, finance capital finds most “convenient,” and derives the greatest profit from, a *form* of subjection which involves the loss of the political

independence of the subjected countries and peoples. In this respect, the semi-colonial countries provide a typical example of the “middle stage.” It is natural that the struggle for these semidependent countries should have become particularly bitter in the epoch of finance capital, when the rest of the world has already been divided up.

Colonial policy and imperialism existed before the latest stage of capitalism, and even before capitalism. Rome, founded on slavery, pursued a colonial policy and practised imperialism. But “general” disquisitions on imperialism, which ignore, or put into the background, the fundamental difference between socio-economic formations, inevitably turn into the most rapid banality or bragging, like the comparison: “Greater Rome and Greater Britain.”⁵ Even the capitalist colonial policy of *previous* stages of capitalism is essentially different from the colonial policy of finance capital.

The principal feature of the latest stage of capitalism is the domination of monopolist associations of big employers. These monopolies are most firmly established when *all* the sources of raw materials are captured by one group, and we have seen with what zeal the international capitalist associations exert every effort to deprive their rivals of all opportunity of competing, to buy up, for example, ironfields, oilfields, etc. Colonial possession alone gives the monopolies complete guarantee against all contingencies in the struggle against competitors, including the case of the adversary wanting to be protected by a law establishing a state monopoly. The more capitalism is developed, the more strongly the shortage of raw materials is felt, the more intense the competition and the hunt for sources of raw materials throughout the whole world, the more desperate the struggle for the acquisition of colonies.

“It may be asserted,” writes Schilder, “although it may sound paradoxical to some, that in the more or less foreseeable future the growth of the urban and industrial population is more likely to be hindered by a shortage of raw materials for industry than by a shortage of food.” For example, there is a growing shortage of timber—the price of which is steadily rising—of leather, and of raw materials for the textile industry. “Associations of manufacturers are making efforts to create an equilibrium between agriculture and industry in the whole of world economy; as an example of this we might mention the International Federation of Cotton Spinners’ Associations in several of the most important industrial countries, founded in 1904, and the European Federation of Flax Spinners’ Associations, founded on the same model in 1910.”⁶

Of course, the bourgeois reformists, and among them particularly the present-day adherents of Kautsky, try to belittle the importance of facts of this kind by arguing that raw materials “could be” obtained in the open

market without a “costly and dangerous” colonial policy; and that the supply of raw materials “could be” increased enormously by “simply” improving conditions in agriculture in general. But such arguments become an apology for imperialism, an attempt to paint it in bright colours, because they ignore the principal feature of the latest stage of capitalism: monopolies. The free market is becoming more and more a thing of the past; monopolist syndicates and trusts are restricting it with every passing day, and “simply” improving conditions in agriculture means improving the conditions of the masses, raising wages and reducing profits. Where, except in the imagination of sentimental reformists, are there any trusts capable of concerning themselves with the condition of the masses instead of the conquest of colonies?

Finance capital is interested not only in the already discovered sources of raw materials but also in potential sources, because present-day technical development is extremely rapid, and land which is useless today may be improved tomorrow if new methods are devised (to this end a big bank can equip a special expedition of engineers, agricultural experts, etc.), and if large amounts of capital are invested. This also applies to prospecting for minerals, to new methods of processing up and utilising raw materials, etc., etc. Hence, the inevitable striving of finance capital to enlarge its spheres of influence and even its actual territory. In the same way that the trusts capitalise their property at two or three times its value, taking into account its “potential” (and not actual) profits and the further results of monopoly, so finance capital in general strives to seize the largest possible amount of land of all kinds in all places, and by every means, taking into account potential sources of raw materials and fearing to be left behind in the fierce struggle for the last remnants of independent territory, or for the repartition of those territories that have been already divided.

The British capitalists are exerting every effort to develop cotton growing in *their* colony, Egypt (in 1904, out of 2,300,000 hectares of land under cultivation, 600,000, or more than one-fourth, were under cotton); the Russians are doing the same in *their* colony, Turkestan, because in this way they will be in a better position to defeat their foreign competitors, to monopolise the sources of raw materials and form a more economical and profitable textile trust in which *all* the processes of cotton production and manufacturing will be “combined” and concentrated in the hands of one set of owners.

The interests pursued in exporting capital also give an impetus to the conquest of colonies, for in the colonial market it is easier to employ monopoly methods (and sometimes they are the only methods that can be

employed) to eliminate competition, to ensure supplies, to secure the necessary “connections,” etc.

The non-economic superstructure which grows up on the basis of finance capital, its politics and its ideology, stimulates the striving for colonial conquest. “Finance capital does not want liberty, it wants domination,” as Hilferding very truly says. And a French bourgeois writer, developing and supplementing, as it were, the ideas of Cecil Rhodes quoted above,⁷ writes that social causes should be added to the economic causes of modern colonial policy: “Owing to the growing complexities of life and the difficulties which weigh not only on the masses of the workers, but also on the middle classes, ‘impatience, irritation and hatred are accumulating in all the countries of the old civilisation and are becoming a menace to public order; the energy which is being hurled out of the definite class channel must be given employment abroad in order to avert an explosion at home.’”⁸

Since we are speaking of colonial policy in the epoch of capitalist imperialism, it must be observed that finance capital and its foreign policy, which is the struggle of the great powers for the economic and political division of the world, give rise to a number of *transitional* forms of state dependence. Not only are the two main groups of countries, those owning colonies, and the colonies themselves, but also the diverse forms of dependent countries which, politically, are formally independent, but in fact, are enmeshed in the net of financial and diplomatic dependence, typical of this epoch. We have already referred to one form of dependence—the semi-colony. An example of another is provided by Argentina.

“South America, and especially Argentina,” writes Schulze-Gaevernitz in his work on British imperialism, “is so dependent financially on London that it ought to be described as almost a British commercial colony.”⁹ Basing himself on the reports of the Austro-Hungarian Consul at Buenos Aires for 1909, Schilder estimated the amount of British capital invested in Argentina at 8,750 million francs. It is not difficult to imagine what strong connections British finance capital (and its faithful “friend,” diplomacy) thereby acquires with the Argentine bourgeoisie, with the circles that control the whole of that country’s economic and political life.

A somewhat different form of financial and diplomatic dependence, accompanied by political independence, is presented by Portugal. Portugal is an independent sovereign state, but actually, for more than two hundred years, since the war of the Spanish Succession (1701–14), it has been a British protectorate. Great Britain has protected Portugal and her colonies in order to fortify her own positions in the fight against her rivals, Spain and France. In return Great Britain has received commercial privileges,

preferential conditions for importing goods and especially capital into Portugal and the Portuguese colonies, the right to use the ports and islands of Portugal, her telegraph cables, etc., etc.¹⁰ Relations of this kind have always existed between big and little states, but in the epoch of capitalist imperialism they become a general system, they form part of the sum total of “divide the world” relations and become links in the chain of operations of world finance capital.

In order to finish with the question of the division of the world, I must make the following additional observation. This question was raised quite openly and definitely not only in American literature after the Spanish-American War, and in English literature after the Anglo-Boer War, at the very end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth; not only has German literature, which has “most jealously” watched “British imperialism,” systematically given its appraisal of this fact. This question has also been raised in French bourgeois literature as definitely and broadly as is thinkable from the bourgeois point of view. Let me quote Driault, the historian, who, in his book, *Political and Social Problems at the End of the Nineteenth Century*, in the chapter “The Great Powers and the Division of the World,” wrote the following: “During the past few years, all the free territory of the globe, with the exception of China, has been occupied by the powers of Europe and North America. This has already brought about several conflicts and shifts of spheres of influence, and these foreshadow more terrible upheavals in the near future. For it is necessary to make haste. The nations which have not yet made provision for themselves run the risk of never receiving their share and never participating in the tremendous exploitation of the globe which will be one of the most essential features of the next century (i.e., the twentieth). That is why all Europe and America have lately been afflicted with the fever of colonial expansion, of ‘imperialism,’ that most noteworthy feature of the end of the nineteenth century.” And the author added:

“In this partition of the world, in this furious hunt for the treasures and the big markets of the globe, the relative strength of the empires founded in this nineteenth century is totally out of proportion to the place occupied in Europe by the nations which founded them. The dominant powers in Europe, the arbiters of her destiny, are *not* equally preponderant in the whole world. And, as colonial might, the hope of controlling as yet unassessed wealth, will evidently react upon the relative strength of the European powers, the colonial question—‘imperialism,’ if you will—which has already modified the political conditions of Europe itself, will modify them more and more.”¹¹

Notes

1. A. Supan, *Die territoriale Entwicklung der europäischen Kolonien*, 1906, S. 254. —*Lenin*
2. Henry C. Morris, *The History of Colonisation*, New York, 1900, Vol. II, p. 88; Vol. I, p. 419; Vol. II, p. 304. —*Lenin*
3. *Die Neue Zeit*, XVI, 1, 1898, S. 302. —*Lenin*
4. *Ibid.*, S. 304. —*Lenin*
5. C. P. Lucas, *Greater Rome and Greater Britain*, Oxford, 1912, or the Earl of Cromer's *Ancient and Modern Imperialism*, London, 1910. —*Lenin*
6. Schilder, op. cit., S. 38–42. —*Lenin*
7. See pp. 256–57 of this volume.—*Ed.*
8. Wahl, *La France aux colonies* quoted by Henri Russier, *Le Partage de l'Océanie*, Paris, 1905, p. 165. —*Lenin*
9. Schulze-Gaevernitz, *Britischer Imperialismus und englischer Freihandel zu Beginn des 20-ten Jahrhunderts*, Leipzig, 1906, S. 318. Sartorius v. Waltershausen says the same in *Das volkswirtschaftliche System der Kapitalanlage im Auslande*, Berlin, 1907, S. 46. —*Lenin*
10. Schilder, op. cit., Vol. I, S. 160–61. —*Lenin*
11. J. E. Driault, *Problèmes politiques et sociaux*, Paris, 1900, p. 299. —*Lenin*

VII. Imperialism As a Special Stage of Capitalism

We must now try to sum up, to draw together the threads of what has been said above on the subject of imperialism. Imperialism emerged as the development and direct continuation of the fundamental characteristics of capitalism in general. But capitalism only became capitalist imperialism at a definite and very high stage of its development, when certain of its fundamental characteristics began to change into their opposites, when the features of the epoch of transition from capitalism to a higher social and economic system had taken shape and revealed themselves in all spheres. Economically, the main thing in this process is the displacement of capitalist free competition by capitalist monopoly. Free competition is the basic feature of capitalism, and of commodity production generally; monopoly is the exact opposite of free competition, but we have seen the latter being transformed into monopoly before our eyes, creating large-scale industry and forcing out small industry, replacing large-scale by still larger-scale industry, and carrying concentration of production and capital to the point where out of it has grown and is growing monopoly: cartels, syndicates and trusts, and merging with them, the capital of a dozen or so banks, which manipulate thousands of millions. At the same time the monopolies, which have grown out of free competition, do not eliminate the latter, but exist

above it and alongside it, and thereby give rise to a number of very acute, intense antagonisms, frictions and conflicts. Monopoly is the transition from capitalism to a higher system.

If it were necessary to give the briefest possible definition of imperialism we should have to say that imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism. Such a definition would include what is most important, for, on the one hand, finance capital is the bank capital of a few very big monopolist banks, merged with the capital of the monopolist associations of industrialists; and, on the other hand, the division of the world is the transition from a colonial policy which has extended without hindrance to territories unseized by any capitalist power, to a colonial policy of monopolist possession of the territory of the world, which has been completely divided up.

But very brief definitions, although convenient, for they sum up the main points, are nevertheless inadequate, since we have to deduce from them some especially important features of the phenomenon that has to be defined. And so, without forgetting the conditional and relative value of all definitions in general, which can never embrace all the concatenations of a phenomenon in its full development, we must give a definition of imperialism that will include the following five of its basic features:

(1) the concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life; (2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this “finance capital,” of a financial oligarchy; (3) the export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance; (4) the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves, and (5) the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed. Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun, in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed.

We shall see later that imperialism can and must be defined differently if we bear in mind not only the basic, purely economic concepts—to which the above definition is limited—but also the historical place of this stage of capitalism in relation to capitalism in general, or the relation between imperialism and the two main trends in the working-class movement. The thing to be noted at this point is that imperialism, as interpreted above, undoubtedly represents a special stage in the development of capitalism.

To enable the reader to obtain the most wellgrounded idea of imperialism, I deliberately tried to quote as extensively as possible *bourgeois* economists who have to admit the particularly incontrovertible facts concerning the latest stage of capitalist economy. With the same object in view, I have quoted detailed statistics which enable one to see to what degree bank capital, etc., has grown, in what precisely the transformation of quantity into quality, of developed capitalism into imperialism, was expressed. Needless to say, of course, all boundaries in nature and in society are conventional and changeable, and it would be absurd to argue, for example, about the particular year or decade in which imperialism “definitely” became established.

In the matter of defining imperialism, however, we have to enter into controversy, primarily, with Karl Kautsky, the principal Marxist theoretician of the epoch of the so-called Second International—that is, of the twenty-five years between 1889 and 1914. The fundamental ideas expressed in our definition of imperialism were very resolutely attacked by Kautsky in 1915, and even in November 1914, when he said that imperialism must not be regarded as a “phase” or stage of economy, but as a policy, a definite policy “preferred” by finance capital; that imperialism must not be “identified” with “present-day capitalism”; that if imperialism is to be understood to mean “all the phenomena of present-day capitalism”—cartels, protection, the domination of the financiers, and colonial policy—then the question as to whether imperialism is necessary to capitalism becomes reduced to the “flattest tautology,” because, in that case, “imperialism is naturally a vital necessity for capitalism,” and so on. The best way to present Kautsky’s idea is to quote his own definition of imperialism, which is diametrically opposed to the substance of the ideas which I have set forth (for the objections coming from the camp of the German Marxists, who have been advocating similar ideas for many years already, have been long known to Kautsky as the objections of a definite trend in Marxism).

Kautsky’s definition is as follows:

“Imperialism is a product of highly developed industrial capitalism. It consists in the striving of every industrial capitalist nation to bring under its control or to annex all large areas of *agrarian* [Kautsky’s italics] territory, irrespective of what nations inhabit it.”¹

This definition is of no use at all because it one-sidedly, i.e., arbitrarily, singles out only the national question (although the latter is extremely important in itself as well as in its relation to imperialism), it arbitrarily and *inaccurately* connects this question *only* with industrial capital in the countries

which annex other nations, and in an equally arbitrary and inaccurate manner pushes into the forefront the annexation of agrarian regions.

Imperialism is a striving for annexations—this is what the *political* part of Kautsky's definition amounts to. It is correct, but very incomplete, for politically, imperialism is, in general, a striving towards violence and reaction. For the moment, however, we are interested in the *economic* aspect of the question, which Kautsky *himself* introduced into his definition. The inaccuracies in Kautsky's definition are glaring. The characteristic feature of imperialism is not industrial *but* finance capital. It is not an accident that in France it was precisely the extraordinarily rapid development of *finance* capital, and the weakening of industrial capital, that from the eighties onwards gave rise to the extreme intensification of annexationist (colonial) policy. The characteristic feature of imperialism is precisely that it strives to annex *not only* agrarian territories, but even most highly industrialised regions (German appetite for Belgium; French appetite for Lorraine), because (1) the fact that the world is already partitioned obliges those contemplating a *redivision* to reach out for *every kind* of territory, and (2) an essential feature of imperialism is the rivalry between several great powers in the striving for hegemony, i.e., for the conquest of territory, not so much directly for themselves as to weaken the adversary and undermine *his* hegemony. (Belgium is particularly important for Germany as a base for operations against Britain; Britain needs Baghdad as a base for operations against Germany, etc.)

Kautsky refers especially—and repeatedly—to English writers who, lie alleges, have given a purely political meaning to the word “imperialism” in the sense that he, Kautsky, understands it. We take up the work by the English writer Hobson, *Imperialism*, which appeared in 1902, and there we read:

“The new imperialism differs from the older, first, in substituting for the ambition of a single growing empire the theory and the practice of competing empires, each motivated by similar lusts of political aggrandisement and commercial gain; secondly, in the dominance of financial or investing over mercantile interests.”²

We see that Kautsky is absolutely wrong in referring to English writers generally (unless he meant the vulgar English imperialists, or the avowed apologists for imperialism). We see that Kautsky, while claiming that he continues to advocate Marxism, as a matter of fact takes a step backward compared with the *social-liberal* Hobson, who *more correctly* takes into account two “historically concrete” (Kautsky's definition is a mockery of historical concreteness!) features of modern imperialism: (1) the competition between *several* imperialisms, and (2) the predominance of the financier over the merchant. If it is chiefly a question of the annexation of agrarian

countries by industrial countries, then the role of the merchant is put in the forefront.

Kautsky's definition is not only wrong and un-Marxist. It serves as a basis for a whole system of views which signify a rupture with Marxist theory and Marxist practice all along the line. I shall refer to this later. The argument about words which Kautsky raises as to whether the latest stage of capitalism should be called imperialism or the stage of finance capital is not worth serious attention. Call it what you will, it makes no difference. The essence of the matter is that Kautsky detaches the politics of imperialism from its economics, speaks of annexations as being a policy "preferred" by finance capital, and opposes to it another bourgeois policy which, he alleges, is possible on this very same basis of finance capital. It follows, then, that monopolies in the economy are compatible with non-monopolistic, non-violent, non-annexationist methods in politics. It follows, then, that the territorial division of the world, which was completed during this very epoch of finance capital, and which constitutes the basis of the present peculiar forms of rivalry between the biggest capitalist states, is compatible with a non-imperialist policy. The result is a slurring-over and a blunting of the most profound contradictions of the latest stage of capitalism, instead of an exposure of their depth; the result is bourgeois reformism instead of Marxism.

Kautsky enters into controversy with the German apologist of imperialism and annexations, Cunow, who clumsily and cynically argues that imperialism is present-day capitalism; the development of capitalism is inevitable and progressive; therefore imperialism is progressive; therefore, we should grovel before it and glorify it! This is something like the caricature of the Russian Marxists which the Narodniks drew in 1894–95. They argued: if the Marxists believe that capitalism is inevitable in Russia, that it is progressive, then they ought to open a tavern and begin to implant capitalism! Kautsky's reply to Cunow is as follows: imperialism is not present-day capitalism; it is only one of the forms of the policy of present-day capitalism. This policy we can and should fight, fight imperialism, annexations, etc.

The reply seems quite plausible, but in effect it is a more subtle and more disguised (and therefore more dangerous) advocacy of conciliation with imperialism, because a "fight" against the policy of the trusts and banks that does not affect the economic basis of the trusts and banks is mere bourgeois reformism and pacifism, the benevolent and innocent expression of pious wishes. Evasion of existing contradictions, forgetting the most important of them, instead of revealing their full depth—such is Kautsky's theory, which has nothing in common with Marxism. Naturally, such a "theory" can only serve the purpose of advocating unity with the Cunows!

“From the purely economic point of view,” writes Kautsky, “it is not impossible that capitalism will yet go through a new phase, that of the extension of the policy of the cartels to foreign policy, the phase of ultra-imperialism,”³ i.e., of a superimperialism, of a union of the imperialisms of the whole world and not struggles among them, a phase when wars shall cease under capitalism, a phase of “the joint exploitation of the world by internationally united finance capital.”⁴

We shall have to deal with this “theory of ultra-imperialism” later on in order to show in detail how decisively and completely it breaks with Marxism. At present, in keeping with the general plan of the present work, we must examine the exact economic data on this question. “From the purely economic point of view,” is “ultra-imperialism” possible, or is it ultra-nonsense?

If the purely economic point of view is meant to be a “pure” abstraction, then all that can be said reduces itself to the following proposition: development is proceeding towards monopolies, hence, towards a single world monopoly, towards a single world trust. This is indisputable, but it is also as completely meaningless as is the statement that “development is proceeding” towards the manufacture of foodstuffs in laboratories. In this sense the “theory” of ultra-imperialism is no less absurd than a “theory of ultra-agriculture” would be.

If, however, we are discussing the “purely economic” conditions of the epoch of finance capital as a historically concrete epoch which began at the turn of the twentieth century, then the best reply that one can make to the lifeless abstractions of “ultraimperialism” (which serve exclusively a most reactionary aim: that of diverting attention from the depth of *existing* antagonisms) is to contrast them with the concrete economic realities of the present-day world economy. Kautsky’s utterly meaningless talk about ultra-imperialism encourages, among other things, that profoundly mistaken idea which only brings grist to the mill of the apologists of imperialism, i.e., that the rule of finance capital *lessens* the unevenness and contradictions inherent in the world economy, whereas in reality it increases them.

R. Calwer, in his little book, *An Introduction to the World Economy*,⁵ made an attempt to summarise the main, purely economic, data that enable one to obtain a concrete picture of the internal relations of the world economy at the turn of the twentieth century. He divides the world into five “main economic areas,” as follows: (1) Central Europe (the whole of Europe with the exception of Russia and Great Britain); (2) Great Britain; (3) Russia; (4) Eastern Asia; (5) America; he includes the colonies in the “areas” of the states to which they belong and “leaves aside” a few countries not

distributed according to areas, such as Persia, Afghanistan, and Arabia in Asia, Morocco and Abyssinia in Africa, etc.

Here is a brief summary of the economic data he quotes on these regions.

Principal economic areas	Area	Pop.	Transport		Trade	Industry		
	Million sq. miles	Millions	Railways (thou. km)	Mercantile fleet (millions tons)	Imports, exports (thous-million marks)	Output		Number of cotton spindles (millions)
						of coal (mill. tons)	of pig iron (mill. tons)	
1) Central Europe	27.6 (23.6)	388 (146)	204	8	41	251	15	26
2) Britain	28.9 (28.6)	398 (355)	140	11	25	249	9	51
3) Russia	22	131	63	1	3	16	3	7
4) Eastern Asia	12	389	8	1	2	8	0.02	2
5) America	30	148	379	6	14	245	14	19

Note: The figures in parentheses show the area and population of the colonies.

We see three areas of highly developed capitalism (high development of means of transport, of trade and of industry): the Central European, the British and the American areas. Among these are three states which dominate the world: Germany, Great Britain, and the United States. Imperialist rivalry and the struggle between these countries have become extremely keen because Germany has only an insignificant area and few colonies; the creation of “Central Europe” is still a matter for the future, it is being born in the midst of a desperate struggle. For the moment the distinctive feature of the whole of Europe is political disunity. In the British and American areas, on the other hand, political concentration is very highly developed, but there is a vast disparity between the immense colonies of the one and the insignificant colonies of the other. In the colonies, however, capitalism is only beginning to develop. The struggle for South America is becoming more and more acute.

There are two areas where capitalism is little developed: Russia and Eastern Asia. In the former, the population is extremely sparse, in the latter it is extremely dense; in the former political concentration is high, in the latter

it does not exist. The partitioning of China is only just beginning, and the struggle for it between Japan, the U.S., etc., is continually gaining in intensity.

Compare this reality—the vast diversity of economic and political conditions, the extreme disparity in the rate of development of the various countries, etc., and the violent struggles among the imperialist states—with Kautsky’s silly little fable about “peaceful” ultra-imperialism. Is this not the reactionary attempt of a frightened philistine to hide from stern reality? Are not the international cartels which Kautsky imagines are the embryos of “ultra-imperialism” (in the same way as one “can” describe the manufacture of tablets in a laboratory as ultra-agriculture in embryo) an example of the division *and the redivision* of the world, the transition from peaceful division to non-peaceful division and vice versa? Is not American and other finance capital, which divided the whole world peacefully with Germany’s participation in, for example, the international rail syndicate, or in the international mercantile shipping trust, now engaged in *redividing* the world on the basis of a new relation of forces that is being changed by methods *anything but peaceful*?

Finance capital and the trusts do not diminish but increase the differences in the rate of growth of the various parts of the world economy. Once the relation of forces is changed, what other solution of the contradictions can be found *under capitalism* than that of *force*? Railway statistics⁶ provide remarkably exact data on the different rates of growth of capitalism and finance capital in world economy. In the last decades of imperialist development, the total length of railways has changed as follows:

	Railways (000 kilometers)					
	1890		1913		+	
Europe	224		346		+122	
U.S.	268		411		+143	
All colonies	82		210		+128	
Independent and semi-independent states of Asia and America	43	125	137	347	+94	+222
Total	617		1,104			

Thus, the development of railways has been most rapid in the colonies and in the independent (and semi-independent) states of Asia and America. Here, as we know, the finance capital of the four or five biggest capitalist states holds undisputed sway. Two hundred thousand kilometres of new railways in the colonies and in the other countries of Asia and America represent a capital of more than 40,000 million marks newly invested on

particularly advantageous terms, with special guarantees of a good return and with profitable orders for steel works, etc., etc.

Capitalism is growing with the greatest rapidity in the colonies and in overseas countries. Among the latter, new imperialist powers are emerging (e.g., Japan). The struggle among the world imperialisms is becoming more acute. The tribute levied by finance capital on the most profitable colonial and overseas enterprises is increasing. In the division of this “booty,” an exceptionally large part goes to countries which do not always stand at the top of the list in the rapidity of the development of their productive forces. In the case of the biggest countries, together with their colonies, the total length of railways was as follows:

	(000 kilometres)		
	1890	1913	
U.S.	268	413	+145
British Empire	107	208	+101
Russia	32	78	+46
Germany	43	68	+25
France	41	63	+22
Total	491	830	+339

Thus, about 80 per cent of the total existing railways are concentrated in the hands of the five biggest powers. But the concentration of the *ownership* of these railways, the concentration of finance capital, is immeasurably greater since the French and British millionaires, for example, own an enormous amount of shares and bonds in American, Russian and other railways.

Thanks to her colonies, Great Britain has increased the length of “her” railways by 100,000 kilometres, four times as much as Germany. And yet, it is well known that the development of productive forces in Germany, and especially the development of the coal and iron industries, has been incomparably more rapid during this period than in Britain—not to speak of France and Russia. In 1892, Germany produced 4,900,000 tons of pig-iron and Great Britain produced 6,800,000 tons; in 1912, Germany produced 17,600,000 tons and Great Britain, 9,000,000 tons. Germany, therefore, had an overwhelming superiority over Britain in this respect.⁷ The question is: what means other than war could there be *under capitalism* to overcome the disparity between the development of productive forces and the accumulation of capital on the one side, and the division of colonies and spheres of influence for finance capital on the other?

Notes

1. *Die Neue Zeit*, 1914, 2 (B. 32), S. 909, Sept. 11, 1914; cf. 1915, 2, S. 107 et seq. —*Lenin*
2. Hobson, *Imperialism*, London, 1902, p. 324. —*Lenin*
3. *Die Neue Zeit*, 1914, 2 (B. 32), S. 921, Sept. 11, 1914. Cf. 1915, 2, S. 107 et seq. —*Lenin*
4. *Ibid.*, 1915, 1, S. 144, April 30, 1915. —*Lenin*
5. R. Calwer, *Einführung in die Weltwirtschaft*, Berlin, 1906. —*Lenin*
6. *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das deutsche Reich, 1915; Archiv für Eisenbahnwesen*, 1892. Minor details for the distribution of railways among the colonies of the various countries in 1890 had to be estimated approximately. —*Lenin*
7. Cf. also Edgar Crammond, "The Economic Relations of the British and German Empires" in *The Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, July 1914, p. 777 et seq. —*Lenin*

VIII. Parasitism and Decay of Capitalism

We now have to examine yet another significant aspect of imperialism to which most of the discussions on the subject usually attach insufficient importance. One of the shortcomings of the Marxist Hilferding is that on this point he has taken a step backward compared with the non-Marxist Hobson. I refer to parasitism, which is characteristic of imperialism.

As we have seen, the deepest economic foundation of imperialism is monopoly. This is capitalist monopoly, i.e., monopoly which has grown out of capitalism and which exists in the general environment of capitalism, commodity production and competition, in permanent and insoluble contradiction to this general environment. Nevertheless, like all monopoly, it inevitably engenders a tendency of stagnation and decay. Since monopoly prices are established, even temporarily, the motive cause of technical and, consequently, of all other progress disappears to a certain extent and, further, the economic possibility arises of deliberately retarding technical progress. For instance, in America, a certain Owens invented a machine which revolutionised the manufacture of bottles. The German bottle-manufacturing cartel purchased Owens's patent, but pigeon-holed it, refrained from utilising it. Certainly, monopoly under capitalism can never completely, and for a very long period of time, eliminate competition in the world market (and this, by the by, is one of the reasons why the theory of ultra-imperialism is so absurd). Certainly, the possibility of reducing the cost of production and increasing profits by introducing technical improvements operates in the direction of change. But the tendency to stagnation and decay, which is characteristic of

monopoly, continues to operate, and in some branches of industry, in some countries, for certain periods of time, it gains the upper hand.

The monopoly ownership of very extensive, rich or well-situated colonies operates in the same direction.

Further, imperialism is an immense accumulation of money capital in a few countries, amounting, as we have seen, to 100,000–50,000 million francs in securities. Hence the extraordinary growth of a class, or rather, of a stratum of rentiers, i.e., people who live by “clipping coupons,” who take no part in any enterprise whatever, whose profession is idleness. The export of capital, one of the most essential economic bases of imperialism, still more completely isolates the rentiers from production and sets the seal of parasitism on the whole country that lives by exploiting the labour of several overseas countries and colonies.

“In 1893,” writes Hobson, “the British capital invested abroad represented about 15 per cent of the total wealth of the United Kingdom.”¹ Let me remind the reader that by 1915 this capital had increased about two and a half times. “Aggressive imperialism,” says Hobson further on, “which costs the tax-payer so dear, which is of so little value to the manufacturer and trader... is a source of great gain to the investor... The annual income Great Britain derives from commissions in her whole foreign and colonial trade, import and export, is estimated by Sir R. Giffen at £18,000,000 (nearly 170 million rubles] for 1899, taken at 2-1/2 per cent, upon a turnover of £800,000,000.” Great as this sum is, it cannot explain the aggressive imperialism of Great Britain, which is explained by the income of £90 million to £100 million from “invested” capital, the income of the rentiers.

The income of the rentiers is five *times* greater than the income obtained from the foreign trade of the biggest “trading” country in the world! This is the essence of imperialism and imperialist parasitism.

For that reason the term “rentier state” (Rentnerstaat), or usurer state, is coming into common use in the economic literature that deals with imperialism. The world has become divided into a handful of usurer states and a vast majority of debtor states. “At the top of the list of foreign investments,” says Schulze-Gaevernitz, “are those placed in politically dependent or allied countries: Great Britain grants loans to Egypt, Japan, China and South America. Her navy plays here the part of bailiff in case of necessity. Great Britain’s political power protects her from the indignation of her debtors.”² Sartorius von Waltershausen in his book, *The National Economic System of Capital Investments Abroad*, cites Holland as the model “rentier state” and points out that Great Britain and France are now becoming such.³ Schilder is of the opinion that five industrial states have become “definitely

pronounced creditor countries”: Great Britain, France, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland. He does not include Holland in this list simply because she is “industrially little developed.”⁴ The United States is a creditor only of the American countries.

“Great Britain,” says Schulze-Gaevernitz, “is gradually becoming transformed from an industrial into a creditor state. Notwithstanding the absolute increase in industrial output and the export of manufactured goods, there is an increase in the relative importance of income from interest and dividends, issues of securities, commissions and speculation in the whole of the national economy. In my opinion it is precisely this that forms the economic basis of imperialist ascendancy. The creditor is more firmly attached to the debtor than the seller is to the buyer.”⁵ In regard to Germany, A. Lansburgh, the publisher of the Berlin *Die Bank*, in 1911, in an article entitled “Germany—a Rentier State,” wrote the following: “People in Germany are ready to sneer at the yearning to become rentiers that is observed in France. But they forget that as far as the bourgeoisie is concerned the situation in Germany is becoming more and more like that in France.”⁶

The rentier state is a state of parasitic, decaying capitalism, and this circumstance cannot fail to influence all the socio-political conditions of the countries concerned, in general, and the two fundamental trends in the working-class movement, in particular. To demonstrate this in the clearest possible manner let me quote Hobson, who is a most reliable witness, since he cannot be suspected of leaning towards Marxist orthodoxy; on the other hand, he is an Englishman who is very well acquainted with the situation in the country which is richest in colonies, in finance capital, and in imperialist experience.

With the Anglo-Boer War fresh in his mind, Hobson describes the connection between imperialism and the interests of the “financiers,” their growing profits from contracts, supplies, etc., and writes: “While the directors of this definitely parasitic policy are capitalists, the same motives appeal to special classes of the workers. In many towns most important trades are dependent upon government employment or contracts; the imperialism of the metal and shipbuilding centres is attributable in no small degree to this fact.” Two sets of circumstances, in this writer’s opinion, have weakened the old empires: (1) “economic parasitism,” and (2) the formation of armies recruited from subject peoples. “There is first the habit of economic parasitism, by which the ruling state has used its provinces, colonies, and dependencies in order to enrich its ruling class and to bribe its lower classes into acquiescence.” And I shall add that the economic possibility of such bribery, whatever its form may be, requires high monopolist profits.

As for the second circumstance, Hobson writes: “One of the strangest symptoms of the blindness of imperialism is the reckless indifference with

which Great Britain, France and other imperial nations are embarking on this perilous dependence. Great Britain has gone farthest. Most of the fighting by which we have won our Indian Empire has been done by natives; in India, as more recently in Egypt, great standing armies are placed under British commanders; almost all the fighting associated with our African dominions, except in the southern part, has been done for us by natives.”

Hobson gives the following economic appraisal of the prospect of the partitioning of China:

“The greater part of Western Europe might then assume the appearance and character already exhibited by tracts of country in the South of England, in the Riviera and in the tourist-ridden or residential parts of Italy and Switzerland, little clusters of wealthy aristocrats drawing dividends and pensions from the Far East, with a somewhat larger group of professional retainers and tradesmen and a larger body of personal servants and workers in the transport trade and in the final stages of production of the more perishable goods; all the main arterial industries would have disappeared, the staple foods and manufactures flowing in as tribute from Asia and Africa. . . . We have foreshadowed the possibility of even a larger alliance of Western states, a European federation of great powers which, so far from forwarding the cause of world civilisation, might introduce the gigantic peril of a Western parasitism, a group of advanced industrial nations, whose upper classes drew vast tribute from Asia and Africa, with which they supported great tame masses of retainers, no longer engaged in the staple industries of agriculture and manufacture, but kept in the performance of personal or minor industrial services under the control of a new financial aristocracy. Let those who would scout such a theory (it would be better to say: prospect) as undeserving of consideration examine the economic and social condition of districts in Southern England today which are already reduced to this condition, and reflect upon the vast extension of such a system which might be rendered feasible by the subjection of China to the economic control of similar groups of financiers, investors, and political and business officials, draining the greatest potential reservoir of profit the world has ever known, in order to consume it in Europe. The situation is far too complex, the play of world forces far too incalculable, to render this or any other single interpretation of the future very probable; but the influences which govern the imperialism of Western Europe today are moving in this direction, and, unless counteracted or diverted, make towards some such consummation.”⁷

The author is quite right: if the forces of imperialism had not been counteracted they would have led precisely to what he has described. The significance of a “United States of Europe” in the present imperialist situation is correctly appraised. He should have added, however, that, also *within* the working-class movement, the opportunists, who are for the moment victorious

in most countries, are “working” systematically and undeviatingly in this very direction. Imperialism, which means the partitioning of the world, and the exploitation of other countries besides China, which means high monopoly profits for a handful of very rich countries, makes it economically possible to bribe the upper strata of the proletariat, and thereby fosters, gives shape to, and strengthens opportunism. We must not, however, lose sight of the forces which counteract imperialism in general, and opportunism in particular, and which, naturally, the social-liberal Hobson is unable to perceive.

The German opportunist, Gerhard Hildebrand, who was once expelled from the Party for defending imperialism, and who could today be a leader of the so-called “Social-Democratic” Party of Germany, supplements Hobson well by his advocacy of a “United States of Western Europe” (without Russia) for the purpose of “joint” action . . . against the African Negroes, against the “great Islamic movement,” for the maintenance of a “powerful army and navy,” against a “Sino-Japanese coalition,”⁸ etc.

The description of “British imperialism” in Schulze-Gaevernitz’s book reveals the same parasitical traits. The national income of Great Britain approximately doubled from 1865 to 1898, while the income “from abroad” increased *ninefold* in the same period. While the “merit” of imperialism is that it “trains the Negro to habits of industry” (you cannot manage without coercion . . .), the “danger” of imperialism lies in that “Europe will shift the burden of physical toil—first agricultural and mining, then the rougher work in industry—on to the coloured races, and itself be content with the role of rentier, and in this way, perhaps, pave the way for the economic, and later, the political emancipation of the coloured races.”

An increasing proportion of land in England is being taken out of cultivation and used for sport, for the diversion of the rich. As far as Scotland—the most aristocratic place for hunting and other sports—is concerned, it is said that “it lives on its past and on Mr. Carnegie” (the American multimillionaire). On horse racing and fox hunting alone England annually spends £14,000,000 (nearly 130 million rubles). The number of rentiers in England is about one million. The percentage of the productively employed population to the total population is declining:

Year	Population England and Wales (000,000)	Workers in basic industries (000,000)	Per cent of total population
1851	17.9	4.1	23
1901	32.5	4.9	15

And in speaking of the British working class the bourgeois student of “British imperialism at the beginning of the twentieth century” is obliged to distinguish systematically between the “*upper stratum*” of the workers and the “*lower stratum of the proletariat proper*.” The upper stratum furnishes the bulk of the membership of co-operatives, of trade unions, of sporting clubs and of numerous religious sects. To this level is adapted the electoral system, which in Great Britain is still “*sufficiently restricted to exclude the lower stratum of the proletariat proper*”! In order to present the condition of the British working class in a rosy light, only this upper stratum—which constitutes a *minority* of the proletariat—is usually spoken of. For instance, “the problem of unemployment is mainly a London problem and that of the lower proletarian stratum, *to which the politicians attach little importance. . .*”⁹ He should have said: to which the bourgeois politicians and the “socialist” opportunists attach little importance.

One of the special features of imperialism connected with the facts I am describing, is the decline in emigration from imperialist countries and the increase in immigration into these countries from the more backward countries where lower wages are paid. As Hobson observes, emigration from Great Britain has been declining since 1884. In that year the number of emigrants was 242,000, while in 1900, the number was 169,000. Emigration from Germany reached the highest point between 1881 and 1890, with a total of 1,453,000 emigrants. In the course of the following two decades, it fell to 544,000 and to 341,000. On the other hand, there was an increase in the number of workers entering Germany from Austria, Italy, Russia and other countries. According to the 1907 census, there were 1,342,294 foreigners in Germany, of whom 440,800 were industrial workers and 257,329 agricultural workers.¹⁰ In France, the workers employed in the mining industry are, “in great part,” foreigners: Poles, Italians and Spaniards.¹¹ In the United States, immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe are engaged in the most poorly paid jobs, while American workers provide the highest percentage of overseers or of the better-paid workers.¹² Imperialism has the tendency to create privileged sections also among the workers, and to detach them from the broad masses of the proletariat.

It must be observed that in Great Britain the tendency of imperialism to split the workers, to strengthen opportunism among them and to cause temporary decay in the working-class movement, revealed itself much earlier than the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries; for two important distinguishing features of imperialism were already observed in Great Britain in the middle of the nineteenth century—vast colonial possessions and a monopolist position in the world market. Marx and Engels traced this connection between opportunism in the

working-class movement and the imperialist features of British capitalism systematically, during the course of several decades. For example, on October 7, 1858, Engels wrote to Marx: “The English proletariat is actually becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat *alongside* the bourgeoisie. For a nation which exploits the whole world this is of course to a certain extent justifiable.”¹⁵ Almost a quarter of a century later, in a letter dated August 11, 1881, Engels speaks of the “worst English trade unions which allow themselves to be led by men sold to, or at least paid by, the middle class.” In a letter to Kautsky, dated September 12, 1882, Engels wrote: “You ask me what the English workers think about colonial policy. Well, exactly the same as they think about politics in general. There is no workers’ party here, there are only Conservatives and Liberal-Radicals, and the workers gaily share the feast of England’s monopoly of the world market and the colonies.”¹³ (Engels expressed similar ideas in the press in his preface to the second edition of *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, which appeared in 1892.)

This clearly shows the causes and effects. The causes are: (1) exploitation of the whole world by this country; (2) its monopolist position in the world market; (3) its colonial monopoly. The effects are: (1) a section of the British proletariat becomes bourgeois; (2) a section of the proletariat allows itself to be led by men bought by, or at least paid by, the bourgeoisie. The imperialism of the beginning of the twentieth century completed the division of the world among a handful of states, each of which today exploits (in the sense of drawing superprofits from) a part of the “whole world” only a little smaller than that which England exploited in 1858; each of them occupies a monopolist position in the world market thanks to trusts, cartels, finance capital and creditor and debtor relations; each of them enjoys to some degree a colonial monopoly (we have seen that out of the total of 75,000,000 sq. km., which comprise the *whole* colonial world, 65,000,000 sq. km., or 86 per cent, belong to six powers; 61,000,000 sq. km., or 81 per cent, belong to three powers).

The distinctive feature of the present situation is the prevalence of such economic and political conditions that are bound to increase the irreconcilability between opportunism and the general and vital interests of the working-class movement: imperialism has grown from an embryo into the predominant system; capitalist monopolies occupy first place in economics and politics; the division of the world has been completed; on the other hand, instead of the undivided monopoly of Great Britain, we see a few imperialist powers contending for the right to share in this monopoly, and this struggle is characteristic of the whole period of the early twentieth century.

Opportunism cannot now be completely triumphant in the working-class movement of one country for decades as it was in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century; but in a number of countries it has grown ripe, overripe, and rotten, and has become completely merged with bourgeois policy in the form of “social-chauvinism.”¹⁴

Notes

1. Hobson, op. cit., pp. 59, 62. —*Lenin*
2. Schulze-Gaevernitz, *Britischer Imperialismus*, S. 320 et seq. —*Lenin*
3. Sartorius von Waltershausen, *Das volkswirtschaftliche System*, etc., Berlin, 1907, Buch IV. —*Lenin*
4. Schilder, op. cit., S. 393. —*Lenin*
5. Schulze-Gaevernitz, op. cit., S. 122. —*Lenin*
6. *Die Bank*, 1911, 1, S. 10–11. —*Lenin*
7. Hobson, op. cit., pp. 103, 205, 144, 335, 386. —*Lenin*
8. Gerhard Hildebrand, *Die Erschütterung der Industriebherrschaft und des Industriesozialismus*, 1910, S. 229 et seq. —*Lenin*
9. Schulze-Gaevernitz, *Britischer Imperialismus* S. 301. —*Lenin*
10. *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, Bd. 211. —*Lenin*
11. Henger, *Die Kapitalanlage der Franzosen*, Stuttgart, 1913. —*Lenin*
12. Hourwich, *Immigration and Labour*, New York, 1913. —*Lenin*
13. *Briefwechsel von Marx und Engels*, Bd. II, S. 290; IV, 433—Karl Kautsky, *Sozialismus und Kolonialpolitik*, Berlin, 1907, S. 79; this pamphlet was written by Kautsky in those infinitely distant days when he was still a Marxist. —*Lenin*
14. Russian social-chauvinism in its overt form, represented by the Potresovs, Chkenkelis, Maslovs, etc., and its covert form (Chkeidze, Skobelev, Axelrod, Martov, etc.) also emerged from the Russian variety of opportunism, namely, liquidationism. —*Lenin*

IX. Critique of Imperialism

By the critique of imperialism, in the broad sense of the term, we mean the attitude of the different classes of society towards imperialist policy in connection with their general ideology.

The enormous dimensions of finance capital concentrated in a few hands and creating an extraordinarily dense and widespread network of relationships and connections which subordinates not only the small and medium, but also the very small capitalists and small masters, on the one hand, and the increasingly intense struggle waged against other national state groups of financiers for the division of the world and domination over other countries, on the other hand, cause the propertied classes to go over

entirely to the side of imperialism. “General” enthusiasm over the prospects of imperialism, furious defence of it and painting it in the brightest colours—such are the signs of the times. Imperialist ideology also penetrates the working class. No Chinese Wall separates it from the other classes. The leaders of the present-day, so-called, “Social-Democratic” Party of Germany are justly called “social-imperialists,” that is, socialists in words and imperialists in deeds; but as early as 1902, Hobson noted the existence in Britain of “Fabian imperialists” who belonged to the opportunist Fabian Society.

Bourgeois scholars and publicists usually come out in defence of imperialism in a somewhat veiled form; they obscure its complete, domination and its deep-going roots, strive to push specific and secondary details into the forefront and do their very best to distract attention from essentials by means of absolutely ridiculous schemes for “reform,” such as police supervision of the trusts or banks, etc. Cynical and frank imperialists who are bold enough to admit the absurdity of the idea of reforming the fundamental characteristics of imperialism are a rarer phenomenon.

Here is an example. The German imperialists attempt, in the magazine *Archives of World Economy*, to follow the national emancipation movements in the colonies, particularly, of course, in colonies other than those belonging to Germany. They note the unrest and the protest movements in India, the movement in Natal (South Africa), in the Dutch East Indies, etc. One of them, commenting on an English report of a conference held on June 28–30, 1910, of representatives of various subject nations and races, of peoples of Asia, Africa and Europe who are under foreign rule, writes as follows in appraising the speeches delivered at this conference: “We are told that we must fight imperialism; that the ruling states should recognise the right of subject peoples to independence; that an international tribunal should supervise the fulfilment of treaties concluded between the great powers and weak peoples. Further than the expression of these pious wishes they do not go. We see no trace of understanding of the fact that imperialism is inseparably bound up with capitalism in its present form and that, therefore [!], an open struggle against imperialism would be hopeless, unless, perhaps, the fight were to be confined to protests against certain of its especially abhorrent excesses.”¹ Since the reform of the basis of imperialism is a deception, a “pious wish,” since the bourgeois representatives of the oppressed nations go no “further” forward, the bourgeois representative of an oppressing nation goes “further” *backward*, to servility towards imperialism under cover of the claim to be “scientific.” That is also “logic”!

The questions as to whether it is possible to reform the basis of imperialism, whether to go forward to the further intensification and deepening of the antagonisms which it engenders, or backward, towards allaying

these antagonisms, are fundamental questions in the critique of imperialism. Since the specific political features of imperialism are reaction everywhere and increased national oppression due to the oppression of the financial oligarchy and the elimination of free competition, a petty-bourgeois-democratic opposition to imperialism arose at the beginning of the twentieth century in nearly all imperialist countries. Kautsky not only did not trouble to oppose, was not only unable to oppose this petty-bourgeois reformist opposition, which is really reactionary in its economic basis, but became merged with it in practice, and this is precisely where Kautsky and the broad international Kautskian trend deserted Marxism.

In the United States, the imperialist war waged against Spain in 1898 stirred up the opposition of the “anti-imperialists,” the last of the Mohicans of bourgeois democracy who declared this war to be “criminal,” regarded the annexation of foreign territories as a violation of the Constitution, declared that the treatment of Aguinaldo, leader of the Filipinos (the Americans promised him the independence of his country, but later landed troops and annexed it), was “jingo treachery,” and quoted the words of Lincoln: “When the white man governs himself, that is self-government; but when he governs himself and also governs others, it is no longer self-government; it is despotism.”² But as long, as all this criticism shrank from recognising the inseverable bond between imperialism and the trusts, and, therefore, between imperialism and the foundations of capitalism, while it shrank from joining the forces engendered by large-scale capitalism and its development-it remained a “pious wish.”

This is also the main attitude taken by Hobson in his critique of imperialism. Hobson anticipated Kautsky in protesting against the “inevitability of imperialism” argument, and in urging the necessity of “increasing the consuming capacity” of the people (under capitalism!). The petty-bourgeois point of view in the critique of imperialism, the omnipotence of the banks, the financial oligarchy, etc., is adopted by the authors I have often quoted, such as Agahd, A. Lansburgh, L. Eschwege, and among the French writers Victor Berard, author of a superficial book entitled *England and Imperialism* which appeared in 1900. All these authors, who make no claim to be Marxists, contrast imperialism with free competition and democracy, condemn the Baghdad railway scheme, which is leading to conflicts and war, utter “pious wishes” for peace, etc. This applies also to the compiler of international stock and share issue statistics, A. Neymarck, who, after calculating the thousands of millions of francs representing “international” securities, exclaimed in 1912: “Is it possible to believe that peace may be disturbed . . . that, in the face of these enormous figures, anyone would risk starting a war?”³

Such simple-mindedness on the part of the bourgeois economists is not surprising; moreover, *it is in their interest* to pretend to be so naive and to talk “seriously” about peace under imperialism. But what remains of Kautsky’s Marxism, when, in 1914, 1915 and 1916, he takes up the same bourgeois-reformist point of view and affirms that “everybody is agreed” (imperialists, pseudo-socialists and social-pacifists) on the matter of peace? Instead of an analysis of imperialism and an exposure of the depths of its contradictions, we have nothing but a reformist “pious wish” to wave them aside, to evade them.

Here is a sample of Kautsky’s economic criticism of imperialism. He takes the statistics of the British export and import trade with Egypt for 1872 and 1912; it seems that this export and import trade has grown more slowly than British foreign trade as a whole. From this Kautsky concludes that “we have no reason to suppose that without military occupation the growth of British trade with Egypt would have been less, simply as a result of the mere operation of economic factors.” “The urge of capital to expand . . . can be best promoted, not by the violent methods of imperialism, but by peaceful democracy.”⁴

This argument of Kautsky’s, which is repeated in every key by his Russian armour-bearer (and Russian shielder of the social-chauvinists), Mr. Spectator,¹¹ constitutes the basis of Kautskian critique of imperialism, and that is why we must deal with it in greater detail. We will begin with a quotation from Hilferding, whose conclusions Kautsky on many occasions, and notably in April 1915, has declared to have been “unanimously adopted by all socialist theoreticians.”

“It is not the business of the proletariat,” writes Hilferding “to contrast the more progressive capitalist policy with that of the now bygone era of free trade and of hostility towards the state. The reply of the proletariat to the economic policy of finance capital, to imperialism, cannot be free trade, but socialism. The aim of proletarian policy cannot today be the ideal of restoring free competition—which has now become a reactionary ideal—but the complete elimination of competition by the abolition of capitalism.”⁵

Kautsky broke with Marxism by advocating in the epoch of finance capital a “reactionary ideal,” “peaceful democracy,” “the mere operation of economic factors,” for *objectively* this ideal drags us back from monopoly to non-monopoly capitalism, and is a reformist swindle.

Trade with Egypt (or with any other colony or semi-colony) “would have grown more” *without* military occupation, without imperialism, and without finance capital. What does this mean? That capitalism would have developed more rapidly if free competition had not been restricted by monopolies in general, or by the “connections,” yoke (i.e., also the monopoly)

of finance capital, or by the monopolist possession of colonies by certain countries?

Kautsky's argument can have no other meaning; and *this* "meaning" is meaningless. Let us assume that free competition, without any sort of monopoly, would have developed capitalism and trade more rapidly. But the more rapidly trade and capitalism develop, the greater is the concentration of production and capital which *gives rise* to monopoly. And monopolies have *already* arisen—precisely out of free competition! Even if monopolies have now begun to retard progress, it is not an argument in favour of free competition, which has become impossible after it has given rise to monopoly.

Whichever way one turns Kautsky's argument, one will find nothing in it except reaction and bourgeois reformism.

Even if we correct this argument and say, as Spectator says, that the trade of the colonies with Britain is now developing more slowly than their trade with other countries, it does not save Kautsky; for it *is also* monopoly, *also* imperialism that is beating Great Britain, only it is the monopoly and imperialism of another country (America, Germany). It is known that the cartels have given rise to a new and peculiar form of protective tariffs, i.e., goods suitable for export are protected (Engels noted this in Vol. III of *Capital*¹²). It is known, too, that the cartels add finance capital have a system peculiar to themselves, that of "exporting goods at cut-rate prices," or "dumping," as the English call it: within a given country the cartel sells its goods at high monopoly prices, but sells them abroad at a much lower price to undercut the competitor, to enlarge its own production to the utmost, etc. If Germany's trade with the British colonies is developing more rapidly than Great Britain's, it only proves that German imperialism is younger, stronger and better organised than British imperialism, is superior to it; but it by no means proves the "superiority" of free trade, for it is not a fight between free trade and protection and colonial dependence, but between two rival imperialisms, two monopolies, two groups of finance capital. The superiority of German imperialism over British imperialism is more potent than the wall of colonial frontiers or of protective tariffs: to use this as an "argument" in *favour* of free trade and "peaceful democracy" is banal, it means forgetting the essential features and characteristics of imperialism, substituting petty-bourgeois reformism for Marxism.

It is interesting to note that even the bourgeois economist, A. Lansburgh, whose criticism of imperialism is as petty-bourgeois as Kautsky's, nevertheless got closer to a more scientific study of trade statistics. He did not compare one single country, chosen at random, and one single colony with the other countries; he examined the export trade of an imperialist

country: (1) with countries which are financially dependent upon it, and borrow money from it; and (2) with countries which are financially independent. He obtained the following results:

Export Trade of Germany (000,000 marks)			
	1889	1908	Per cent increase
<i>To countries financially dependent on Germany</i>			
Rumania	48.2	70.8	47
Portugal	19.0	32.8	73
Argentina	60.7	147.0	143
Brazil	48.7	84.5	73
Chile	28.3	64.0	114
Total	234.8	451.5	92
<i>To countries financially independent of Germany</i>			
Great Britain	651.8	997.4	53
France	210.2	437.9	108
Belgium	137.2	322.8	135
Switzerland	177.4	401.1	127
Australia	21.2	64.5	205
Dutch East Indies	8.8	40.7	363
Total	1,206.6	2,264.4	87

Lansburgh did not draw *conclusions* and therefore, strangely enough, failed to observe that if the figures prove anything at all, they prove that *he is wrong*, for the exports to countries financially dependent on Germany have grown *more rapidly*, if only slightly, than exports to the countries which are financially independent. (I emphasise the “if,” for Lansburgh’s figures are far from complete.)

Tracing the connection between exports and loans, Lansburgh writes:

“In 1890–91, a Rumanian loan was floated through the German banks, which had already in previous years made advances on this loan. It was used chiefly to purchase railway materials in Germany. In 1891, German exports to Rumania amounted to 55 million marks. The following year they dropped to 39.4 million marks and, with fluctuations, to 25.4 million in 1900. Only in very recent years have they regained the level of 1891, thanks to two new loans.

“German exports to Portugal rose, following the loans of 1888– to 21,100,000 (1890); then, in the two following years, they dropped to 16,200,000 and 7,400,000, and regained their former level only in 1903.

“The figures of German trade with Argentina are still more striking. Loans were floated in 1888 and 1890; German exports to Argentina reached 60,700,000 marks (1889). Two years later they amounted to only 18,600,000 marks, less than one-third of the previous figure. It was not until 1901 that they regained and surpassed the level of 1889, and then only as a result of new loans floated by the state and by municipalities, with advances to build power stations, and with other credit operations.

“Exports to Chile, as a consequence of the loan of 1889, rose to 45,200,000 marks (in 1892), and a year later dropped to 22,500,000 marks. A new Chilean loan floated by the German banks in 1906 was followed by a rise of exports to 84,700,000 marks in 1907, only to fall again to 52,400,000 marks in 1908.”⁶

From these facts Lansburgh draws the amusing petty-bourgeois moral of how unstable and irregular export trade is when it is bound up with loans, how bad it is to invest capital abroad instead of “naturally” and “harmoniously” developing home industry, how “costly” are the millions in bakshish that Krupp has to pay in floating foreign loans, etc. But the facts tell us clearly: the increase in exports is connected with just *theseswindling* tricks of finance capital, which is not concerned with bourgeois morality, but with skinning the ox twice—first, it pockets the profits from the loan; then it pockets other profits from the *same* loan which the borrower uses to make purchases from Krupp, or to purchase railway material from the Steel Syndicate, etc.

I repeat that I do not by any means consider Lansburgh’s figures to be perfect; but I had to quote them because they are more scientific than Kautsky’s and Spectator’s and because Lansburgh showed the correct way to approach the question. In discussing the significance of finance capital in regard to exports, etc., one must be able to single out the connection of exports especially and solely with the tricks of the financiers, especially and solely with the sale of goods by cartels, etc. Simply to compare colonies with non-colonies, one imperialism with another imperialism, one semi-colony or colony (Egypt) with all other countries, is to evade and to obscure the very *essence* of the question.

Kautsky’s theoretical critique of imperialism has nothing in common with Marxism and serves only as a preamble to propaganda for peace and unity with the opportunists and the social-chauvinists, precisely for the reason that it evades and obscures the very profound and fundamental contradictions of imperialism: the contradictions between monopoly and free competition which exists side by side with it, between the gigantic “operations” (and gigantic profits) of finance capital and “honest” trade in the

free market, the contradiction between cartels and trusts, on the one hand, and non-cartelised industry, on the other, etc.

The notorious theory of “ultra-imperialism,” invented by Kautsky, is just as reactionary. Compare his arguments on this subject in 1915, with Hobson’s arguments in 1902.

Kautsky: “. . . Cannot the present imperialist policy be supplanted by a new, ultra-imperialist policy, which will introduce the joint exploitation of the world by internationally united finance capital in place of the mutual rivalries of national finance capitals? Such a new phase of capitalism is at any rate conceivable. Can it be achieved? Sufficient premises are still lacking to enable us to answer this question.”⁷

Hobson: “Christendom thus laid out in a few great federal empires, each with a retinue of uncivilised dependencies, seems to many the most legitimate development of present tendencies, and one which would offer the best hope of permanent peace on an assured basis of inter-Imperialism.”

Kautsky called ultra-imperialism or super-imperialism what Hobson, thirteen years earlier, described as inter-imperialism. Except for coining a new and clever catchword, replacing one Latin prefix by another, the only progress Kautsky has made in the sphere of “scientific” thought is that he gave out as Marxism what Hobson, in effect, described as the Kant of English parsons. After the Anglo-Boer War it was quite natural for this highly honourable caste to exert their main efforts to *console* the British middle class and the workers who had lost many of their relatives on the battlefields of South Africa and who were obliged to pay higher taxes in order to guarantee still higher profits for the British financiers. And what better consolation could there be than the theory that imperialism is not so bad; that it stands close to inter- (or ultra-) imperialism, which can ensure permanent peace? No matter what the good intentions of the English parsons, or of sentimental Kautsky, may have been, the only objective, i.e., real, social significance of Kautsky’s “theory” is this: it is a most reactionary method of consoling the masses with hopes of permanent peace being possible under capitalism, by distracting their attention from the sharp antagonisms and acute problems of the present times, and directing it towards illusory prospects of an imaginary “ultraimperialism” of the future. Deception of the masses—that is all there is in Kautsky’s “Marxist” theory.

Indeed, it is enough to compare well-known and indisputable facts to become convinced of the utter falsity of the prospects which Kautsky tries to conjure up before the German workers (and the workers of all lands). Let us consider India, Indo-China and China. It is known that these three colonial and semi-colonial countries, with a population of six to seven

hundred million, are subjected to the exploitation of the finance capital of several imperialist powers: Great Britain, France, Japan, the U.S.A., etc. Let us assume that these imperialist countries form alliances against one another in order to protect or enlarge their possessions, their interests and their spheres of influence in these Asiatic states; these alliances will be “inter-imperialist,” or “ultra-imperialist” alliances. Let us assume that *all* the imperialist countries conclude an alliance for the “peaceful” division of these parts of Asia; this alliance would be an alliance of “internationally united finance capital.” There are actual examples of alliances of this kind in the history of the twentieth century—the attitude of the powers to China, for instance. We ask, is it “conceivable,” assuming that the capitalist system remains intact—and this is precisely the assumption that Kautsky does make—that such alliances would be more than temporary, that they would eliminate friction, conflicts and struggle in every possible form?

The question has only to be presented clearly for any other than a negative answer to be impossible. This is because the only conceivable basis under capitalism for the division of spheres of influence, interests, colonies, etc., is a calculation of the *strength* of those participating, their general economic, financial, military strength, etc. And the strength of these participants in the division does not change to an equal degree, for the *even* development of different undertakings, trusts, branches of industry, or countries is impossible under capitalism. Half a century ago Germany was a miserable, insignificant country, if her capitalist strength is compared with that of the Britain of that time; Japan compared with Russia in the same way. Is it “conceivable” that in ten or twenty years’ time the relative strength of the imperialist powers will have remained unchanged? It is out of the question.

Therefore, in the realities of the capitalist system, and not in the banal philistine fantasies of English parsons, or of the German “Marxist,” Kautsky, “inter-imperialist” or “ultra-imperialist” alliances, no matter what form they may assume, whether of one imperialist coalition against another, or of a general alliance embracing *all* the imperialist powers, are *inevitably nothing* more than a “truce” in periods between wars. Peaceful alliances prepare the ground for wars, and in their turn grow out of wars; the one conditions the other, producing alternating forms of peaceful and non-peaceful struggle on *one and the same* basis of imperialist connections and relations within world economics and world politics. But in order to pacify the workers and reconcile them with the social-chauvinists who have deserted to the side of the bourgeoisie, over-wise Kautsky *separates* one link of a single chain from another, separates the present peaceful (and ultra-imperialist, nay, ultra-ultra-imperialist) alliance of *all* the powers for the “pacification” of China (remember the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion¹³) from the

non-peaceful conflict of tomorrow, which will prepare the ground for another “peaceful” general alliance for the partition, say, of Turkey, on the day after tomorrow, *etc., etc.* Instead of showing the living connection between periods of imperialist peace and periods of imperialist war, Kautsky presents the workers with a lifeless abstraction in order to reconcile them to their lifeless leaders.

An American writer, Hill, in his *A History of the Diplomacy in the International Development of Europe* refers in his preface to the following periods in the recent history of diplomacy: (1) the era of revolution; (2) the constitutional movement; (3) the present era of “commercial imperialism.”⁸ Another writer divides the history of Great Britain’s “world policy” since 1870 into four periods: (1) the first Asiatic period (that of the struggle against Russia’s advance in Central Asia towards India); (2) the African period (approximately 1885–1902): that of the struggle against France for the partition of Africa (the “Fashoda incident” of 1898 which brought her within a hair’s breadth of war with France); (3) the second Asiatic period (alliance with Japan against Russia); and (4) the “European” period, chiefly anti-German.⁹ “The political patrol clashes take place on the financial field,” wrote the banker, Riesser, in 1905, in showing how French finance capital operating in Italy was preparing the way for a political alliance of these countries, and how a conflict was developing between Germany and Great Britain over Persia, between all the European capitalists over Chinese loans, etc. Behold, the living reality of peaceful “ultra-imperialist” alliances in their inseverable connection with ordinary imperialist conflicts!

Kautsky’s obscuring of the deepest contradictions of imperialism, which inevitably boils down to painting imperialism in bright colours, leaves its traces in this writer’s criticism of the political features of imperialism. Imperialism is the epoch of finance capital and of monopolies, which introduce everywhere the striving for domination, not for freedom. Whatever the political system, the result of these tendencies is everywhere reaction and an extreme intensification of antagonisms in this field. Particularly intensified become the yoke of national oppression and the striving for annexations, i.e., the violation of national independence (for annexation is nothing but the violation of the right of nations to self-determination). Hilferding rightly notes the connection between imperialism and the intensification of national oppression. “In the newly opened-up countries,” he writes, “the capital imported into them intensifies antagonisms and excites against the intruders the constantly growing resistance of the peoples who are awakening to national consciousness; this resistance can easily develop into dangerous measures against foreign capital. The old social relations become completely revolutionised, the age-long agrarian isolation of

‘nations without history’ is destroyed and they are drawn into the capitalist whirlpool. Capitalism itself gradually provides the subjugated with the means and resources for their emancipation and they set out to achieve the goal which once seemed highest to the European nations: the creation of a united national state as a means to economic and cultural freedom. This movement for national independence threatens European capital in its most valuable and most promising fields of exploitation, and European capital can maintain its domination only by continually increasing its military forces.”¹⁰

To this must be added that it is not only in newly opened-up countries, but also in the old, that imperialism is leading to annexation, to increased national oppression, and, consequently, also to increasing resistance. While objecting to the intensification of political reaction by imperialism, Kautsky leaves in the shade a question that has become particularly urgent, viz., the impossibility of unity with the opportunists in the epoch of imperialism. While objecting to annexations, he presents his objections in a form that is most acceptable and least offensive to the opportunists. He addresses himself to a German audience, yet he obscures the most topical and important point, for instance, the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine by Germany. In order to appraise this “mental aberration” of Kautsky’s I shall take the following example. Let us suppose that a Japanese condemns the annexation of the Philippines by the Americans. The question is: will many believe that he does so because he has a horror of annexations as such, and not because he himself has a desire to annex the Philippines? And shall we not be constrained to admit that the “fight” the Japanese is waging against annexations can be regarded as being sincere and politically honest only if he fights against the annexation of Korea by Japan, and urges freedom for Korea to secede from Japan?

Kautsky’s theoretical analysis of imperialism, as well as his economic and political critique of imperialism, are permeated *through and through* with a spirit, absolutely irreconcilable with Marxism, of obscuring and glossing over the fundamental contradictions of imperialism and with a striving to preserve at all costs the crumbling unity with opportunism in the European working-class movement.

Notes

1. *Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv*, Bd. II, S. 193. —*Lenin*
2. J. Patouillet, *L’impérialisme américain*, Dijon, 1904, p. 272. —*Lenin*
3. *Bulletin de l’Institut International de Statistique*, T. XIX, Lvr. II, p. 225. —*Lenin*

4. Kautsky, *Nationalstaat, imperialistischer Staat und Staatenbund*, Nürnberg, 1915, S. 72, 70. —*Lenin*
5. *Finance Capital*, p. 567. —*Lenin*
6. *Die Bank*, 1909, 2, S. 819 et seq. —*Lenin*
7. *Die Neue Zeit*, April 30, 1915, S. 144. —*Lenin*
8. David Jayne Hill, *History of the Diplomacy in the International Development of Europe*, Vol. I, p. X. —*Lenin*
9. Schilder, op. cit., S. 178. —*Lenin*
10. *Finance Capital*, p. 487. —*Lenin*

X. The Place of Imperialism in History

We have seen that in its economic essence imperialism is monopoly capitalism. This in itself determines its place in history, for monopoly that grows out of the soil of free competition, and precisely out of free competition, is the transition from the capitalist system to a higher socio-economic order. We must take special note of the four principal types of monopoly, or principal manifestations of monopoly capitalism, which are characteristic of the epoch we are examining.

Firstly, monopoly arose out of the concentration of production at a very high stage. This refers to the monopolist capitalist associations, cartels, syndicates, and trusts. We have seen the important part these play in present-day economic life. At the beginning of the twentieth century, monopolies had acquired complete supremacy in the advanced countries, and although the first steps towards the formation of the cartels were taken by countries enjoying the protection of high tariffs (Germany, America), Great Britain, with her system of free trade, revealed the same basic phenomenon, only a little later, namely, the birth of monopoly out of the concentration of production.

Secondly, monopolies have stimulated the seizure of the most important sources of raw materials, especially for the basic and most highly cartelised industries in capitalist society: the coal and iron industries. The monopoly of the most important sources of raw materials has enormously increased the power of big capital, and has sharpened the antagonism between cartelised and non-cartelised industry.

Thirdly, monopoly has sprung from the banks. The banks have developed from modest middleman enterprises into the monopolists of finance capital. Some three to five of the biggest banks in each of the foremost capitalist countries have achieved the “personal link-up” between industrial and bank capital, and have concentrated in their hands the control of thousands upon thousands of millions which form the greater part of the capital

and income of entire countries. A financial oligarchy, which throws a close network of dependence relationships over all the economic and political institutions of present-day bourgeois society without exception—such is the most striking manifestation of this monopoly.

Fourthly, monopoly has grown out of colonial policy. To the numerous “old” motives of colonial policy, finance capital has added the struggle for the sources of raw materials, for the export of capital, for spheres of influence, i.e., for spheres for profitable deals, concessions, monopoly profits and so on, economic territory in general. When the colonies of the European powers, for instance, comprised only one-tenth of the territory of Africa (as was the case in 1876), colonial policy was able to develop—by methods other than those of monopoly—by the “free grabbing” of territories, so to speak. But when nine-tenths of Africa had been seized (by 1900), when the whole world had been divided up, there was inevitably ushered in the era of monopoly possession of colonies and, consequently, of particularly intense struggle for the division and the redivision of the world.

The extent to which monopolist capital has intensified all the contradictions of capitalism is generally known. It is sufficient to mention the high cost of living and the tyranny of the cartels. This intensification of contradictions constitutes the most powerful driving force of the transitional period of history, which began from the time of the final victory of world finance capital.

Monopolies, oligarchy, the striving for domination and not for freedom, the exploitation of an increasing number of small or weak nations by a handful of the richest or most powerful nations—all these have given birth to those distinctive characteristics of imperialism which compel us to define it as parasitic or decaying capitalism. More and more prominently there emerges, as one of the tendencies of imperialism, the creation of the “rentier state,” the usurer state, in which the bourgeoisie to an ever-increasing degree lives on the proceeds of capital exports and by “clipping coupons.” It would be a mistake to believe that this tendency to decay precludes the rapid growth of capitalism. It does not. In the epoch of imperialism, certain branches of industry, certain strata of the bourgeoisie and certain countries betray, to a greater or lesser degree, now one and now another of these tendencies. On the whole, capitalism is growing far more rapidly than before; but this growth is not only becoming more and more uneven in general, its unevenness also manifests itself, in particular, in the decay of the countries which are richest in capital (Britain).

In regard to the rapidity of Germany’s economic development, Riesser, the author of the book on the big German banks, states: “The progress of

the preceding period (1848–70), which had not been exactly slow, compares with the rapidity with which the whole of Germany’s national economy, and with it German banking, progressed during this period (1870–1905) in about the same way as the speed of the mail coach in the good old days compares with the speed of the present-day automobile . . . which is whizzing past so fast that it endangers not only innocent pedestrians in its path, but also the occupants of the car.” In its turn, this finance capital which has grown with such extraordinary rapidity is not unwilling, precisely because it has grown so quickly, to pass on to a more “tranquil” possession of colonies which have to be seized—and not only by peaceful methods—from richer nations. In the United States, economic development in the last decades has been even more rapid than in Germany, *and for this very reason*, the parasitic features of modern American capitalism have stood out with particular prominence. On the other hand, a comparison of, say, the republican American bourgeoisie with the monarchist Japanese or German bourgeoisie shows that the most pronounced political distinction diminishes to an extreme degree in the epoch of imperialism—not because it is unimportant in general, but because in all these cases we are talking about a bourgeoisie which has definite features of parasitism.

The receipt of high monopoly profits by the capitalists in one of the numerous branches of industry, in one of the numerous countries, etc., makes it economically possible for them to bribe certain sections of the workers, and for a time a fairly considerable minority of them, and win them to the side of the bourgeoisie of a given industry or given nation against all the others. The intensification of antagonisms between imperialist nations for the division of the world increases this urge. And so there is created that bond between imperialism and opportunism, which revealed itself first and most clearly in Great Britain, owing to the fact that certain features of imperialist development were observable there much earlier than in other countries. Some writers, L. Martov, for example, are prone to wave aside the connection between imperialism and opportunism in the working-class movement—a particularly glaring fact at the present time—by resorting to “official optimism” (*à la* Kautsky and Huysmans) like the following: the cause of the opponents of capitalism would be hopeless if it were progressive capitalism that led to the increase of opportunism, or, if it were the best-paid workers who were inclined towards opportunism, etc. We must have no illusions about “optimism” of this kind. It is optimism in respect of opportunism; it is optimism which serves to conceal opportunism. As a matter of fact the extraordinary rapidity and the particularly revolting character of the development of opportunism is by no means a guarantee that its victory will be durable: the rapid growth of a painful abscess on a healthy

body can only cause it to burst more quickly and thus relieve the body of it. The most dangerous of all in this respect are those who do not wish to understand that the fight against imperialism is a sham and humbug unless it is inseparably bound up with the fight against opportunism.

From all that has been said in this book on the economic essence of imperialism, it follows that we must define it as capitalism in transition, or, more precisely, as moribund capitalism. It is very instructive in this respect to note that bourgeois economists, in describing modern capitalism, frequently employ catchwords and phrases like “interlocking,” “absence of isolation,” etc.; “in conformity with their functions and course of development,” banks are “not purely private business enterprises: they are more and more outgrowing the sphere of purely private business regulation.” And this very Riesser, whose words I have just quoted, declares with all seriousness that the “prophecy” of the Marxists concerning “socialisation” has “not come true”!

What then does this catchword “interlocking” express? It merely expresses the most striking feature of the process going on before our eyes. It shows that the observer counts the separate trees, but cannot see the wood. It slavishly copies the superficial, the fortuitous, the chaotic. It reveals the observer as one who is overwhelmed by the mass of raw material and is utterly incapable of appreciating its meaning and importance. Ownership of shares, the relations between owners of private property “interlock in a haphazard way.” But underlying this interlocking, its very base, are the changing social relations of production. When a big enterprise assumes gigantic proportions, and, on the basis of an exact computation of mass data, organises according to plan the supply of primary raw materials to the extent of two-thirds, or three-fourths, of all that is necessary for tens of millions of people; when the raw materials are transported in a systematic and organised manner to the most suitable places of production, sometimes situated hundreds or thousands of miles from each other; when a single centre directs all the consecutive stages of processing the material right up to the manufacture of numerous varieties of finished articles; when these products are distributed according to a single plan among tens and hundreds of millions of consumers (the marketing of oil in America and Germany by the American oil trust)—then it becomes evident that we have socialisation of production, and not mere “interlocking,” that private economic and private property relations constitute a shell which no longer fits its contents, a shell which must inevitably decay if its removal is artificially delayed, a shell which may remain in a state of decay for a fairly long period (if, at the worst, the cure of the opportunist abscess is protracted), but which will inevitably be removed.

The enthusiastic admirer of German imperialism, Schulze-Gaevernitz, exclaims:

“Once the supreme management of the German banks has been entrusted to the hands of a dozen persons, their activity is even today more significant for the public good than that of the majority of the Ministers of State. . . . (The “interlocking” of bankers, ministers, magnates of industry and renters is here conveniently forgotten.) If we imagine the development of those tendencies we have noted carried to their logical conclusion we will have: the money capital of the nation united in the banks; the banks themselves combined into cartels; the investment capital of the nation cast in the shape of securities. Then the forecast of that genius Saint-Simon will be fulfilled: ‘The present anarchy of production, which corresponds to the fact that economic relations are developing without uniform regulation, must make way for organisation in production. Production will no longer be directed by isolated manufacturers, independent of each other and ignorant of man’s economic needs; that will be done by a certain public institution. A central committee of management, being able to survey the large field of social economy from a more elevated point of view, will regulate it for the benefit of the whole of society, will put the means of production into suitable hands, and above all will take care that there be constant harmony between production and consumption. Institutions already exist which have assumed as part of their functions a certain organisation of economic labour, the banks.’ We are still a long way from the fulfilment of Saint-Simon’s forecast, but we are on the way towards it: Marxism, different from what Marx imagined, but different only in form.”¹

A crushing “refutation” of Marx indeed, which retreats a step from Marx’s precise, scientific analysis to Saint-Simon’s guess-work, the guess-work of a genius, but guess-work all the same.

Notes

1. *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik*, S. 146. —*Lenin*

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The State and Revolution

Study and Discussion Guide

Preface to the First and Second Editions

1. What does Lenin mean by “opportunism” and “social chauvinism?”
2. What are the problems with opportunism and social chauvinism?
3. Are opportunism and social chauvinism problems today? Why or why not?

Chapter 1: Class Society and the State

4. How do opportunists use Marxism? Can you think of other revolutionaries to whom this happens?
5. Why does the state come into being, according to Engels?
6. What does it mean to say that class antagonisms are irreconcilable? Does it mean that they are impossible to solve?
7. Why are the standing army and the police so important for state power?

8. What are some ways that the state is as an instrument to exploit workers and oppressed people?

Chapter 2: The Experience of 1848–51

9. Why is Marx's concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat one of his most important? What do you think about its relevance for today?
10. Are socialist reformers and utopians betraying the interests of the working class? Why or why not?
11. How did the bourgeois state come into being?
12. What distinction does Lenin make between opportunists and revolutionaries at the end of the chapter?

Chapter 3: Experience of the Paris Commune of 1871:”

13. Why did the Paris Commune compel Marx and Engels to revise what they had written in the *Communist Manifesto* in 1948? What did they originally write?
14. Think about the current radical political landscape. How might the distinction between utilizing the state and smashing the state be relevant?
15. Sometimes Marxism and Leninism are caricatured as being concerned only with the industrial working class. Is this true?
16. Lenin writes about the importance of alliances in the Paris Commune. What alliances should we be making today?
17. In what ways did the Paris Commune smash the state machine?
18. What were some reasons for the defeat of the Paris Commune?
19. What are Lenin's objections with parliamentarism? What should replace parliamentarism?
20. How have opportunists distorted Marx's observations on the Paris Commune?

Chapter 4: Supplementary Explanations by Engels

21. How is the housing question dealt with under capitalism? How is it dealt with under socialism?
22. Why does Lenin revisit Marx and Engels' critique of anarchists?
23. What do Marx and Engels say about being “anti-authoritarian?” Does this critique have relevance for today? If so, discuss some struggles where it comes up.

24. Lenin describes two different forms of democratic centralism in reference to Engels' use of the term. What are they? Is this distinction important?
25. What lessons does Engels draw from the commune in his 1891 preface to "The Civil War in France?" Why do you think Lenin is going back to the Commune in this chapter?
26. Why will democracy wither away together with the proletarian state? What does this tell us about democracy?

Chapter 5: The Economic Basis of the Withering Away of the State

27. In what ways was Marx's theory a theory of development? Why is this important?
28. What kinds of changes took place in Marx's understanding of the state?
29. How should we understand the transition from capitalism to communism?
30. What are the two stages of communism, and what are the differences between them?
31. Toward the end of the chapter, Lenin talks about the change of "quantity into quality." What does this phrase mean, and what does it have to do with the transition to communism?

Chapter 6: The Vulgarization of Marxism by Opportunists

32. What is Lenin's problem with Plekhanov's pamphlet?
33. How did Bernstein distort Marx's insight on the state?
34. What was Katsky's response to Bernstein here?
35. Why do you think Lenin was so concerned with this issue?
36. What does Lenin mean when he says that opportunists are fearful and anarchists are either impatient or blind? How does Marx teach us to avoid both of these errors?
37. Why does Lenin refer to revolution as embodying a "creative power?"
38. Read the last paragraph together as a class. Does this ending communicate the urgency of the question of the state? Does this urgency exist today?

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The State and Revolution

Written: August–September, 1917

Source: *Collected Works*, Volume 25, pp. 381–492

Preface to the First Edition

The question of the state is now acquiring particular importance both in theory and in practical politics. The imperialist war has immensely accelerated and intensified the process of transformation of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism. The monstrous oppression of the working people by the state, which is merging more and more with the all-powerful capitalist associations, is becoming increasingly monstrous. The advanced countries—we mean their hinterland—are becoming military convict prisons for the workers.

The unprecedented horrors and miseries of the protracted war are making the people's position unbearable and increasing their anger. The world proletarian revolution is clearly maturing. The question of its relation to the state is acquiring practical importance.

The elements of opportunism that accumulated over the decades of comparatively peaceful development have given rise to the trend of social-chauvinism which dominated the official socialist parties throughout the world. This trend—socialism in words and chauvinism in deeds (Plekhanov, Potresov, Breshkovskaya, Rubanovich, and, in a slightly veiled form,

Learning with Lenin, pages 455–546

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Tsereteli, Chernov and Co. in Russia; Scheidemann, Legien, David and others in Germany; Renaudel, Guesde and Vandervelde in France and Belgium; Hyndman and the Fabians¹ in England, etc., etc.)—is conspicuous for the base, servile adaptation of the “leaders of socialism” to the interests not only of “their” national bourgeoisie, but of “their” state, for the majority of the so-called Great Powers have long been exploiting and enslaving a whole number of small and weak nations. And the imperialist war is a war for the division and redivision of this kind of booty. The struggle to free the working people from the influence of the bourgeoisie in general, and of the imperialist bourgeoisie in particular, is impossible without a struggle against opportunist prejudices concerning the “state.”

First of all we examine the theory of Marx and Engels of the state, and dwell in particular detail on those aspects of this theory which are ignored or have been distorted by the opportunists. Then we deal specially with the one who is chiefly responsible for these distortions, Karl Kautsky, the best-known leader of the Second International (1889–1914), which has met with such miserable bankruptcy in the present war. Lastly, we sum up the main results of the experience of the Russian revolutions of 1905 and particularly of 1917. Apparently, the latter is now (early August 1917) completing the first stage of its development; but this revolution as a whole can only be understood as a link in a chain of socialist proletarian revolutions being caused by the imperialist war. The question of the relation of the socialist proletarian revolution to the state, therefore, is acquiring not only practical political importance, but also the significance of a most urgent problem of the day, the problem of explaining to the masses what they will have to do before long to free themselves from capitalist tyranny.

The Author

August 1917

Preface to the Second Edition

The present, second edition is published virtually unaltered, except that section 3 had been added to Chapter II.

The Author

Moscow

December 17, 1918

Note

1. Fabians—members of the Fabian Society, a British reformist organisation founded in 1884. It grouped mostly bourgeois intellectuals—scholars, writers, politicians—including Sydney and Beatrice Webb, Ramsay MacDonald and Bernard Shaw. The Fabians denied the necessity for the proletarian class struggle and for the socialist revolution. They contended that the transition from capitalism to socialism could only be effected through minor social reforms, that is, gradual changes. Lenin described Fabian ideas as “an extremely opportunist trend” (see present edition, Vol. 13, p. 358).

In 1900 the Fabian Society became part of the British Labour Party. “Fabian socialism” is a source of the Labour Party’s ideology.

During the First World War the Fabians took a social-chauvinist stand. For Lenin’s characterisation of Fabian principles, see Lenin’s article “British Pacifism and the British Dislike of Theory” (present edition, Vol. 21, pp. 260–65).

Chapter One: Class Society and the State

1. The State: A Product of the Irreconcilability of Class Antagonisms

What is now happening to Marx’s theory has, in the course of history, happened repeatedly to the theories of revolutionary thinkers and leaders of oppressed classes fighting for emancipation. During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes constantly hounded them, received their theories with the most savage malice, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaigns of lies and slander. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonize them, so to say, and to hallow their *names* to a certain extent for the “consolation” of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping the latter, while at the same time robbing the revolutionary theory of its *substance*, blunting its revolutionary edge and vulgarizing it. Today, the bourgeoisie and the opportunists within the labor movement concur in this doctoring of Marxism. They omit,

obscure, or distort the revolutionary side of this theory, its revolutionary soul. They push to the foreground and extol what is or seems acceptable to the bourgeoisie. All the social-chauvinists are now “Marxists” (don’t laugh!). And more and more frequently German bourgeois scholars, only yesterday specialists in the annihilation of Marxism, are speaking of the “national-German” Marx, who, they claim, educated the labor unions which are so splendidly organized for the purpose of waging a predatory war!

In these circumstances, in view of the unprecedentedly wide-spread distortion of Marxism, our prime task is to re-establish what Marx really taught on the subject of the state. This will necessitate a number of long quotations from the works of Marx and Engels themselves. Of course, long quotations will render the text cumbersome and not help at all to make it popular reading, but we cannot possibly dispense with them. All, or at any rate all the most essential passages in the works of Marx and Engels on the subject of the state must by all means be quoted as fully as possible so that the reader may form an independent opinion of the totality of the views of the founders of scientific socialism, and of the evolution of those views, and so that their distortion by the “Kautskyism” now prevailing may be documentarily proved and clearly demonstrated.

Let us begin with the most popular of Engels’ works, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, the sixth edition of which was published in Stuttgart as far back as 1894. We have to translate the quotations from the German originals, as the Russian translations, while very numerous, are for the most part either incomplete or very unsatisfactory.

Summing up his historical analysis, Engels says:

“The state is, therefore, by no means a power forced on society from without; just as little is it ‘the reality of the ethical idea’, ‘the image and reality of reason’, as Hegel maintains. Rather, it is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms, these classes with conflicting economic interests, might not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have a power, seemingly standing above society, that would alleviate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of ‘order’; and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state.” (Pp.177–78, sixth edition)¹

This expresses with perfect clarity the basic idea of Marxism with regard to the historical role and the meaning of the state. The state is a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. The

state arises where, when and insofar as class antagonism objectively cannot be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable.

It is on this most important and fundamental point that the distortion of Marxism, proceeding along two main lines, begins.

On the one hand, the bourgeois, and particularly the petty-bourgeois, ideologists, compelled under the weight of indisputable historical facts to admit that the state only exists where there are class antagonisms and a class struggle, “correct” Marx in such a way as to make it appear that the state is an organ for the reconciliation of classes. According to Marx, the state could neither have arisen nor maintained itself had it been possible to reconcile classes. From what the petty-bourgeois and philistine professors and publicists say, with quite frequent and benevolent references to Marx, it appears that the state does reconcile classes. According to Marx, the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another; it is the creation of “order,” which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between classes. In the opinion of the petty-bourgeois politicians, however, order means the reconciliation of classes, and not the oppression of one class by another; to alleviate the conflict means reconciling classes and not depriving the oppressed classes of definite means and methods of struggle to overthrow the oppressors.

For instance, when, in the revolution of 1917, the question of the significance and role of the state arose in all its magnitude as a practical question demanding immediate action, and, moreover, action on a mass scale, all the Social-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks descended at once to the petty-bourgeois theory that the “state” “reconciles” classes. Innumerable resolutions and articles by politicians of both these parties are thoroughly saturated with this petty-bourgeois and philistine “reconciliation” theory. That the state is an organ of the rule of a definite class which cannot be reconciled with its antipode (the class opposite to it) is something the petty-bourgeois democrats will never be able to understand. Their attitude to the state is one of the most striking manifestations of the fact that our Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks are not socialists at all (a point that we Bolsheviks have always maintained), but petty-bourgeois democrats using near-socialist phraseology.

On the other hand, the “Kautskyite” distortion of Marxism is far more subtle. “Theoretically,” it is not denied that the state is an organ of class rule, or that class antagonisms are irreconcilable. But what is overlooked or glossed over is this: if the state is the product of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms, if it is a power standing above society and “alienating

itself more and more from it,” it is clear that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, but also without the destruction of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class and which is the embodiment of this “alienation.” As we shall see later, Marx very explicitly drew this theoretically self-evident conclusion on the strength of a concrete historical analysis of the tasks of the revolution. And—as we shall show in detail further on—it is this conclusion which Kautsky has “forgotten” and distorted.

2. Special Bodies of Armed Men, Prisons, etc.

Engels continues:

“As distinct from the old gentile [tribal or clan] order,² the state, first, divides its subjects according to territory. . .”

This division seems “natural” to us, but it costs a prolonged struggle against the old organization according to generations or tribes.

“The second distinguishing feature is the establishment of a public power which no longer directly coincides with the population organizing itself as an armed force. This special, public power is necessary because a self-acting armed organization of the population has become impossible since the split into classes. . . . This public power exists in every state; it consists not merely of armed men but also of material adjuncts, prisons, and institutions of coercion of all kinds, of which gentile [clan] society knew nothing. . .”

Engels elucidates the concept of the “power” which is called the state, a power which arose from society but places itself above it and alienates itself more and more from it. What does this power mainly consist of? It consists of special bodies of armed men having prisons, etc., at their command.

We are justified in speaking of special bodies of armed men, because the public power which is an attribute of every state “does not directly coincide” with the armed population, with its “self-acting armed organization.”

Like all great revolutionary thinkers, Engels tries to draw the attention of the class-conscious workers to what prevailing philistinism regards as least worthy of attention, as the most habitual thing, hallowed by prejudices that are not only deep-rooted but, one might say, petrified. A standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power. But how can it be otherwise?

From the viewpoint of the vast majority of Europeans of the end of the 19th century, whom Engels was addressing, and who had not gone through or closely observed a single great revolution, it could not have

been otherwise. They could not understand at all what a “self-acting armed organization of the population” was. When asked why it became necessary to have special bodies of armed men placed above society and alienating themselves from it (police and a standing army), the West-European and Russian philistines are inclined to utter a few phrases borrowed from Spencer or Mikhailovsky, to refer to the growing complexity of social life, the differentiation of functions, and so on.

Such a reference seems “scientific,” and effectively lulls the ordinary person to sleep by obscuring the important and basic fact, namely, the split of society into irreconcilable antagonistic classes.

Were it not for this split, the “self-acting armed organization of the population” would differ from the primitive organization of a stick-wielding herd of monkeys, or of primitive men, or of men united in clans, by its complexity, its high technical level, and so on. But such an organization would still be possible.

It is impossible because civilized society is split into antagonistic, and, moreover, irreconcilably antagonistic classes, whose “self-acting” arming would lead to an armed struggle between them. A state arises, a special power is created, special bodies of armed men, and every revolution, by destroying the state apparatus, shows us the naked class struggle, clearly shows us how the ruling class strives to restore the special bodies of armed men which serve it, and how the oppressed class strives to create a new organization of this kind, capable of serving the exploited instead of the exploiters.

In the above argument, Engels raises theoretically the very same question which every great revolution raises before us in practice, palpably and, what is more, on a scale of mass action, namely, the question of the relationship between “special” bodies of armed men and the “self-acting armed organization of the population.” We shall see how this question is specifically illustrated by the experience of the European and Russian revolutions.

But to return to Engels’ exposition.

He points out that sometimes—in certain parts of North America, for example—this public power is weak (he has in mind a rare exception in capitalist society, and those parts of North America in its pre-imperialist days where the free colonists predominated), but that, generally speaking, it grows stronger:

“It [the public power] grows stronger, however, in proportion as class antagonisms within the state become more acute, and as adjacent states become larger and more populous. We have only to look at our present-day Europe, where class struggle and rivalry in conquest have tuned up the

public power to such a pitch that it threatens to swallow the whole of society and even the state.”

This was written not later than the early nineties of the last century, Engels’ last preface being dated June 16, 1891. The turn towards imperialism—meaning the complete domination of the trusts, the omnipotence of the big banks, a grand-scale colonial policy, and so forth—was only just beginning in France, and was even weaker in North America and in Germany. Since then “rivalry in conquest” has taken a gigantic stride, all the more because by the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century the world had been completely divided up among these “rivals in conquest,” i.e., among the predatory Great Powers. Since then, military and naval armaments have grown fantastically and the predatory war of 1914–17 for the domination of the world by Britain or Germany, for the division of the spoils, has brought the “swallowing” of all the forces of society by the rapacious state power close to complete catastrophe.

Engels’ could, as early as 1891, point to “rivalry in conquest” as one of the most important distinguishing features of the foreign policy of the Great Powers, while the social-chauvinist scoundrels have ever since 1914, when this rivalry, many time intensified, gave rise to an imperialist war, been covering up the defence of the predatory interests of “their own” bourgeoisie with phrases about “defence of the fatherland,” “defence of the republic and the revolution,” etc.!

3. The State: an Instrument for the Exploitation of the Oppressed Class

The maintenance of the special public power standing above society requires taxes and state loans.

“Having public power and the right to levy taxes,” Engels writes, “the officials now stand, as organs of society, above society. The free, voluntary respect that was accorded to the organs of the gentile [clan] constitution does not satisfy them, even if they could gain it. . . .” Special laws are enacted proclaiming the sanctity and immunity of the officials. “The shabbiest police servant” has more “authority” than the representative of the clan, but even the head of the military power of a civilized state may well envy the elder of a clan the “unrestrained respect” of society.

The question of the privileged position of the officials as organs of state power is raised here. The main point indicated is: what is it that places them above society? We shall see how this theoretical question was answered in

practice by the Paris Commune in 1871 and how it was obscured from a reactionary standpoint by Kautsky in 1912.

“Because the state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but because it arose, at the same time, in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which, through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class. . . .” The ancient and feudal states were organs for the exploitation of the slaves and serfs; likewise, “the modern representative state is an instrument of exploitation of wage-labor by capital. By way of exception, however, periods occur in which the warring classes balance each other so nearly that the state power as ostensible mediator acquires, for the moment, a certain degree of independence of both. . . .” Such were the absolute monarchies of the 17th and 18th centuries, the Bonapartism of the First and Second Empires in France, and the Bismarck regime in Germany.

Such, we may add, is the Kerensky government in republican Russia since it began to persecute the revolutionary proletariat, at a moment when, owing to the leadership of the petty-bourgeois democrats, the Soviets have already become impotent, while the bourgeoisie are not yet strong enough simply to disperse them.

In a democratic republic, Engels continues, “wealth exercises its power indirectly, but all the more surely,” first, by means of the “direct corruption of officials” (America); secondly, by means of an “alliance of the government and the Stock Exchange” (France and America).

At present, imperialism and the domination of the banks have “developed” into an exceptional art both these methods of upholding and giving effect to the omnipotence of wealth in democratic republics of all descriptions. Since, for instance, in the very first months of the Russian democratic republic, one might say during the honeymoon of the “socialist” S.R.s and Mensheviks joined in wedlock to the bourgeoisie, in the coalition government. Mr. Palchinsky obstructed every measure intended for curbing the capitalists and their marauding practices, their plundering of the state by means of war contracts; and since later on Mr. Palchinsky, upon resigning from the Cabinet (and being, of course, replaced by another quite similar Palchinsky), was “rewarded” by the capitalists with a lucrative job with a salary of 120,000 rubles per annum—what would you call that? Direct or indirect bribery? An alliance of the government and the syndicates, or “merely” friendly relations? What role do the Chernovs, Tseretelis, Avksentyevs and Skobelevs play? Are they the “direct” or only the indirect allies of the millionaire treasury-looters?

Another reason why the omnipotence of “wealth” is more certain in a democratic republic is that it does not depend on defects in the political machinery or on the faulty political shell of capitalism. A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism, and, therefore, once capital has gained possession of this very best shell (through the Palchinskys, Chernovs, Tseretelis and Co.), it establishes its power so securely, so firmly, that no change of persons, institutions or parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic can shake it.

We must also note that Engels is most explicit in calling universal suffrage as well an instrument of bourgeois rule. Universal suffrage, he says, obviously taking account of the long experience of German Social-Democracy, is

“the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the present-day state.”

The petty-bourgeois democrats, such as our Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, and also their twin brothers, all the social-chauvinists and opportunists of Western Europe, expect just this “more” from universal suffrage. They themselves share, and instil into the minds of the people, the false notion that universal suffrage “in the present-day state” is really capable of revealing the will of the majority of the working people and of securing its realization.

Here, we can only indicate this false notion, only point out that Engels’ perfectly clear statement is distorted at every step in the propaganda and agitation of the “official” (i.e., opportunist) socialist parties. A detailed exposure of the utter falsity of this notion which Engels brushes aside here is given in our further account of the views of Marx and Engels on the “present-day” state.

Engels gives a general summary of his views in the most popular of his works in the following words:

“The state, then, has not existed from all eternity. There have been societies that did without it, that had no idea of the state and state power. At a certain stage of economic development, which was necessarily bound up with the split of society into classes, the state became a necessity owing to this split. We are now rapidly approaching a stage in the development of production at which the existence of these classes not only will have ceased to be a necessity, but will become a positive hindrance to production. They will fall as they arose at an earlier stage. Along with them the state will inevitably fall. Society, which will reorganize production on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers, will put the whole machinery of state where it

will then belong: into a museum of antiquities, by the side of the spinning-wheel and the bronze axe.”

We do not often come across this passage in the propaganda and agitation literature of the present-day Social-Democrats. Even when we do come across it, it is mostly quoted in the same manner as one bows before an icon, i.e., it is done to show official respect for Engels, and no attempt is made to gauge the breadth and depth of the revolution that this relegating of “the whole machinery of state to a museum of antiquities” implies. In most cases we do not even find an understanding of what Engels calls the state machine.

4. *The “Withering Away” of the State, and Violent Revolution*

Engels’ words regarding the “withering away” of the state are so widely known, they are often quoted, and so clearly reveal the essence of the customary adaptation of Marxism to opportunism that we must deal with them in detail. We shall quote the whole argument from which they are taken.

“The proletariat seizes from state power and turns the means of production into state property to begin with. But thereby it abolishes itself as the proletariat, abolishes all class distinctions and class antagonisms, and abolishes also the state as state. Society thus far, operating amid class antagonisms, needed the state, that is, an organization of the particular exploiting class, for the maintenance of its external conditions of production, and, therefore, especially, for the purpose of forcibly keeping the exploited class in the conditions of oppression determined by the given mode of production (slavery, serfdom or bondage, wage-labor). The state was the official representative of society as a whole, its concentration in a visible corporation. But it was this only insofar as it was the state of that class which itself represented, for its own time, society as a whole: in ancient times, the state of slave-owning citizens; in the Middle Ages, of the feudal nobility; in our own time, of the bourgeoisie. When at last it becomes the real representative of the whole of society, it renders itself unnecessary. As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection, as soon as class rule, and the individual struggle for existence based upon the present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from this struggle, are removed, nothing more remains to be held in subjection—nothing necessitating a special coercive force, a state. The first act by which the state really comes forward as the representative of the whole of society—the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society—is also its last independent act as a state. State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies down of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state is not ‘abolished’. It withers away. This gives the measure of the value of the phrase ‘a free people’s state’, both as

to its justifiable use for a long time from an agitational point of view, and as to its ultimate scientific insufficiency; and also of the so-called anarchists' demand that the state be abolished overnight." (Herr Eugen Dühring's *Revolution in Science [Anti-Dühring]*, pp. 301–303, third German edition.)³

It is safe to say that of this argument of Engels', which is so remarkably rich in ideas, only one point has become an integral part of socialist thought among modern socialist parties, namely, that according to Marx that state "withers away"—as distinct from the anarchist doctrine of the "abolition" of the state. To prune Marxism to such an extent means reducing it to opportunism, for this "interpretation" only leaves a vague notion of a slow, even, gradual change, of absence of leaps and storms, of absence of revolution. The current, widespread, popular, if one may say so, conception of the "withering away" of the state undoubtedly means obscuring, if not repudiating, revolution.

Such an "interpretation," however, is the crudest distortion of Marxism, advantageous only to the bourgeoisie. In point of theory, it is based on disregard for the most important circumstances and considerations indicated in, say, Engels' "summary" argument we have just quoted in full.

In the first place, at the very outset of his argument, Engels says that, in seizing state power, the proletariat thereby "abolishes the state as state." It is not done to ponder over the meaning of this. Generally, it is either ignored altogether, or is considered to be something in the nature of "Hegelian weakness" on Engels' part. As a matter of fact, however, these words briefly express the experience of one of the greatest proletarian revolutions, the Paris Commune of 1871, of which we shall speak in greater detail in its proper place. As a matter of fact, Engels speaks here of the proletarian revolution "abolishing" the *bourgeois* state, while the words about the state withering away refer to the remnants of the *proletarian* state *after* the socialist revolution. According to Engels, the bourgeois state does not "wither away," but is "abolished" by the proletariat in the course of the revolution. What withers away after this revolution is the proletarian state or semi-state.

Secondly, the state is a "special coercive force." Engels gives this splendid and extremely profound definition here with the utmost lucidity. And from it follows that the "special coercive force" for the suppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, of millions of working people by handfuls of the rich, must be replaced by a "special coercive force" for the suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat (the dictatorship of the proletariat). This is precisely what is meant by "abolition of the state as state." This is precisely the "act" of taking possession of the means of production in the name of society. And it is self-evident that such a replacement of one (bourgeois)

“special force” by another (proletarian) “special force” cannot possibly take place in the form of “withering away.”

Thirdly, in speaking of the state “withering away,” and the even more graphic and colorful “dying down of itself,” Engels refers quite clearly and definitely to the period after “the state has taken possession of the means of production in the name of the whole of society,” that is, after the socialist revolution. We all know that the political form of the “state” at that time is the most complete democracy. But it never enters the head of any of the opportunists, who shamelessly distort Marxism, that Engels is consequently speaking here of democracy “dying down of itself,” or “withering away.” This seems very strange at first sight. But it is “incomprehensible” only to those who have not thought about democracy also being a state and, consequently, also disappearing when the state disappears. Revolution alone can “abolish” the bourgeois state. The state in general, i.e., the most complete democracy, can only “wither away.”

Fourthly, after formulating his famous proposition that “the state withers away,” Engels at once explains specifically that this proposition is directed against both the opportunists and the anarchists. In doing this, Engels puts in the forefront that conclusion, drawn from the proposition that “the state withers away,” which is directed against the opportunists.

One can wager that out of every 10,000 persons who have read or heard about the “withering away” of the state, 9,990 are completely unaware, or do not remember, that Engels directed his conclusions from that proposition not against anarchists alone. And of the remaining 10, probably nine do not know the meaning of a “free people’s state” or why an attack on this slogan means an attack on opportunists. This is how history is written! This is how a great revolutionary teaching is imperceptibly falsified and adapted to prevailing philistinism. The conclusion directed against the anarchists has been repeated thousands of times; it has been vulgarized, and rammed into people’s heads in the shallowest form, and has acquired the strength of a prejudice, whereas the conclusion directed against the opportunists has been obscured and “forgotten”!

The “free people’s state” was a programme demand and a catchword current among the German Social-Democrats in the seventies. This catchword is devoid of all political content except that it describes the concept of democracy in a pompous philistine fashion. Insofar as it hinted in a legally permissible manner at a democratic republic, Engels was prepared to “justify” its use “for a time” from an agitational point of view. But it was an opportunist catchword, for it amounted to nothing more than prettifying bourgeois democracy, and was also a failure to understand the socialist

criticism of the state in general. We are in favor of a democratic republic as the best form of state for the proletariat under capitalism. But we have no right to forget that wage slavery is the lot of the people even in the most democratic bourgeois republic. Furthermore, every state is a “special force” for the suppression of the oppressed class. Consequently, every state is not “free” and not a “people’s state.” Marx and Engels explained this repeatedly to their party comrades in the seventies.

Fifthly, the same work of Engels’, whose arguments about the withering away of the state everyone remembers, also contains an argument of the significance of violent revolution. Engels’ historical analysis of its role becomes a veritable panegyric on violent revolution. This, “no one remembers.” It is not done in modern socialist parties to talk or even think about the significance of this idea, and it plays no part whatever in their daily propaganda and agitation among the people. And yet it is inseparably bound up with the “withering away” of the state into one harmonious whole.

Here is Engels’ argument:

“... That force, however, plays yet another role [other than that of a diabolical power] in history, a revolutionary role; that, in the words of Marx, it is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with a new one, that it is the instrument with which social movement forces its way through and shatters the dead, fossilized political forms—of this there is not a word in Herr Duhring. It is only with sighs and groans that he admits the possibility that force will perhaps be necessary for the overthrow of an economy based on exploitation—unfortunately, because all use of force demoralizes, he says, the person who uses it. And this in Germany, where a violent collision—which may, after all, be forced on the people—would at least have the advantage of wiping out the servility which has penetrated the nation’s mentality following the humiliation of the Thirty Years’ War.⁴ And this person’s mode of thought—dull, insipid, and impotent—presumes to impose itself on the most revolutionary party that history has ever known! (p.193, third German edition, Part II, end of Chap.IV)

How can this panegyric on violent revolution, which Engels insistently brought to the attention of the German Social-Democrats between 1878 and 1894, i.e., right up to the time of his death, be combined with the theory of the “withering away” of the state to form a single theory?

Usually the two are combined by means of eclecticism, by an unprincipled or sophistic selection made arbitrarily (or to please the powers that be) of first one, then another argument, and in 99 cases out of 100, if not more, it is the idea of the “withering away” that is placed in the forefront. Dialectics are replaced by eclecticism—this is the most usual, the most

wide-spread practice to be met with in present-day official Social-Democratic literature in relation to Marxism. This sort of substitution is, of course, nothing new; it was observed even in the history of classical Greek philosophy. In falsifying Marxism in opportunist fashion, the substitution of eclecticism for dialectics is the easiest way of deceiving the people. It gives an illusory satisfaction; it seems to take into account all sides of the process, all trends of development, all the conflicting influences, and so forth, whereas in reality it provides no integral and revolutionary conception of the process of social development at all.

We have already said above, and shall show more fully later, that the theory of Marx and Engels of the inevitability of a violent revolution refers to the bourgeois state. The latter cannot be superseded by the proletarian state (the dictatorship of the proletariat) through the process of "withering away," but, as a general rule, only through a violent revolution. The panegyric Engels sang in its honor, and which fully corresponds to Marx's repeated statements (see the concluding passages of *The Poverty of Philosophy*⁵ and the *Communist Manifesto*,⁶ with their proud and open proclamation of the inevitability of a violent revolution; see what Marx wrote nearly 30 years later, in criticizing the Gotha Programme of 1875,⁷ when he mercilessly castigated the opportunist character of that programme)—this panegyric is by no means a mere "impulse," a mere declamation or a polemical sally. The necessity of systematically imbuing the masses with this and precisely this view of violent revolution lies at the root of the entire theory of Marx and Engels. The betrayal of their theory by the now prevailing social-chauvinist and Kautskyite trends expresses itself strikingly in both these trends ignoring such propaganda and agitation.

The supersession of the bourgeois state by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution. The abolition of the proletarian state, i.e., of the state in general, is impossible except through the process of "withering away."

A detailed and concrete elaboration of these views was given by Marx and Engels when they studied each particular revolutionary situation, when they analyzed the lessons of the experience of each particular revolution. We shall now pass to this, undoubtedly the most important, part of their theory.

Notes

1. See Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1973, pp. 326–327).

Further below, on pp. 393–95, 395–99 of the volume, Lenin is quoting from the same work by Engels (op. cit., pp. 327–30).

2. Gentile, or tribal, organisation of society—the primitive communal system, or the first socio-economic formation in history. The tribal commune was a community of blood relatives linked by economic and social ties. The tribal system went through the matriarchal and the patriarchal periods. The patriarchate culminated in primitive society becoming a class society and in the rise of the state. Relations of production under the primitive communal system were based on social ownership of the means of production and equalitarian distribution of all products. This corresponded in the main to the low level of the productive forces and to their character at the time.

For the primitive communal system, see Karl Marx, *Conspectus of Lewis Morgan's "Ancient Society,"* and Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1973, pp. 204–334).

3. See Frederick Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, Moscow, 1969, pp. 332–333.

Further down, on p. 404 of this volume, Lenin is quoting from the same work by Engels (op. cit., p. 220).

4. Thirty Years' War (1618–48), the first European war, resulted from an aggravation of the antagonisms between various alignments of European states, and took the form of a struggle between Protestants and Catholics. It began with a revolt in Bohemia against the tyranny of the Hapsburg monarchy and the onslaught of Catholic reaction. The states which then entered the war formed two camps. The Pope, the Spanish and Austrian Hapsburgs and the Catholic princes of Germany, who rallied to the Catholic Church, opposed the Protestant countries—Bohemia, Denmark, Sweden, the Dutch Republic, and a number of German states that had accepted the Reformation. The Protestant countries were backed by the French kings, enemies of the Hapsburgs. Germany became the chief battlefield and object of military plunder and predatory claims. The war ended in 1648 with the signing of the Peace Treaty of Westphalia, which completed the political dismemberment of Germany.
5. See Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Moscow, 1973, pp. 151–52.
6. See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1973, p. 137.
7. Gotha Programme—the programme adopted by the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany in 1875, at the Gotha Congress, which united two German socialist parties, namely, the Eisenachers—led by August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht and influenced by Marx and Engels—and the Lassalleans. The programme betrayed eclecticism and was opportunist, because the Eisenachers had made concessions to the Lassalleans on major issues and accepted Lassallean formulations. Marx in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, and Engels in his letter to Bebel of March 18–28, 1875, devastated the Gotha Programme, which they regarded as a serious step backwards compared with the Eisenach programme of 1869.

Chapter 2: The Experience of 1848–1851

1. *The Eve of Revolution*

The first works of mature Marxism — *The Poverty of Philosophy* and the *Communist Manifesto* — appeared just on the eve of the revolution of 1848. For this reason, in addition to presenting the general principles of Marxism, they reflect to a certain degree the concrete revolutionary situation of the time. It will, therefore, be more expedient, perhaps, to examine what the authors of these works said about the state immediately before they drew conclusions from the experience of the years 1848–51.

In *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx wrote:

“The working class, in the course of development, will substitute for the old bourgeois society an association which will preclude classes and their antagonism, and there will be no more political power groups, since the political power is precisely the official expression of class antagonism in bourgeois society.” (p.182, German edition, 1885)¹

It is instructive to compare this general exposition of the idea of the state disappearing after the abolition of classes with the exposition contained in the *Communist Manifesto*, written by Marx and Engels a few months later—in November 1847, to be exact:

“...In depicting the most general phases of the development of the proletariat, we traced the more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat. . . .

“... We have seen above that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class to win the battle of democracy.

“The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degree, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible.” (pp.31 and 37, seventh German edition, 1906)²

Here we have a formulation of one of the most remarkable and most important ideas of Marxism on the subject of the state, namely, the idea of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” (as Marx and Engels began to call it after the Paris Commune); and, also, a highly interesting definition of the

state, which is also one of the “forgotten words” of Marxism: “the state, i.e., the proletariat organized as the ruling class.”

This definition of the state has never been explained in the prevailing propaganda and agitation literature of the official Social-Democratic parties. More than that, it has been deliberately ignored, for it is absolutely irreconcilable with reformism, and is a slap in the face for the common opportunist prejudices and philistine illusions about the “peaceful development of democracy.”

The proletariat needs the state—this is repeated by all the opportunists, social-chauvinists and Kautskyites, who assure us that this is what Marx taught. But they “forget” to add that, in the first place, according to Marx, the proletariat needs only a state which is withering away, i.e., a state so constituted that it begins to wither away immediately, and cannot but wither away. And, secondly, the working people need a “state, i.e., the proletariat organized as the ruling class.”

The state is a special organization of force: it is an organization of violence for the suppression of some class. What class must the proletariat suppress? Naturally, only the exploiting class, i.e., the bourgeoisie. The working people need the state only to suppress the resistance of the exploiters, and only the proletariat can direct this suppression, can carry it out. For the proletariat is the only class that is consistently revolutionary, the only class that can unite all the working and exploited people in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, in completely removing it.

The exploiting classes need political rule to maintain exploitation, i.e., in the selfish interests of an insignificant minority against the vast majority of all people. The exploited classes need political rule in order to completely abolish all exploitation, i.e., in the interests of the vast majority of the people, and against the insignificant minority consisting of the modern slave-owners—the landowners and capitalists.

The petty-bourgeois democrats, those sham socialists who replaced the class struggle by dreams of class harmony, even pictured the socialist transformation in a dreamy fashion—not as the overthrow of the rule of the exploiting class, but as the peaceful submission of the minority to the majority which has become aware of its aims. This petty-bourgeois utopia, which is inseparable from the idea of the state being above classes, led in practice to the betrayal of the interests of the working classes, as was shown, for example, by the history of the French revolutions of 1848 and 1871, and by the experience of “socialist” participation in bourgeois Cabinets in Britain, France, Italy and other countries at the turn of the century.

All his life Marx fought against this petty-bourgeois socialism, now revived in Russia by the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik parties. He developed his theory of the class struggle consistently, down to the theory of political power, of the state.

The overthrow of bourgeois rule can be accomplished only by the proletariat, the particular class whose economic conditions of existence prepare it for this task and provide it with the possibility and the power to perform it. While the bourgeoisie break up and disintegrate the peasantry and all the petty-bourgeois groups, they weld together, unite and organize the proletariat. Only the proletariat—by virtue of the economic role it plays in large-scale production—is capable of being the leader of all the working and exploited people, whom the bourgeoisie exploit, oppress and crush, often not less but more than they do the proletarians, but who are incapable of waging an independent struggle for their emancipation.

The theory of class struggle, applied by Marx to the question of the state and the socialist revolution, leads as a matter of course to the recognition of the political rule of the proletariat, of its dictatorship, i.e., of undivided power directly backed by the armed force of the people. The overthrow of the bourgeoisie can be achieved only by the proletariat becoming the ruling class, capable of crushing the inevitable and desperate resistance of the bourgeoisie, and of organizing all the working and exploited people for the new economic system.

The proletariat needs state power, a centralized organization of force, an organization of violence, both to crush the resistance of the exploiters and to lead the enormous mass of the population—the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, and semi-proletarians—in the work of organizing a socialist economy.

By educating the workers' party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat, capable of assuming power and leading the whole people to socialism, of directing and organizing the new system, of being the teacher, the guide, the leader of all the working and exploited people in organizing their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie. By contrast, the opportunism now prevailing trains the members of the workers' party to be the representatives of the better-paid workers, who lose touch with the masses, "get along" fairly well under capitalism, and sell their birthright for a mass of pottage, i.e., renounce their role as revolutionary leaders of the people against the bourgeoisie.

Marx's theory of "the state, i.e., the proletariat organized as the ruling class," is inseparably bound up with the whole of his doctrine of the revolutionary role of the proletariat in history. The culmination of this rule is the proletarian dictatorship, the political rule of the proletariat.

But since the proletariat needs the state as a special form of organization of violence against the bourgeoisie, the following conclusion suggests itself: is it conceivable that such an organization can be created without first abolishing, destroying the state machine created by the bourgeoisie for themselves? The *Communist Manifesto* leads straight to this conclusion, and it is of this conclusion that Marx speaks when summing up the experience of the revolution of 1848–51.

2. *The Revolution Summed Up*

Marx sums up his conclusions from the revolution of 1848–51, on the subject of the state we are concerned with, in the following argument contained in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

“But the revolution is throughgoing. It is still journeying through purgatory. It does its work methodically. By December 2, 1851 [the day of Louis Bonaparte’s coup d’etat], it had completed one half of its preparatory work. It is now completing the other half. First it perfected the parliamentary power, in order to be able to overthrow it. Now that it has attained this, it is perfecting the executive power, reducing it to its purest expression, isolating it, setting it up against itself as the sole object, in order to concentrate all its forces of destruction against it. And when it has done this second half of its preliminary work, Europe will leap from its seat and exultantly exclaim: well grubbed, old mole!

“This executive power with its enormous bureaucratic and military organization, with its vast and ingenious state machinery, with a host of officials numbering half a million, besides an army of another half million, this appalling parasitic body, which enmeshes the body of French society and chokes all its pores, sprang up in the days of the absolute monarchy, with the decay of the feudal system, which it helped to hasten.” The first French Revolution developed centralization, “but at the same time” it increased “the extent, the attributes and the number of agents of governmental power. Napoleon completed this state machinery.” The legitimate monarchy and the July monarchy “added nothing but a greater division of labor.” . . .

“. . . Finally, in its struggle against the revolution, the parliamentary republic found itself compelled to strengthen, along with repressive measures, the resources and centralization of governmental power. All revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it. The parties that contended in turn for domination regarded the possession of this huge state edifice as the principal spoils of the victor.” (*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* pp.98–99, fourth edition, Hamburg, 1907)³

In this remarkable argument, Marxism takes a tremendous step forward compared with the *Communist Manifesto*. In the latter, the question

of the state is still treated in an extremely abstract manner, in the most general terms and expressions. In the above-quoted passage, the question is treated in a concrete manner, and the conclusion is extremely precise, definite, practical and palpable: all previous revolutions perfected the state machine, whereas it must be broken, smashed.

This conclusion is the chief and fundamental point in the Marxist theory of the state. And it is precisely this fundamental point which has been completely ignored by the dominant official Social-Democratic parties and, indeed, distorted (as we shall see later) by the foremost theoretician of the Second International, Karl Kautsky.

The *Communist Manifesto* gives a general summary of history, which compels us to regard the state as the organ of class rule and leads us to the inevitable conclusion that the proletariat cannot overthrow the bourgeoisie without first winning political power, without attaining political supremacy, without transforming the state into the "proletariat organized as the ruling class"; and that this proletarian state will begin to wither away immediately after its victory because the state is unnecessary and cannot exist in a society in which there are no class antagonisms. The question as to how, from the point of view of historical development, the replacement of the bourgeois by the proletarian state is to take place is not raised here.

This is the question Marx raises and answers in 1852. True to his philosophy of dialectical materialism, Marx takes as his basis the historical experience of the great years of revolution, 1848 to 1851. Here, as everywhere else, his theory is a summing up of experience, illuminated by a profound philosophical conception of the world and a rich knowledge of history.

The problem of the state is put specifically: How did the bourgeois state, the state machine necessary for the rule of the bourgeoisie, come into being historically? What changes did it undergo, what evolution did it perform in the course of bourgeois revolutions and in the face of the independent actions of the oppressed classes? What are the tasks of the proletariat in relation to this state machine?

The centralized state power that is peculiar to bourgeois society came into being in the period of the fall of absolutism. Two institutions most characteristic of this state machine are the bureaucracy and the standing army. In their works, Marx and Engels repeatedly show that the bourgeoisie are connected with these institutions by thousands of threads. Every worker's experience illustrates this connection in an extremely graphic and impressive manner. From its own bitter experience, the working class learns to recognize this connection. That is why it so easily grasps and so firmly learns the doctrine which shows the inevitability of this connection,

a doctrine which the petty-bourgeois democrats either ignorantly and flippantly deny, or still more flippantly admit “in general,” while forgetting to draw appropriate practical conclusions.

The bureaucracy and the standing army are a “parasite” on the body of bourgeois society—a parasite created by the internal antagonisms which rend that society, but a parasite which “chokes” all its vital pores. The Kautskyite opportunism now prevailing in official Social-Democracy considers the view that the state is a parasitic organism to be the peculiar and exclusive attribute of anarchism. It goes without saying that this distortion of Marxism is of vast advantage to those philistines who have reduced socialism to the unheard-of disgrace of justifying and prettifying the imperialist war by applying to it the concept of “defence of the fatherland”; but it is unquestionably a distortion, nevertheless.

The development, perfection, and strengthening of the bureaucratic and military apparatus proceeded during all the numerous bourgeois revolutions which Europe has witnessed since the fall of feudalism. In particular, it is the petty bourgeois who are attracted to the side of the big bourgeoisie and are largely subordinated to them through this apparatus, which provides the upper sections of the peasants, small artisans, tradesmen, and the like with comparatively comfortable, quiet, and respectable jobs raising the holders above the people. Consider what happened in Russia during the six months following February 27, 1917. The official posts which formerly were given by preference to the Black Hundreds have now become the spoils of the Cadets, Mensheviks, and Social-Revolutionaries. Nobody has really thought of introducing any serious reforms. Every effort has been made to put them off “until the Constituent Assembly meets,” and to steadily put off its convocation until after the war! But there has been no delay, no waiting for the Constituent Assembly, in the matter of dividing the spoils of getting the lucrative jobs of ministers, deputy ministers, governors-general, etc., etc.! The game of combinations that has been played in forming the government has been, in essence, only an expression of this division and redivision of the “spoils,” which has been going on above and below, throughout the country, in every department of central and local government. The six months between February 27 and August 27, 1917, can be summed up, objectively summed up beyond all dispute, as follows: reforms shelved, distribution of official jobs accomplished and “mistakes” in the distribution corrected by a few redistributions.

But the more the bureaucratic apparatus is “redistributed” among the various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties (among the Cadets, Social-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks in the case of Russia), the more keenly aware the oppressed classes, and the proletariat at their head, become of

their irreconcilable hostility to the whole of bourgeois society. Hence the need for all bourgeois parties, even for the most democratic and “revolutionary-democratic” among them, to intensify repressive measures against the revolutionary proletariat, to strengthen the apparatus of coercion, i.e., the state machine. This course of events compels the revolution “to concentrate all its forces of destruction” against the state power, and to set itself the aim, not of improving the state machine, but of smashing and destroying it.

It was not logical reasoning, but actual developments, the actual experience of 1848–51, that led to the matter being presented in this way. The extent to which Marx held strictly to the solid ground of historical experience can be seen from the fact that, in 1852, he did not yet specifically raise the question of what was to take the place of the state machine to be destroyed. Experience had not yet provided material for dealing with this question, which history placed on the agenda later on, in 1871. In 1852, all that could be established with the accuracy of scientific observation was that the proletarian revolution had approached the task of “concentrating all its forces of destruction” against the state power, of “smashing” the state machine.

Here the question may arise: is it correct to generalize the experience, observations and conclusions of Marx, to apply them to a field that is wider than the history of France during the three years 1848–51? Before proceeding to deal with this question, let us recall a remark made by Engels and then examine the facts. In his introduction to the third edition of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Engels wrote:

“France is the country where, more than anywhere else, the historical class struggles were each time fought out to a finish, and where, consequently, the changing political forms within which they move and in which their results are summarized have been stamped in the sharpest outlines. The centre of feudalism in the Middle Ages, the model country, since the Renaissance, of a unified monarchy based on social estates, France demolished feudalism in the Great Revolution and established the rule of the bourgeoisie in a classical purity unequalled by any other European land. And the struggle of the upward-striving proletariat against the ruling bourgeoisie appeared here in an acute form unknown elsewhere.” (p. 4, 1907 edition)

The last remark is out of date inasmuch as since 1871 there has been a lull in the revolutionary struggle of the French proletariat, although, long as this lull may be, it does not at all preclude the possibility that in the coming proletarian revolution France may show herself to be the classic country of the class struggle to a finish.

Let us, however, cast a general glance over the history of the advanced countries at the turn of the century. We shall see that the same process went on more slowly, in more varied forms, in a much wider field: on the one hand, the development of “parliamentary power” both in the republican countries (France, America, Switzerland), and in the monarchies (Britain, Germany to a certain extent, Italy, the Scandinavia countries, etc.); on the other hand, a struggle for power among the various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties which distributed and redistributed the “spoils” of office, with the foundations of bourgeois society unchanged; and, lastly, the perfection and consolidation of the “executive power,” of its bureaucratic and military apparatus.

There is not the slightest doubt that these features are common to the whole of the modern evolution of all capitalist states in general. In the last three years 1848–51 France displayed, in a swift, sharp, concentrated form, the very same processes of development which are peculiar to the whole capitalist world.

Imperialism—the era of bank capital, the era of gigantic capitalist monopolies, of the development of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism—has clearly shown an unprecedented growth in its bureaucratic and military apparatus in connection with the intensification of repressive measures against the proletariat both in the monarchical and in the freest, republican countries.

World history is now undoubtedly leading, on an incomparably larger scale than in 1852, to the “concentration of all the forces” of the proletarian revolution on the “destruction” of the state machine.

What the proletariat will put in its place is suggested by the highly instructive material furnished by the Paris Commune.

3. The Presentation of the Question by Marx in 1852

In 1907, Mehring, in the magazine *Neue Zeit*⁴ (Vol.XXV, 2, p.164), published extracts from Marx’s letter to Weydemeyer dated March 5, 1852. This letter, among other things, contains the following remarkable observation:

“And now as to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists, the economic anatomy of classes. What I did that was new was to prove: (1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with the particular, historical phases in the development of production (historische Entwicklungsphasen der Produktion), (2) that the

class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society.”⁵

In these words, Marx succeeded in expressing with striking clarity, first, the chief and radical difference between his theory and that of the foremost and most profound thinkers of the bourgeoisie; and, secondly, the essence of his theory of the state.

It is often said and written that the main point in Marx’s theory is the class struggle. But this is wrong. And this wrong notion very often results in an opportunist distortion of Marxism and its falsification in a spirit acceptable to the bourgeoisie. For the theory of the class struggle was created not by Marx, but by the bourgeoisie before Marx, and, generally speaking, it is acceptable to the bourgeoisie. Those who recognize only the class struggle are not yet Marxists; they may be found to be still within the bounds of bourgeois thinking and bourgeois politics. To confine Marxism to the theory of the class struggle means curtailing Marxism, distorting it, reducing it to something acceptable to the bourgeoisie. Only he is a Marxist who extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is what constitutes the most profound distinction between the Marxist and the ordinary petty (as well as big) bourgeois. This is the touchstone on which the real understanding and recognition of Marxism should be tested. And it is not surprising that when the history of Europe brought the working class face to face with this question as a practical issue, not only all the opportunists and reformists, but all the Kautskyites (people who vacillate between reformism and Marxism) proved to be miserable philistines and petty-bourgeois democrats repudiating the dictatorship of the proletariat. Kautsky’s pamphlet, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, published in August 1918, i.e., long after the first edition of the present book, is a perfect example of petty-bourgeois distortion of Marxism and base renunciation of it in deeds, while hypocritically recognizing it in words (see my pamphlet, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, Petrograd and Moscow, 1918).

Opportunism today, as represented by its principal spokesman, the ex-Marxist Karl Kautsky, fits in completely with Marx’s characterization of the bourgeois position quoted above, for this opportunism limits recognition of the class struggle to the sphere of bourgeois relations. (Within this sphere, within its framework, not a single educated liberal will refuse to recognize the class struggle “in principle”!) Opportunism does not extend recognition of the class struggle to the cardinal point, to the period of transition from capitalism to communism, of the overthrow and the complete

abolition of the bourgeoisie. In reality, this period inevitably is a period of an unprecedentedly violent class struggle in unprecedentedly acute forms, and, consequently, during this period the state must inevitably be a state that is democratic in a new way (for the proletariat and the propertyless in general) and dictatorial in a new way (against the bourgeoisie).

Further. The essence of Marx's theory of the state has been mastered only by those who realize that the dictatorship of a single class is necessary not only for every class society in general, not only for the proletariat which has overthrown the bourgeoisie, but also for the entire historical period which separates capitalism from "classless society," from communism. Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same: all these states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The transition from capitalism to communism is certainly bound to yield a tremendous abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Notes

1. See Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Moscow, 1973, p. 151.
2. See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1973, pp. 118–19 and 126.
3. See Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1973, p. 477).

Further below, on pp. 414–15 of this volume, Lenin is quoting from Engels's preface to the third edition of the work (*op. cit.*, p. 396).

4. *Die Neue Zeit* (*New Times*)—theoretical journal of the German Social-Democratic Party, published in Stuttgart from 1883 to 1923. It was edited by Karl Kautsky till October 1917 and by Heinrich Cunow in the subsequent period. It published some of Marx's and Engels's writings for the first time. Engels offered advice to its editors and often criticised them for departures from Marxism.

In the second half of the nineties, upon Engels's death, the journal began systematically to publish revisionist articles, including a serial by Bernstein entitled "Problems of Socialism." which initiated a revisionist campaign against Marxism. During the First World War the journal adhered to a Centrist position, and virtually hacked the social-chauvinists.

5. See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, 1965, p. tb').

Chapter 3: Experience of the Paris Commune of 1871. Marx's Analysis

1. What Made the Communards' Attempt Heroic?

It is well known that in the autumn of 1870, a few months before the Commune, Marx warned the Paris workers that any attempt to overthrow the government would be the folly of despair. But when, in March 1871, a decisive battle was forced upon the workers and they accepted it, when the uprising had become a fact, Marx greeted the proletarian revolution with the greatest enthusiasm, in spite of unfavorable auguries. Marx did not persist in the pedantic attitude of condemning an “untimely” movement as did the ill-famed Russian renegade from marxism, Plekhanov, who in November 1905 wrote encouragingly about the workers’ and peasants’ struggle, but after December 1905 cried, liberal fashion: “They should not have taken up arms.”

Marx, however, was not only enthusiastic about the heroism of the Communards, who, as he expressed it, “stormed heaven.” Although the mass revolutionary movement did not achieve its aim, he regarded it as a historic experience of enormous importance, as a certain advance of the world proletarian revolution, as a practical step that was more important than hundreds of programmes and arguments. Marx endeavored to analyze this experiment, to draw tactical lessons from it and re-examine his theory in the light of it.

The only “correction” Marx thought it necessary to make to the Communist Manifesto he made on the basis of the revolutionary experience of the Paris Commune.

The last preface to the new German edition of the *Communist Manifesto*, signed by both its authors, is dated June 24, 1872. In this preface the authors, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, say that the programme of the *Communist Manifesto* “has in some details become out-of-date,” and they go on to say:

“... One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that ‘the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes’...”¹

The authors took the words that are in single quotation marks in this passage from Marx’s book, *The Civil War in France*.

Thus, Marx and Engels regarded one principal and fundamental lesson of the Paris Commune as being of such enormous importance that they introduced it as an important correction into the *Communist Manifesto*.

Most characteristically, it is this important correction that has been distorted by the opportunists, and its meaning probably is not known to nine-tenths, if not ninety-nine-hundredths, of the readers of the *Communist Manifesto*. We shall deal with this distortion more fully farther on, in a chapter devoted specially to distortions. Here it will be sufficient to note that the current, vulgar “interpretation” of Marx’s famous statement just quoted is that Marx here allegedly emphasizes the idea of slow development in contradistinction to the seizure of power, and so on.

As a matter of fact, the exact opposite is the case. Marx’s idea is that the working class must break up, smash the “ready-made state machinery,” and not confine itself merely to laying hold of it.

On April 12, 1871, i.e., just at the time of the Commune, Marx wrote to Kugelmann:

“If you look up the last chapter of my Eighteenth Brumaire, you will find that I declare that the next attempt of the French Revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to another, but to *smash* it [Marx’s italics—the original is *zerbrechen*], and this is the precondition for every real people’s revolution on the Continent. And this is what our heroic Party comrades in Paris are attempting.” (*Neue Zeit*, Vol.XX, 1, 1901–02, p. 709.)² (The letters of Marx to Kugelmann have appeared in Russian in no less than two editions, one of which I edited and supplied with a preface.)

The words, “to smash the bureaucratic-military machine,” briefly express the principal lesson of Marxism regarding the tasks of the proletariat during a revolution in relation to the state. And this is the lesson that has been not only completely ignored, but positively distorted by the prevailing, Kautskyite, “interpretation” of Marxism!

As for Marx’s reference to *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, we have quoted the relevant passage in full above.

It is interesting to note, in particular, two points in the above-quoted argument of Marx. First, he restricts his conclusion to the Continent. This was understandable in 1871, when Britain was still the model of a purely capitalist country, but without a militarist clique and, to a considerable degree, without a bureaucracy. Marx therefore excluded Britain, where a revolution, even a people’s revolution, then seemed possible, and indeed was possible, *without* the precondition of destroying “ready-made state machinery.”

Today, in 1917, at the time of the first great imperialist war, this restriction made by Marx is no longer valid. Both Britain and America, the biggest and the last representatives—in the whole world—of Anglo-Saxon “liberty,”

in the sense that they had no militarist cliques and bureaucracy, have completely sunk into the all-European filthy, bloody morass of bureaucratic-military institutions which subordinate everything to themselves, and suppress everything. Today, in Britain and America, too, “the precondition for every real people’s revolution” is the *smashing*, the *destruction* of the “ready-made state machinery” (made and brought up to the “European,” general imperialist, perfection in those countries in the years 1914–17).

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

If we take the revolutions of the 20th century as examples we shall, of course, have to admit that the Portuguese and the Turkish revolutions are both bourgeois revolutions. Neither of them, however, is a “people’s” revolution, since in neither does the mass of the people, their vast majority, come out actively, independently, with their own economic and political demands to any noticeable degree. By contrast, although the Russian bourgeois revolution of 1905–07 displayed no such “brilliant” successes as at time fell to the Portuguese and Turkish revolutions, it was undoubtedly a “real people’s” revolution, since the mass of the people, their majority, the very lowest social groups, crushed by oppression and exploitation, rose independently and stamped on the entire course of the revolution the imprint of *their* own demands, *their* attempt to build in their own way a new society in place of the old society that was being destroyed.

In Europe, in 1871, the proletariat did not constitute the majority of the people in any country on the Continent. A “people’s” revolution, one actually sweeping the majority into its stream, could be such only if it embraced both the proletariat and the peasants. These two classes then constituted the “people.” These two classes are united by the fact that the “bureaucratic-military state machine” oppresses, crushes, exploits them. To *smash* this machine, to *break it up*, is truly in the interest of the “people,” of their majority, of the workers and most of the peasants, is “the precondition” for a free alliance of the poor peasant and the proletarians, whereas without such an alliance democracy is unstable and socialist transformation is impossible.

As is well known, the Paris Commune was actually working its way toward such an alliance, although it did not reach its goal owing to a number of circumstances, internal and external.

Consequently, in speaking of a “real people’s revolution,” Marx, without in the least discounting the special features of the petty bourgeois (he spoke a great deal about them and often), took strict account of the actual balance of class forces in most of the continental countries of Europe in 1871. On the other hand, he stated that the “smashing” of the state machine was required by the interests of both the workers and the peasants, that it united them, that it placed before them the common task of removing the “parasite” and of replacing it by something new.

By what exactly?

2. What Is to Replace the Smashed State Machine?

In 1847, in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx’s answer to this question was as yet a purely abstract one; to be exact, it was an answer that indicated the tasks, but not the ways of accomplishing them. The answer given in the *Communist Manifesto* was that this machine was to be replaced by “the proletariat organized as the ruling class,” by the “winning of the battle of democracy.”

Marx did not indulge in utopias; he expected the *experience* of the mass movement to provide the reply to the question as to the specific forms this organisation of the proletariat as the ruling class would assume and as to the exact manner in which this organisation would be combined with the most complete, most consistent “winning of the battle of democracy.”

Marx subjected the experience of the Commune, meagre as it was, to the most careful analysis in *The Civil War in France*. Let us quote the most important passages of this work. [All the following quotes in this Chapter, with one exception, are so cited—Ed.]

Originating from the Middle Ages, there developed in the 19th century “the centralized state power, with its ubiquitous organs of standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy, and judicature.” With the development of class antagonisms between capital and labor, “state power assumed more and more the character of a public force organized for the suppression of the working class, of a machine of class rule. After every revolution, which marks an advance in the class struggle, the purely coercive character of the state power stands out in bolder and bolder relief.” After the revolution of 1848–49, state power became “the national war instruments of capital against labor.” The Second Empire consolidated this.

“The direct antithesis to the empire was the Commune.” It was the “specific form” of “a republic that was not only to remove the monarchical form of class rule, but class rule itself.”

What was this “specific” form of the proletarian, socialist republic? What was the state it began to create?

“The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people.”

This demand now figures in the programme of every party calling itself socialist. The real worth of their programme, however, is best shown by the behavior of our Social-Revolutionists and mensheviks, who, right after the revolution of February 27, refused to carry out this demand!

“The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at any time. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class. . . . The police, which until then had been the instrument of the Government, was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible, and at all times revocable, agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at *workmen’s wages*. The privileges and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of state disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves. . . . Having once got rid of the standing army and the police, the instruments of physical force of the old government, the Commune proceeded at once to break the instrument of spiritual suppression, the power of the priests. . . . The judicial functionaries lost that sham independence . . . they were thenceforward to be elective, responsible, and revocable.”³

The Commune, therefore, appears to have replaced the smashed state machine “only” by fuller democracy: abolition of the standing army; all officials to be elected and subject to recall. But as a matter of fact this “only” signifies a gigantic replacement of certain institutions by other institutions of a fundamentally different type. This is exactly a case of “quantity being transformed into quality”: democracy, introduced as fully and consistently as is at all conceivable, is transformed from bourgeois into proletarian democracy; from the state (= a special force for the suppression of a particular class) into something which is no longer the state proper.

It is still necessary to suppress the bourgeoisie and crush their resistance. This was particularly necessary for the Commune; and one of the reasons for its defeat was that it did not do this with sufficient determination.

The organ of suppression, however, is here the majority of the population, and not a minority, as was always the case under slavery, serfdom, and wage slavery. And since the majority of people itself suppresses its oppressors, a ‘special force’ for suppression is no longer necessary! In this sense, the state begins to wither away. Instead of the special institutions of a privileged minority (privileged officialdom, the chiefs of the standing army), the majority itself can directly fulfil all these functions, and the more the functions of state power are performed by the people as a whole, the less need there is for the existence of this power.

In this connection, the following measures of the Commune, emphasized by Marx, are particularly noteworthy: the abolition of all representation allowances, and of all monetary privileges to officials, the reduction of the remuneration of all servants of the state to the level of “workmen’s wages.” This shows more clearly than anything else the turn from bourgeois to proletarian democracy, from the democracy of the oppressors to that of the oppressed classes, from the state as a “special force” for the suppression of a particular class to the suppression of the oppressors by the general force of the majority of the people—the workers and the peasants. And it is on this particularly striking point, perhaps the most important as far as the problem of the state is concerned, that the ideas of Marx have been most completely ignored! In popular commentaries, the number of which is legion, this is not mentioned. The thing done is to keep silent about it as if it were a piece of old-fashioned “naivete,” just as Christians, after their religion had been given the status of state religion, “forgot” the “naivete” of primitive Christianity with its democratic revolutionary spirit.

The reduction of the remuneration of high state officials seem “simply” a demand of naive, primitive democracy. One of the “founders” of modern opportunism, the ex-Social-Democrat Eduard Bernstein, has more than once repeated the vulgar bourgeois jeers at “primitive” democracy. Like all opportunists, and like the present Kautskyites, he did not understand at all that, first of all, the transition from capitalism to socialism is impossible without a certain “reversion” to “primitive” democracy (for how else can the majority, and then the whole population without exception, proceed to discharge state functions?); and that, secondly, “primitive democracy” based on capitalism and capitalist culture is not the same as primitive democracy in prehistoric or precapitalist times. Capitalist culture has created large-scale production, factories, railways, the postal service, telephones, etc., and on this basis the great majority of the functions of the old “state power” have become so simplified and can be reduced to such exceedingly simple operations of registration, filing, and checking that they can be easily performed by every literate person, can quite easily be

performed for ordinary “workmen’s wages,” and that these functions can (and must) be stripped of every shadow of privilege, of every semblance of “official grandeur.”

All officials, without exception, elected and subject to recall at any time, their salaries reduced to the level of ordinary “workmen’s wages”—these simple and “self-evident” democratic measures, while completely uniting the interests of the workers and the majority of the peasants, at the same time serve as a bridge leading from capitalism to socialism. These measures concern the reorganization of the state, the purely political reorganization of society; but, of course, they acquire their full meaning and significance only in connection with the “expropriation of the expropriators” either brought accomplished or in preparation, i.e., with the transformation of capitalist private ownership of the means of production into social ownership.

“The Commune,” Marx wrote, “made the catchword of all bourgeois revolutions, cheap government, a reality, by abolishing the two greatest sources of expenditure—the army and the officialdom.”

From the peasants, as from other sections of the petty bourgeoisie, only an insignificant few “rise to the top,” “get on in the world” in the bourgeois sense, i.e., become either well-to-do, bourgeois, or officials in secure and privileged positions. In every capitalist country where there are peasants (as there are in most capitalist countries), the vast majority of them are oppressed by the government and long for its overthrow, long for “cheap” government. This can be achieved only by the proletariat; and by achieving it, the proletariat at the same time takes a step towards the socialist reorganization of the state.

3. *Abolition of Parliamentarism*

“The Commune,” Marx wrote, “was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time. . . .

“Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to represent and repress [ver- and zertreten] the people in parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people constituted in communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for workers, foremen and accountants for his business.”

Owing to the prevalence of social-chauvinism and opportunism, this remarkable criticism of parliamentarism, made in 1871, also belongs now to the “forgotten words” of Marxism. The professional Cabinet Ministers and parliamentarians, the traitors to the proletariat and the “practical” socialists

of our day, have left all criticism of parliamentarism to the anarchists, and, on this wonderfully reasonable ground, they denounce all criticism of parliamentarism as “anarchism”!! It is not surprising that the proletariat of the “advanced” parliamentary countries, disgusted with such “socialists” as the Scheidemanns, Davids, Legiens, Sembats, Renaudels, Hendersons, Vanderveldes, Staunings, Brantings, Bissolatis, and Co., has been with increasing frequency giving its sympathies to anarcho-syndicalism, in spite of the fact that the latter is merely the twin brother of opportunism.

For Marx, however, revolutionary dialectics was never the empty fashionable phrase, the toy rattle, which Plekhanov, Kautsky and others have made of it. Marx knew how to break with anarchism ruthlessly for its inability to make use even of the “pigsty” of bourgeois parliamentarism, especially when the situation was obviously not revolutionary; but at the same time he knew how to subject parliamentarism to genuinely revolutionary proletarian criticism.

To decide once every few years which members of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary-constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics.

But if we deal with the question of the state, and if we consider parliamentarism as one of the institutions of the state, from the point of view of the tasks of the proletariat in this field, what is the way out of parliamentarism? How can it be dispensed with?

Once again, we must say: the lessons of Marx, based on the study of the Commune, have been so completely forgotten that the present-day “Social-Democrat” (i.e., present-day traitor to socialism) really cannot understand any criticism of parliamentarism other than anarchist or reactionary criticism.

The way out of parliamentarism is not, of course, the abolition of representative institutions and the elective principle, but the conversion of the representative institutions from talking shops into “working” bodies. “The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time.”

“A working, not a parliamentary body”—this is a blow straight from the shoulder at the present-day parliamentarian country, from America to Switzerland, from France to Britain, Norway and so forth—in these countries the real business of “state” is performed behind the scenes and is carried on by the departments, chancelleries, and General Staffs. parliament is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the “common people.” This is so true that even in the Russian republic, a bourgeois-democratic republic, all these sins of parliamentarism came out at once, even before

it managed to set up a real parliament. The heroes of rotten philistinism, such as the skobelevs and tseretelis, the Chernovs and Avksentyevs, have even succeeded in polluting the Soviets after the fashion of the most disgusting bourgeois parliamentarism, in converting them into mere talking shops. In the Soviets, the “socialist” Ministers are fooling the credulous rustics with phrase-mongering and resolutions. In the government itself a sort of permanent shuffle is going on in order that, on the one hand, as many Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks as possible may in turn get near the “pie,” the lucrative and honorable posts, and that, on the other hand, the “attention” of the people may be “engaged.” meanwhile the chancelleries and army staffs “do” the business of “state.”

Dyelo Naroda, the organ of the ruling Socialist-Revolutionary Party, recently admitted in a leading article—with the matchless frankness of people of “good society,” in which “all” are engaged in political prostitution—that even in the ministries headed by the “socialists” (save the mark!), the whole bureaucratic apparatus is in fact unchanged, is working in the old way and quite “freely” sabotaging revolutionary measures! Even without this admission, does not the actual history of the participation of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks in the government prove this? It is noteworthy, however, that in the ministerial company of the Cadets, the Chernovs, Rusanovs, Zenzinovs, and other editors of *Dyelo Naroda* have so completely lost all sense of shame as to brazenly assert, as if it were a mere bagetelle, that in “their” ministries everything is unchanged!! Revolutionary-democratic phrases to gull the rural Simple Simons, and bureaucracy and red tape to “gladden the hearts” of the capitalists—that is the essence of the “honest” coalition.

The Commune substitutes for the venal and rotten parliamentarism of bourgeois society institutions in which freedom of opinion and discussion does not degenerate into deception, for the parliamentarians themselves have to work, have to execute their own laws, have themselves to test the results achieved in reality, and to account directly to their constituents. Representative institutions remain, but there is no parliamentarism here as a special system, as the division of labor between the legislative and the executive, as a privileged position for the deputies. We cannot imagine democracy, even proletarian democracy, without representative institutions, but we can and must imagine democracy without parliamentarism, if criticism of bourgeois society is not mere words for us, if the desire to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie is our earnest and sincere desire, and not a mere “election” cry for catching workers’ votes, as it is with the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, and also the Scheidemanns and Legiens, the Smlblats and Vanderveldes.

It is extremely instructive to note that, in speaking of the function of those officials who are necessary for the Commune and for proletarian democracy, Marx compares them to the workers of “every other employer,” that is, of the ordinary capitalist enterprise, with its “workers, foremen, and accountants.”

There is no trace of utopianism in Marx, in the sense that he made up or invented a “new” society. No, he studied the birth of the new society out of the old, and the forms of transition from the latter to the former, as a mass proletarian movement and tried to draw practical lessons from it. He “Learned” from the Commune, just as all the great revolutionary thinkers learned unhesitatingly from the experience of great movements of the oppressed classes, and never addressed them with pedantic “homilies” (such as Plekhanov’s: “They should not have taken up arms” or Tsereteli’s: “A class must limit itself”).

Abolishing the bureaucracy at once, everywhere and completely, is out of the question. It is a utopia. But to smash the old bureaucratic machine at once and to begin immediately to construct a new one that will make possible the gradual abolition of all bureaucracy—this is not a utopia, it is the experience of the Commune, the direct and immediate task of the revolutionary proletariat.

Capitalism simplifies the functions of “state” administration; it makes it possible to cast “bossing” aside and to confine the whole matter to the organization of the proletarians (as the ruling class), which will hire “workers, foremen and accountants” in the name of the whole of society.

We are not utopians, we do not “dream” of dispensing at once with all administration, with all subordination. These anarchist dreams, based upon incomprehension of the tasks of the proletarian dictatorship, are totally alien to Marxism, and, as a matter of fact, serve only to postpone the socialist revolution until people are different. No, we want the socialist revolution with people as they are now, with people who cannot dispense with subordination, control, and “foremen and accountants.”

The subordination, however, must be to the armed vanguard of all the exploited and working people, i.e., to the proletariat. A beginning can and must be made at once, overnight, to replace the specific “bossing” of state officials by the simple functions of “foremen and accountants,” functions which are already fully within the ability of the average town dweller and can well be performed for “workmen’s wages.”

We, the workers, shall organize large-scale production on the basis of what capitalism has already created, relying on our own experience as workers, establishing strict, iron discipline backed up by the state power of the

armed workers. We shall reduce the role of state officials to that of simply carrying out our instructions as responsible, revocable, modestly paid “foremen and accountants” (of course, with the aid of technicians of all sorts, types and degrees). This is our proletarian task, this is what we can and must start with in accomplishing the proletarian revolution. Such a beginning, on the basis of large-scale production, will of itself lead to the gradual “withering away” of all bureaucracy, to the gradual creation of an order—an order without inverted commas, an order bearing no similarity to wage slavery—an order under which the functions of control and accounting, becoming more and more simple, will be performed by each in turn, will then become a habit and will finally die out as the special functions of a special section of the population.

A witty German Social-Democrat of the seventies of the last century called the postal service an example of the socialist economic system. This is very true. At the present the postal service is a business organized on the lines of state-capitalist monopoly. Imperialism is gradually transforming all trusts into organizations of a similar type, in which, standing over the “common” people, who are overworked and starved, one has the same bourgeois bureaucracy. But the mechanism of social management is here already to hand. Once we have overthrown the capitalists, crushed the resistance of these exploiters with the iron hand of the armed workers, and smashed the bureaucratic machinery of the modern state, we shall have a splendidly-equipped mechanism, freed from the “parasite,” a mechanism which can very well be set going by the united workers themselves, who will hire technicians, foremen and accountants, and pay them all, as indeed all “state” officials in general, workmen’s wages. Here is a concrete, practical task which can immediately be fulfilled in relation to all trusts, a task whose fulfilment will rid the working people of exploitation, a task which takes account of what the Commune had already begun to practice (particularly in building up the state).

To organize the whole economy on the lines of the postal service so that the technicians, foremen and accountants, as well as all officials, shall receive salaries no higher than “a workman’s wage,” all under the control and leadership of the armed proletariat—that is our immediate aim. This is what will bring about the abolition of parliamentarism and the preservation of representative institutions. This is what will rid the laboring classes of the bourgeoisie’s prostitution of these institutions.

4. Organisation of National Unity

“In a brief sketch of national organization which the Commune had no time to develop, it states explicitly that the Commune was to be the political form

of even the smallest village. . . .” The communes were to elect the “National Delegation” in Paris.

“. . . The few but important functions which would still remain for a central government were not to be suppressed, as had been deliberately mis-stated, but were to be transferred to communal, i.e., strictly responsible, officials.

“. . . National unity was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, organized by the communal constitution; it was to become a reality by the destruction of state power which posed as the embodiment of that unity yet wanted to be independent of, and superior to, the nation, on whose body it was but a parasitic excrescence. While the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority claiming the right to stand above society, and restored to the responsible servants of society.”

The extent to which the opportunists of present-day Social-Democracy have failed—perhaps it would be more true to say, have refused—to understand these observations of Marx is best shown by that book of Herostratean fame of the renegade Bernstein, *The Premises of Socialism and the Tasks of the Social-Democrats*. It is in connection with the above passage from Marx that Bernstein wrote that “as far as its political content,” this programme “displays, in all its essential features, the greatest similarity to the federalism of Proudhon. . . . In spite of all the other points of difference between Marx and the ‘petty-bourgeois’ Proudhon [Bernstein places the word “petty-bourgeois” in inverted commas, to make it sound ironical] on these points, their lines of reasoning run as close as could be.” Of course, Bernstein continues, the importance of the municipalities is growing, but “it seems doubtful to me whether the first job of democracy would be such a dissolution [Auflosung] of the modern states and such a complete transformation [Umwandlung] of their organization as is visualized by Marx and Proudhon (the formation of a National Assembly from delegates of the provincial of district assemblies, which, in their turn, would consist of delegates from the communes), so that consequently the previous mode of national representation would disappear.” (Bernstein, *Premises*, German edition, 1899, pp. 134 and 136)

To confuse Marx’s view on the “destruction of state power, a parasitic excrescence,” with Proudhon’s federalism is positively monstrous! But it is no accident, for it never occurs to the opportunist that Marx does not speak here at all about federalism as opposed to centralism, but about smashing the old, bourgeois state machine which exists in all bourgeois countries.

The only thing that does occur to the opportunist is what he sees around him, in an environment of petty-bourgeois philistinism and “reformists”

stagnation, namely, only “municipalities”! The opportunist has even grown out of the habit of thinking about proletarian revolution.

It is ridiculous. But the remarkable thing is that nobody argued with Bernstein on this point. Bernstein has been refuted by many, especially by Plekhanov in Russian literature and by Kautsky in European literature, but neither of them has said anything about this distortion of Marx by Bernstein.

The opportunist has so much forgotten how to think in a revolutionary way and to dwell on revolution that he attributes “federalism” to Marx, whom he confuses with the founder of anarchism, Proudhon. As for Kautsky and Plekhanov, who claim to be orthodox Marxists and defenders of the theory of revolutionary Marxism, they are silent on this point! Here is one of the roots of the extreme vulgarization of the views on the difference between Marxism and anarchism, which is characteristic of both the Kautskyites and the opportunists, and which we shall discuss again later.

There is not a trace of federalism in Marx’s above-quoted observation on the experience of the Commune. Marx agreed with Proudhon on the very point that the opportunist Bernstein did not see. Marx disagreed with Proudhon on the very point on which Bernstein found a similarity between them.

Marx agreed with Proudhon in that they both stood for the “smashing” of the modern state machine. Neither the opportunists nor the Kautskyites wish to see the similarity of views on this point between Marxism and anarchism (both Proudhon and Bakunin) because this is where they have departed from Marxism.

Marx disagreed both with Proudhon and Bakunin precisely on the question of federalism (not to mention the dictatorship of the proletariat). Federalism as a principle follows logically from the petty-bourgeois views of anarchism. Marx was a centralist. There is no departure whatever from centralism in his observations just quoted. Only those who are imbued with the philistine “superstitious belief” in the state can mistake the destruction of the bourgeois state machine for the destruction of centralism!

Now if the proletariat and the poor peasants take state power into their own hands, organize themselves quite freely in communes, and unite the action of all the communes in striking at capital, in crushing the resistance of the capitalists, and in transferring the privately-owned railways, factories, land and so on to the entire nation, to the whole of society, won’t that be centralism? Won’t that be the most consistent democratic centralism and, moreover, proletarian centralism?

Bernstein simply cannot conceive of the possibility of voluntary centralism, of the voluntary fusion of the proletarian communes, for the sole purpose of destroying bourgeois rule and the bourgeois state machine. Like all philistines, Bernstein pictures centralism as something which can be imposed and maintained solely from above, and solely by the bureaucracy and military clique.

As though foreseeing that his views might be distorted, Marx expressly emphasized that the charge that the Commune had wanted to destroy national unity, to abolish the central authority, was a deliberate fraud. Marx purposely used the words: “National unity was . . . to be organized,” so as to oppose conscious, democratic, proletarian centralism to bourgeois, military, bureaucratic centralism.

But there are none so deaf as those who will not hear. And the very thing the opportunists of present-day Social-Democracy do not want to hear about is the destruction of state power, the amputation of the parasitic excrescence.

5. Abolition of the Parasite State

We have already quoted Marx’s words on the subject, and we must now supplement them.

“It is generally the fate of new historical creations,” he wrote, “to be mistaken for the counterpart of older and even defunct forms of social life, to which they may bear a certain likeness. Thus, this new Commune, which breaks [bricht, smashes] the modern state power, has been regarded as a revival of the medieval communes . . . as a federation of small states (as Montesquieu and the Girondins⁴ visualized it) . . . as an exaggerated form of the old struggle against overcentralization. . . .

“. . . The Communal Constitution would have restored to the social body all the forces hitherto absorbed by that parasitic excrescence, the ‘state’, feeding upon and hampering the free movement of society. By this one act it would have initiated the regeneration of France. . . .

“. . . The Communal Constitution would have brought the rural producers under the intellectual lead of the central towns of their districts, and there secured to them, in the town working men, the natural trustees of their interests. The very existence of the Commune involved, as a matter of course, local self-government, but no longer as a counterpoise to state power, now become superfluous.”

“Breaking state power,” which as a “parasitic excrescence”; its “amputation,” its “smashing”; “state power, now become superfluous”—these are

the expressions Marx used in regard to the state when appraising and analyzing the experience of the Commune.

All this was written a little less than half a century ago; and now one has to engage in excavations, as it were, in order to bring undistorted Marxism to the knowledge of the mass of the people. The conclusions drawn from the observation of the last great revolution which Marx lived through were forgotten just when the time for the next great proletarian revolution has arrived.

“...The multiplicity of interpretations to which the Commune has been subjected, and the multiplicity of interests which expressed themselves in it show that it was a thoroughly flexible political form, while all previous forms of government had been essentially repressive. Its true secret was this: it was essentially a working-class government, the result of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which the economic emancipation of labor could be accomplished. . . .

“Except on this last condition, the Communal Constitution would have been an impossibility and a delusion. . . .”

The utopians busied themselves with “discovering” political forms under which the socialist transformation of society was to take place. The anarchists dismissed the question of political forms altogether. The opportunists of present-day Social-Democracy accepted the bourgeois political forms of the parliamentary democratic state as the limit which should not be overstepped; they battered their foreheads praying before this “model,” and denounced as anarchism every desire to break these forms.

Marx deduced from the whole history of socialism and the political struggle that the state was bound to disappear, and that the transitional form of its disappearance (the transition from state to non-state) would be the “proletariat organized as the ruling class.” Marx, however, did not set out to discover the political forms of this future stage. He limited himself to carefully observing French history, to analyzing it, and to drawing the conclusion to which the year 1851 had led, namely, that matters were moving towards destruction of the bourgeois state machine.

And when the mass revolutionary movement of the proletariat burst forth, Marx, in spite of its failure, in spite of its short life and patent weakness, began to study the forms it had discovered.

The Commune is the form “at last discovered” by the proletarian revolution, under which the economic emancipation of labor can take place.

The Commune is the first attempt by a proletarian revolution to smash the bourgeois state machine; and it is the political form “at last discovered,” by which the smashed state machine can and must be replaced.

We shall see further on that the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, in different circumstances and under different conditions, continue the work of the Commune and confirm Marx’s brilliant historical analysis.

Notes

1. See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1962, p. 22.
2. See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Correspondence*. Moscow, 1965, pp. 262–63.
3. See Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France* (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1973, pp. 217–21).

Further below, on pp. 426, 427, 432–436 of this volume, Lenin is quoting from the same work by Marx (*op. cit.*, pp. 222, 220–23).

4. The Girondists—a political grouping during the French bourgeois revolution of the late eighteenth century, expressed the interests of the moderate bourgeoisie. They wavered between revolution and counter-revolution, and made deals with the monarchy.

Chapter 4: Supplementary Explanations by Engels

Marx gave the fundamentals concerning the significance of the experience of the Commune. Engels returned to the same subject time and again, and explained Marx’s analysis and conclusions, sometimes elucidating other aspects of the question with such power and vividness that it is necessary to deal with his explanations specially.

1. The Housing Question

In his work, *The Housing Question* (1872), Engels already took into account the experience of the Commune, and dealt several times with the tasks of the revolution in relation to the state. It is interesting to note that the treatment of this specific subject clearly revealed, on the one hand, points of similarity between the proletarian state and the present state—points that warrant speaking of the state in both cases—and, on the other hand, points of difference between them, or the transition to the destruction of the state.

“How is the housing question to be settled then? In present-day society, it is settled just as any other social question: by the gradual economic levelling of demand and supply, a settlement which reproduces the question itself again and again and therefore is no settlement. How a social revolution would settle this question not only depends on the circumstances in each particular case, but is also connected with much more far-reaching questions, one of the most fundamental of which is the abolition of the antithesis between town and country. As it is not our task to create utopian systems for the organization of the future society, it would be more than idle to go into the question here. But one thing is certain: there is already a sufficient quantity of houses in the big cities to remedy immediately all real ‘housing shortage’, provided they are used judiciously. This can naturally only occur through the expropriation of the present owners and by quartering in their houses homeless workers or workers overcrowded in their present homes. As soon as the proletariat has won political power, such a measure prompted by concern for the common good will be just as easy to carry out as are other expropriations and billetings by the present-day state.” (German edition, 1887, p. 22)¹

The change in the form of state power is not examined here, but only the content of its activity. Expropriations and billetings take place by order even of the present state. From the formal point of view, the proletarian state will also “order” the occupation of dwellings and expropriation of houses. But it is clear that the old executive apparatus, the bureaucracy, which is connected with the bourgeoisie, would simply be unfit to carry out the orders of the proletarian state.

“... It must be pointed out that the ‘actual seizure’ of all the instruments of labor, the taking possession of industry as a whole by the working people, is the exact opposite of the Proudhonist ‘redemption’. In the latter case the individual worker becomes the owner of the dwelling, the peasant farm, the instruments of labor; in the former case, the ‘working people’ remain the collective owners of the houses, factories and instruments of labor, and will hardly permit their use, at least during a transitional period, by individuals or associations without compensation for the cost. In the same way, the abolition of property in land is not the abolition of ground rent but its transfer, if in a modified form, to society. The actual seizure of all the instruments of labor by the working people, therefore, does not at all preclude the retention of rent relations.” (p. 68)

We shall examine the question touched upon in this passage, namely, the economic basis for the withering away of the state, in the next chapter. Engels expresses himself most cautiously, saying that the proletarian state would “hardly” permit the use of houses without payment, “at least during a transitional period.” The letting of houses owed by the whole people to

individual families presupposes the collection of rent, a certain amount of control, and the employment of some standard in allotting the housing. All this calls for a certain form of state, but it does not at all call for a special military bureaucratic apparatus, with officials occupying especially privileged positions. The transition to a situation in which it will be possible to supply dwellings rent-free depends on the complete “withering away” of the state.

Speaking of the Blanquists’ adoption of the fundamental position of Marxism after the Commune and under the influence of its experience, Engels, in passing, formulates this position as follows:

“...Necessity of political action by the proletariat and of its dictatorship as the transition to the abolition of classes and, with them, of the state...”
(p. 55)

Addicts of hair-splitting criticism, or bourgeois “exterminators of Marxism,” will perhaps see a contradiction between this recognition of the “abolition of the state” and repudiation of this formula as an anarchist one in the above passage from *Anti-Dühring*. It would not be surprising if the opportunists classed Engels, too, as an “anarchist,” for it is becoming increasingly common with the social-chauvinists to accuse the internationalists of anarchism.

Marxism has always taught that with the abolition of classes the state will also be abolished. The well-known passage on the “withering away of the state” in *Anti-Dühring* accuses the anarchists not simply of favoring the abolition of the state, but of preaching that the state can be abolished “overnight.”

As the now prevailing “Social-Democratic” doctrine completely distorts the relation of Marxism to anarchism on the question of the abolition of the state, it will be particularly useful to recall a certain controversy in which Marx and Engels came out against the anarchists.

2. *Controversy with the Anarchists*

This controversy took place in 1873. Marx and Engels contributed articles against the Proudhonists, “autonomists” or “anti-authoritarians,” to an Italian socialist annual, and it was not until 1913 that these articles appeared in German in *Neue Zeit*.²

“If the political struggle of the working class assumes revolutionary form,” wrote Marx, ridiculing the anarchists for their repudiation of politics, “and if the workers set up their revolutionary dictatorship in place of the dic-

tatorship of the bourgeoisie, they commit the terrible crime of violating principles, for in order to satisfy their wretched, vulgar everyday needs and to crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie, they give the state a revolutionary and transient form, instead of laying down their arms and abolishing the state.” (*Neue Zeit* Vol.XXXII, 1, 1913–14, p.40)

It was solely against this kind of “abolition” of the state that Marx fought in refuting the anarchists! He did not at all oppose the view that the state would disappear when classes disappeared, or that it would be abolished when classes were abolished. What he did oppose was the proposition that the workers should renounce the use of arms, organized violence, that is, the state, which is to serve to “crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie.”

To prevent the true meaning of his struggle against anarchism from being distorted, Marx expressly emphasized the “revolutionary and transient form” of the state which the proletariat needs. The proletariat needs the state only temporarily. We do not after all differ with the anarchists on the question of the abolition of the state as the aim. We maintain that, to achieve this aim, we must temporarily make use of the instruments, resources, and methods of state power against the exploiters, just as the temporary dictatorship of the oppressed class is necessary for the abolition of classes. Marx chooses the sharpest and clearest way of stating his case against the anarchists: After overthrowing the yoke of the capitalists, should the workers “lay down their arms,” or use them against the capitalists in order to crush their resistance? But what is the systematic use of arms by one class against another if not a “transient form” of state?

Let every Social-Democrat ask himself: Is that how he has been posing the question of the state in controversy with the anarchists? Is that how it has been posed by the vast majority of the official socialist parties of the Second International?

Engels expounds the same ideas in much greater detail and still more popularly. First of all he ridicules the muddled ideas of the Proudhonists, who call themselves “anti-authoritarians,” i.e., repudiated all authority, all subordination, all power. Take a factory, a railway, a ship on the high seas, said Engels: is it not clear that not one of these complex technical establishments, based on the use of machinery and the systematic co-operation of many people, could function without a certain amount of subordination and, consequently, without a certain amount of authority or power?

“...When I counter the most rabid anti-authoritarians with these arguments, they only answer they can give me is the following: Oh, that’s true, except that here it is not a question of authority with which we vest our del-

egates, but of a commission! These people imagine they can change a thing by changing its name. . . .”

Having thus shown that authority and autonomy are relative terms, that the sphere of their application varies with the various phases of social development, that it is absurd to take them as absolutes, and adding that the sphere of application of machinery and large-scale production is steadily expanding, Engels passes from the general discussion of authority to the question of the state.

“Had the autonomists,” he wrote, “contented themselves with saying that the social organization of the future would allow authority only within the bounds which the conditions of production make inevitable, one could have come to terms with them. But they are blind to all facts that make authority necessary and they passionately fight the word.

“Why do the anti-authoritarians not confine themselves to crying out against political authority, the state? All socialists are agreed that the state, and with it political authority, will disappear as a result of the coming social revolution, that is, that public functions will lose their political character and become mere administrative functions of watching over social interests. But the anti-authoritarians demand that the political state be abolished at one stroke, even before the social relations that gave both to it have been destroyed. They demand that the first act of the social revolution shall be the abolition of authority.

“Have these gentlemen ever seen a revolution? A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is an act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon, all of which are highly authoritarian means. And the victorious party must maintain its rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionaries. Would the Paris Commune have lasted more than a day if it had not used the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie? Cannot we, on the contrary, blame it for having made too little use of that authority? Therefore, one of two things: either that anti-authoritarians don’t know what they are talking about, in which case they are creating nothing but confusion. Or they do know, and in that case they are betraying the cause of the proletariat. In either case they serve only reaction.” (p.39)

This argument touches upon questions which should be examined in connection with the relationship between politics and economics during the withering away of the state (the next chapter is devoted to this). These questions are: the transformation of public functions from political into simple functions of administration, and the “political state.” This last term, one particularly liable to misunderstanding, indicates the process of the

withering away of the state: at a certain stage of this process, the state which is withering away may be called a non-political state.

Against, the most remarkable thing in this argument of Engels' is the way he states his case against the anarchists. Social-Democrats, claiming to be disciples of Engels, have argued on this subject against the anarchists millions of times since 1873, but they have not argued as Marxists could and should. The anarchist idea of abolition of the state is muddled and non-revolutionary—that is how Engels put it. It is precisely the revolution in its rise and development, with its specific tasks in relation to violence, authority, power, the state, that the anarchists refuse to see.

The usual criticism of anarchism by present-day Social-Democrats has boiled down to the purest philistine banality: "We recognize the state, whereas the anarchists do not!" Naturally, such banality cannot but repel workers who are at all capable of thinking and revolutionary-minded. What Engels says is different. He stresses that all socialists recognize that the state will disappear as a result of the socialist revolution. He then deals specifically with the question of the revolution—the very question which, as a rule, the Social-Democrats evade out of opportunism, leaving it, so to speak, exclusively for the anarchists "to work out." And when dealing with this question, Engels takes the bull by the horns; he asks: should not the Commune have made more use of the revolutionary power of the state, that is, of the proletariat armed and organized as the ruling class?

Prevailing official Social-Democracy usually dismissed the question of the concrete tasks of the proletariat in the revolution either with a philistine sneer, or, at best, with the sophistic evasion: "The future will show." And the anarchists were justified in saying about such Social-Democrats that they were failing in their task of giving the workers a revolutionary education. Engels draws upon the experience of the last proletarian revolution precisely for the purpose of making a most concrete study of what should be done by the proletariat, and in what manner, in relation to both the banks and the state.

3. Letter to Bebel

One of the most, if not the most, remarkable observation on the state in the works of Marx and Engels is contained in the following passage in Engels' letter to Bebel dated March 18–28, 1875. This letter, we may observe in parenthesis, was, as far as we know, first published by Bebel in the second volume of his memoirs (*Aus meinem Leben*), which appeared in 1911, i.e., 36 years after the letter had been written and sent.

Engels wrote to Bebel criticizing the same draft of the Gotha Programme which Marx criticized in his famous letter to Bracke. Referring specially to the question of the state, Engels said:

“The free people’s state has been transferred into the free state. Taken in its grammatical sense, a free state is one where the state is free in relation to its citizens, hence a state with a despotic government. The whole talk about the state should be dropped, especially since the Commune, which was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word. The ‘people’s state’ has been thrown in our faces by the anarchists to the point of disgust, although already Marx’s book against Proudhon and later the Communist Manifesto say plainly that with the introduction of the socialist order of society the state dissolves of itself [sich auflöst] and disappears. As the state is only a transitional institution which is used in the struggle, in the revolution, to hold down one’s adversaries by force, it is sheer nonsense to talk of a ‘free people’s state’; so long as the proletariat still needs the state, it does not need it in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist. We would therefore propose replacing the state everywhere by *Gemeinwesen*, a good old German word which can very well take the place of the French word *commune*.” (pp. 321–22 of the German original.)³

It should be borne in mind that this letter refers to the party programme which Marx criticized in a letter dated only a few weeks later than the above (Marx’s letter is dated May 5, 1875), and that at the time Engels was living with Marx in London. Consequently, when he says “we” in the last sentence, Engels undoubtedly, in his own as well as in Marx’s name, suggests to the leader of the German workers’ party that the word “state” be struck out of the programme and replaced by the word “community.”

What a howl about “anarchism” would be raised by the leading lights of present-day “Marxism,” which has been falsified for the convenience of the opportunists, if such an amendment of the programme were suggested to them!

Let them howl. This will earn them the praises of the bourgeoisie.

And we shall go on with our work. In revising the programme of our Party, we must by all means take the advice of Engels and Marx into consideration in order to come nearer the truth, to restore Marxism by ridding it of distortions, to guide the struggle of the working class for its emancipation more correctly. Certainly no one opposed to the advice of Engels and Marx will be found among the Bolsheviks. The only difficulty that may perhaps arise will be in regard to the term. In German there are two words meaning “community,” of which Engels used the one which does not denote a single community, but their totality, a system of communities. In Russian there is

no such word, and we may have to choose the French word “commune,” although this also has its drawbacks.

“The Commune was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word”—this is the most theoretically important statement Engels makes. After what has been said above, this statement is perfectly clear. The Commune was ceasing to be a state since it had to suppress, not the majority of the population, but a minority (the exploiters). It had smashed the bourgeois state machine. In place of a special coercive force the population itself came on the scene. All this was a departure from the state in the proper sense of the word. And had the Commune become firmly established, all traces of the state in it would have “withered away” of themselves; it would not have had to “abolish” the institutions of the state—they would have ceased to function as they ceased to have anything to do.

“The ‘people’s state’ has been thrown in our faces by the anarchists.” In saying this, Engels above all has in mind Bakunin and his attacks on the German Social-Democrats. Engels admits that these attacks were justified insofar as the “people’s state” was as much an absurdity and as much a departure from socialism as the “free people’s state.” Engels tried to put the struggle of the German Social-Democrats against the anarchists on the right lines, to make this struggle correct in principle, to ride it of opportunist prejudices concerning the “state.” Unfortunately, Engels’ letter was pigeon-holed for 36 years. We shall see farther on that, even after this letter was published, Kautsky persisted in virtually the same mistakes against which Engels had warned.

Bebel replied to Engels in a letter dated September 21, 1875, in which he wrote, among other things, that he “fully agreed” with Engels’ opinion of the draft programme, and that he had reproached Liebknecht with readiness to make concessions (p.334 of the German edition of Bebel’s memoirs, Vol.II). But if we take Bebel’s pamphlet, *Our Aims*, we find there views on the state that are absolutely wrong.

“The state must . . . be transformed from one based on class rule into a people’s state.” (*Unsere Ziele*, 1886, p. 14)

This was printed in the ninth (ninth!) edition of Bebel’s pamphlet! It is not surprising that opportunist views on the state, so persistently repeated, were absorbed by the German Social-Democrats, especially as Engels’ revolutionary interpretations had been safely pigeon-holed, and all the conditions of life were such as to “wean” them from revolution for a long time.

4. *Criticism of the Draft of the Erfurt Programme*

In analyzing Marxist teachings on the state, the criticism of the draft of the Erfurt Programme,⁴ sent by Engels to Kautsky on June 29, 1891, and published only 10 years later in *Neue Zeit*, cannot be ignored; for it is with the opportunist views of the Social-Democrats on questions of state organization that this criticism is mainly concerned.

We shall note in passing that Engels also makes an exceedingly valuable observation on economic questions, which shows how attentively and thoughtfully he watched the various changes occurring in modern capitalism, and how for this reason he was able to foresee to a certain extent the tasks of our present, the imperialist, epoch. Here is that observation: referring to the word “planlessness” (*Planlosigkeit*), used in the draft programme, as characteristic of capitalism, Engels wrote:

“When we pass from joint-stock companies to trusts which assume control over, and monopolize, whole industries, it is not only private production that ceases, but also planlessness.” (*Neue Zeit*, Vol. XX, 1, 1901–1902, p. 8)

Here we have what is most essential in the theoretical appraisal of the latest phase of capitalism, i.e., imperialism, namely, that capitalism becomes monopoly capitalism. The latter must be emphasized because the erroneous bourgeois reformist assertion that monopoly capitalism or state-monopoly capitalism is no longer capitalism, but can now be called “state socialism” and so on, is very common. The trusts, of course, never provided, do not now provide, and cannot provide complete planning. But however much they do plan, however much the capitalist magnates calculate in advance the volume of production on a national and even on an international scale, and however much they systematically regulate it, we still remain under capitalism—at its new stage, it is true, but still capitalism, without a doubt. The “proximity” of such capitalism to socialism should serve genuine representatives of the proletariat as an argument proving the proximity, facility, feasibility, and urgency of the socialist revolution, and not at all as an argument for tolerating the repudiation of such a revolution and the efforts to make capitalism look more attractive, something which all reformists are trying to do.

But to return to the question of the state. In his letter Engels makes three particularly valuable suggestions: first, in regard to the republic; second, in regard to the connection between the national question and state organization; and, third, in regard to local self-government.

In regard to the republic, Engels made this the focal point of this criticism of the draft of the Erfurt Programme. And when we recall the importance which the Erfurt Programme acquired for all the Social-Democrats of the world, and that it became the model for the whole Second International, we may say without exaggeration that Engels thereby criticizes the opportunism of the whole Second International.

“The political demands of the draft,” Engels wrote, “have one great fault. *It lacks* [Engels’ italics] precisely what should have been said.”

And, later on, he makes it clear that the German Constitution is, strictly speaking, a copy of the extremely reactionary Constitution of 1850, that the Reichstag is only, as Wilhelm Liebknecht put it, “the fig leaf of absolutism” and that to wish “to transform all the instruments of labor into common property” on the basis of a constitution which legalizes the existence of petty states and the federation of petty German states is an “obvious absurdity.”

“To touch on that is dangerous, however,” Engels added, knowing only too well that it was impossible legally to include in the programme the demand for a republic in Germany. But he refused to merely accept this obvious consideration which satisfied “everybody.” He continued: “Nevertheless, somehow or other, the thing has to be attacked. How necessary this is is shown precisely at the present time by opportunism, which is gaining ground [einreissende] in a large section of the Social-Democrat press. Fearing a renewal of the Anti-Socialist Law,⁵ or recalling all manner of overhasty pronouncements made during the reign of that law, they now want the Party to find the present legal order in Germany adequate for putting through all Party demands by peaceful means. . . .”

Engels particularly stressed the fundamental fact that the German Social-Democrats were prompted by fear of a renewal of the Anti-Socialist Law, and explicitly described it as opportunism; he declared that precisely because there was no republic and no freedom in Germany, the dreams of a “peaceful” path were perfectly absurd. Engels was careful not to tie his hands. He admitted that in republican or very free countries “one can conceive” (only “conceive”!) of a peaceful development towards socialism, but in Germany, he repeated,

“. . . in Germany, where the government is almost omnipotent and the Reichstag and all other representative bodies have no real power, to advocate such a thing in Germany, where, moreover, there is no need to do so, means removing the fig leaf from absolutism and becoming oneself a screen for its nakedness.”

The great majority of the official leaders of the German Social-Democratic Party, which pigeon-holed this advice, have really proved to be a screen for absolutism.

“... In the long run such a policy can only lead one’s own party astray. They push general, abstract political questions into the foreground, thereby concealing the immediate concrete questions, which at the moment of the first great events, the first political crisis, automatically pose themselves. What can result from this except that at the decisive moment the party suddenly proves helpless and that uncertainty and discord on the most decisive issues reign in it because these issues have never been discussed? ...

“This forgetting of the great, the principal considerations for the momentary interests of the day, this struggling and striving for the success of the moment regardless of later consequences, this sacrifice of the future of the movement for its present may be ‘honestly’ meant, but it is and remains opportunism, and ‘honest’ opportunism is perhaps the most dangerous of all. ...

“If one thing is certain it is that our party and the working class can only come to power in the form of the democratic republic. This is even the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the Great French Revolution has already shown. ...”

Engels realized here in a particularly striking form the fundamental idea which runs through all of Marx’s works, namely, that the democratic republic is the nearest approach to the dictatorship of the proletariat. For such a republic, without in the least abolishing the rule of capital, and, therefore, the oppression of the masses and the class struggle, inevitably leads to such an extension, development, unfolding, and intensification of this struggle that, as soon as it becomes possible to meet the fundamental interests of the oppressed masses, this possibility is realized inevitably and solely through the dictatorship of the proletariat, through the leadership of those masses by the proletariat. These, too, are “forgotten words” of marxism for the whole of the Second International, and the fact that they have been forgotten was demonstrated with particular vividness by the history of the Menshevik Party during the first six months of the Russian revolution of 1917.

On the subject of a federal republic, in connection with the national composition of the population, Engels wrote:

“What should take the place of the present-day Germany [with its reactionary monarchical Constitution and its equally reactionary division into petty states, a division which perpetuates all the specific features of “Prussianism” instead of dissolving them in Germany as a whole]? In my view, the proletariat can only use the form of the one and indivisible republic. In

the gigantic territory of the United States, a federal republic is still, on the whole, a necessity, although in the Eastern states it is already becoming a hindrance. It would be a step forward in Britain where the two islands are peopled by four nations and in spite of a single Parliament three different systems of legislation already exist side by side. In little Switzerland, it has long been a hindrance, tolerable only because Switzerland is content to be a purely passive member of the European state system. For Germany, federalization on the Swiss model would be an enormous step backward. Two points distinguish a union state from a completely unified state: first, that each member state, each canton, has its own civil and criminal legislative and judicial system, and, second, that alongside a popular chamber there is also a federal chamber in which each canton, whether large or small, votes as such." In Germany, the union state is the transition to the completely unified state, and the "revolution from above" of 1866 and 1870 must not be reversed but supplemented by a "movement from below."

Far from being indifferent to the forms of state, Engels, on the contrary, tried to analyze the transitional forms with the utmost thoroughness in order to establish, in accordance with the concrete historical peculiarities of each particular case, from what and to what the given transitional form is passing.

Approaching the matter from the standpoint of the proletariat and the proletarian revolution, Engels, like Marx, upheld democratic centralism, the republic—one and indivisible. He regarded the federal republic either as an exception and a hindrance to development, or as a transition from a monarchy to a centralized republic, as a "step forward" under certain special conditions. And among these special conditions, he puts the national question to the fore.

Although mercilessly criticizing the reactionary nature of small states, and the screening of this by the national question in certain concrete cases, Engels, like Marx, never betrayed the slightest desire to brush aside the national question—a desire of which the Dutch and Polish Marxists, who proceed from their perfectly justified opposition to the narrow philistine nationalism of "their" little states, are often guilty.

Even in regard to Britain, where geographical conditions, a common language and the history of many centuries would seem to have "put an end" to the national question in the various small divisions of the country—even in regard to that country, Engels reckoned with the plain fact that the national question was not yet a thing of the past, and recognized in consequence that the establishment of a federal republic would be a "step forward." Of course, there is not the slightest hint here of Engels abandoning the criticism of the shortcomings of a federal republic or renouncing

the most determined advocacy of, and struggle for, a unified and centralized democratic republic.

But Engels did not at all men democratic centralism in the bureaucratic sense in which the term is used by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologists, the anarchists among the latter. His idea of centralism did not in the least preclude such broad local self-government as would combine the voluntary defence of the unity of the state by the “communes” and districts, and the complete elimination of all bureaucratic practices and all “ordering” from above. Carrying forward the programme views of Marxism on the state, Engels wrote:

“So, then, a unified republic—but not in the sense of the present French Republic, which is nothing but the Empire established in 1798 without the Emperor. From 1792 to 1798 each French department, each commune [Gemeinde], enjoyed complete self-government on the American model, and this is what we too must have. How self-government is to be organized and how we can manage, without a bureaucracy has been shown to us by America and the first French Republic, and is being shown even today by Australia, Canada and the other English colonies. And a provincial [regional] and communal self-government of this type is far freer than, for instance, Swiss federalism, under which, it is true, the canton is very independent in relation to the Bund [i.e., the federated state as a whole], but is also independent in relation to the district [Bezirk] and the commune. The cantonal governments appoint the district governors [Bezirksstatthalter] and prefects—which is unknown in English-speaking countries and which we want to abolish here as resolutely in the future as the Prussian Landrate and Regierungsräte” (commissioners, district police chiefs, governors, and in general all officials appointed from above). Accordingly, Engels proposes the following words for the self-government clause in the programme: “Complete self-government for the provinces [gubernias or regions], districts and communes through officials elected by universal suffrage. The abolition of all local and provincial authorities appointed by the state.”

I have already had occasion to point out—in *Pravda* (No.68, May 28, 1917), which was suppressed by the government of Kerensky and other “socialist” Ministers—how on this point (of course, not on this point alone by any means) our pseudo-socialist representatives of pseudo-revolutionary pseudo-democracy have made glaring departures from democracy. Naturally, people who have bound themselves by a “coalition” to the imperialist bourgeoisie have remained deaf to this criticism.

It is extremely important to note that Engels, armed with facts, disproved by a most precise example the prejudice which is very widespread, particularly among petty-bourgeois democrats, that a federal republic necessarily means

a greater amount of freedom than a centralized republic. This is wrong. It is disproved by the facts cited by Engels regarding the centralized French Republic of 792–98 and the federal Swiss Republic. The really democratic centralized republic gave more freedom than the federal republic. In other words, the greatest amount of local, regional, and other freedom known in history was accorded by a centralized and not a federal republic.

Insufficient attention has been and is being paid in our Party propaganda and agitation to this fact, as, indeed, to the whole question of the federal and the centralized republic and local self-government.

5. *The 1891 Preface to Marx's "The Civil War in France"*

In his preface to the third edition of *The Civil War in France* (this preface is dated March 18, 1891, and was originally published in *Neue Zeit*), Engels, in addition to some interesting incidental remarks on questions concerning the attitude towards the state, gave a remarkably vivid summary of the lessons of the Commune.⁶ This summary, made more profound by the entire experience of the 20 years that separated the author from the Commune, and directed expressly against the “superstitious belief in the state” so widespread in Germany, may justly be called the last word of Marxism on the question under consideration.

In France, Engels observed, the workers emerged with arms from every revolution: “therefore the disarming of the workers was the first commandment for the bourgeois, who were at the helm of the state. Hence, after every revolution won by the workers, a new struggle, ending with the defeat of the workers.”

This summary of the experience of bourgeois revolutions is as concise as it is expressive. The essence of the matter—among other things, on the question of the state (has the oppressed class arms?)—is here remarkably well-grasped. It is precisely this essence that is most often evaded by both professors influenced by bourgeois ideology, and by petty-bourgeois democrats. In the Russian revolution of 1917, the honor (Cavaignac honor) of blabbing this secret of bourgeois revolutions fell to the Menshevik, would-be Marxist, Tsereteli. In his “historic” speech of June 11, Tsereteli blurted out that the bourgeoisie were determined to disarm the Petrograd workers—presenting, of course, this decision as his own, and as a necessity for the “state” in general!

Tsereteli’s historical speech of June 11 will, of course, serve every historian of the revolution of 1917 as a graphic illustration of how the

Social-Revolutionary and Menshevik bloc, led by Mr. Tsereteli, deserted to the bourgeoisie against the revolutionary proletariat.

Another incidental remark of Engels', also connected with the question of the state, deals with religion. It is well-known that the German Social-Democrats, as they degenerated and became increasingly opportunist, slipped more and more frequently into the philistine misinterpretation of the celebrated formula: "Religion is to be declared a private matter." That is, the formula was twisted to mean that religion was a private matter even for the party of the revolutionary proletariat!! It was against this complete betrayal of the revolutionary programme of the proletariat that Engels vigorously protested. In 1891 he saw only the very feeble beginnings of opportunism in his party, and, therefore, he expressed himself with extreme caution:

"As almost only workers, or recognized representatives of the workers, sat in the Commune, its decisions bore a decidedly proletarian character. Either they decreed reforms which the republican bourgeoisie had failed to pass solely out of cowardice, but which provided a necessary basis for the free activity of the working class—such as the realization of the principle that *in relation to the state* religion is a purely private matter—or the Commune promulgated decrees which were in the direct interest of the working class and in part cut deeply into the old order of society."

Engels deliberately emphasized the words "in relation to the state" as a straight thrust at German opportunism, which had declared religion to be a private matter in relation to the party, thus degrading the party of the revolutionary proletariat to the level of the most vulgar "free-thinking" philistinism, which is prepared to allow a non-denominational status, but which renounces the party struggle against the opium of religion which stupifies the people.

The future historian of the German Social-Democrats, in tracing the roots of their shameful bankruptcy in 1914, will find a fair amount of interesting material on this question, beginning with the evasive declarations in the articles of the party's ideological leader, Kautsky, which throw the door wide open to opportunism, and ending with the attitude of the party towards the "Los-von-Kirche-Bewegung"⁷ (the "Leave-the-Church" movement) in 1913.

But let us see how, 20 years after the Commune, Engels summed up its lessons for the fighting proletariat.

Here are the lessons to which Engels attached prime importance:

"... It was precisely the oppressing power of the former centralized government, army, political parties, bureaucracy, which Napoleon had created in

1798 and which every new government had since then taken over as a welcome instrument and used against its opponents—it was this power which was to fall everywhere, just as it had fallen in Paris.

“From the very outset the Commune had to recognize that the working class, once in power, could not go on managing with the old state machine; that in order not to lose again its only just-gained supremacy, this working class must, on the one hand, do away with all the old machinery of oppression previously used against it itself, and, on the other, safeguard itself against its own deputies and officials, by declaring them all, without exception, subject to recall at any time. . . .”

Engels emphasized once again that not only under a monarchy, but also under a democratic republic the state remains a state, i.e., it retains its fundamental distinguishing feature of transforming the officials, the ‘servants of society,’ its organs, into the masters of society.

“Against this transformation of the state and the organs of the state from servants of society into masters of society—an inevitable transformation in all previous states—the Commune used two infallible means. In the first place, it filled all posts—administrative, judicial, and educational—by election on the basis of universal suffrage of all concerned, subject to recall at any time by the electors. And, in the second place, it paid all officials, high or low, only the wages received by other workers. The highest salary paid by the Commune to anyone was 6,000 francs. In this way a dependable barrier to place-hunting and careerism was set up, even apart from the binding mandates to delegates to representative bodies, which were added besides. . . .”

Engels here approached the interesting boundary line at which consistent democracy, on the one hand, is transformed into socialism and, on the other, demands socialism. For, in order to abolish the state, it is necessary to convert the functions of the civil service into the simple operations of control and accounting that are within the scope and ability of the vast majority of the population, and, subsequently, of every single individual. And if careerism is to be abolished completely, it must be made impossible for “honorable” though profitless posts in the Civil Service to be used as a springboard to highly lucrative posts in banks or joint-stock companies, as constantly happens in all the freest capitalist countries.

Engels, however, did not make the mistake some Marxists make in dealing, for example, with the question of the right of nations to self-determination, when they argue that it is impossible under capitalism and will be superfluous under socialism. This seemingly clever but actually incorrect statement might be made in regard to any democratic institution, including

moderate salaries for officials, because fully consistent democracy is impossible under capitalism, and under socialism all democracy will wither away.

This is a sophism like the old joke about a man becoming bald by losing one more hair.

To develop democracy to the utmost, to find the forms for this development, to test them by practice, and so forth—all this is one of the component tasks of the struggle for the social revolution. Taken separately, no kind of democracy will bring socialism. But in actual life democracy will never be “taken separately”; it will be “taken together” with other things, it will exert its influence on economic life as well, will stimulate its transformation; and in its turn it will be influenced by economic development, and so on. This is the dialectics of living history.

Engels continued:

“... This shattering [Sprengrung] of the former state power and its replacement by a new and truly democratic one is described in detail in the third section of *The Civil War*. But it was necessary to touch briefly here once more on some of its features, because in Germany particularly the superstitious belief in the state has passed from philosophy into the general consciousness of the bourgeoisie and even of many workers. According to the philosophical conception, the state is the ‘realization of the idea’, or the Kingdom of God on earth, translated into philosophical terms, the sphere in which eternal truth and justice are, or should be, realized. And from this follows a superstitious reverence for the state and everything connected with it, which takes root the more readily since people are accustomed from childhood to imagine that the affairs and interests common to the whole of society could not be looked after other than as they have been looked after in the past, that is, through the state and its lucratively positioned officials. And people think they have taken quite an extraordinary bold step forward when they have rid themselves of belief in hereditary monarchy and swear by the democratic republic. In reality, however, the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another, and indeed in the democratic republic no less than in the monarchy. And at best it is an evil inherited by the proletariat after its victorious struggle for class supremacy, whose worst sides the victorious proletariat will have to lop off as speedily as possible, just as the Commune had to, until a generation reared in new, free social conditions is able to discard the entire lumber of the state.”

Engels warned the Germans not to forget the principles of socialism with regard to the state in general in connection with the substitution of a republic for the monarchy. His warnings now read like a veritable lesson to the Tseretelis and Chernovs, who in their “coalition” practice have revealed a superstitious belief in, and a superstitious reverence for, the state!

Two more remarks. 1. Engels' statement that in a democratic republic, "no less" than in a monarchy, the state remains a "machine for the oppression of one class by another" by no means signifies that the form of oppression makes no difference to the proletariat, as some anarchists "teach." A wider, freer and more open form of the class struggle and of class oppression vastly assists the proletariat in its struggle for the abolition of classes in general.

2. Why will only a new generation be able to discard the entire lumber of the state? This question is bound up with that of overcoming democracy, with which we shall deal now.

6. *Engels on the Overcoming of Democracy*

Engels came to express his views on this subject when establishing that the term "Social-Democrat" was scientifically wrong.

In a preface to an edition of his articles of the seventies on various subjects, mostly on "international" questions (*Internationales aus dem Volkstaat*), dated January 3, 1894, i.e., written a year and a half before his death, Engels wrote that in all his articles he used the word "Communist," and not "Social-Democrat," because at that time the Proudhonists in France and the Lassalleans⁸ in Germany called themselves Social-Democrats.

"...For Marx and myself," continued Engels, "it was therefore absolutely impossible to use such a loose term to characterize our special point of view. Today things are different, and the word ["Social-Democrat"] may perhaps pass muster [mag passieren], inexact [unpassend, unsuitable] though it still is for a party whose economic programme is not merely socialist in general, but downright communist, and whose ultimate political aim is to overcome the whole state and, consequently, democracy as well. The names of *real* political parties, however, are never wholly appropriate; the party develops while the name stays."⁹

The dialectician Engels remained true to dialectics to the end of his days. Marx and I, he said, had a splendid, scientifically exact name for the party, but there was no real party, i.e., no mass proletarian party. Now (at the end of the 19th century) there was a real party, but its name was scientifically wrong. Never mind, it would "pass muster," so long as the party developed, so long as the scientific inaccuracy of the name was not hidden from it and did not hinder its development on the right direction!

Perhaps some wit would console us Bolsheviks in the manner of Engels: we have a real party, it is developing splendidly; even such a meaningless and ugly term as "Bolshevik" will "pass muster," although it expresses

nothing whatever but the purely accidental fact that at the Brussels-London Congress of 1903 we were in the majority. Perhaps now that the persecution of our Party by republicans and “revolutionary” petty-bourgeois democrats in July and August has earned the name “Bolshevik” such universal respect, now that, in addition, this persecution marks the tremendous historical progress our Party has made in its real development—perhaps now even I might hesitate to insist on the suggestion I made in April to change the name of our Party. Perhaps I would propose a “compromise” to my comrades, namely, to call ourselves the Communist Party, but to retain the word “Bolshevik” in brackets.

But the question of the name of the Party is incomparably less important than the question of the attitude of the revolutionary proletariat to the state.

In the usual argument about the state, the mistake is constantly made against which Engels warned and which we have in passing indicated above, namely, it is constantly forgotten that the abolition of the state means also the abolition of democracy; that the withering away of the state means the withering away of democracy.

At first sight this assertion seems exceedingly strange and incomprehensible; indeed, someone may even suspect us of expecting the advent of a system of society in which the principle of subordination of the minority to the majority will not be observed—for democracy means the recognition of this very principle.

No, democracy is not identical with the subordination of the minority to the majority. Democracy is a state which recognizes the subordination of the minority to the majority, i.e., an organization for the systematic use of force by one class against another, by one section of the population against another.

We set ourselves the ultimate aim of abolishing the state, i.e., all organized and systematic violence, all use of violence against people in general. We do not expect the advent of a system of society in which the principle of subordination of the minority to the majority will not be observed. In striving for socialism, however, we are convinced that it will develop into communism and, therefore, that the need for violence against people in general, for the subordination of one man to another, and of one section of the population to another, will vanish altogether since people will become accustomed to observing the elementary conditions of social life without violence and without subordination.

In order to emphasize this element of habit, Engels speaks of a new generation, “reared in new, free social conditions,” which will “be able to

discard the entire lumber of the state”—of any state, including the democratic-republican state.

In order to explain this, it is necessary to analyze the economic basis of the withering away of the state.

Notes

1. See Frederick Engels, *The Housing Question* (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1973, pp. 317–18).
Further below, on pp. 439–40 of this volume, Lenin is quoting from the same work by Engels (op. cit., pp. 370, 355).
2. Lenin is referring to the articles “L’indifferenza in materia politica” by Karl Marx and “Dell’ Autorita” by Frederick Engels (*Almanacco Repubblicano per l’anno 1874*). Further below, on pp. 440–41, 442, 442–43 of this volume, Lenin is quoting from the same articles.
3. See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, 1965, pp. 293–94.
4. Erfurt Programme—the programme adopted by the German Social-Democratic Party at its Erfurt Congress in October 1891. A step forward compared with the Gotha Programme (1875), it was based on Marx’s doctrine of the inevitable downfall of the capitalist mode of production and its replacement by the socialist mode. It stressed the necessity for the working class to wage a political struggle, pointed out the party’s role as the leader of that struggle, and so on. But it also made serious concessions to opportunism. Engels criticised the original draft of the programme in detail in his work *A Critique of the Draft Social-Democratic Programme of 1891*. It was virtually a critique of the opportunism of the Second International as a whole. But the German Social-Democratic leaders concealed Engels’s critique from the rank and file, and disregarded his highly important comments in drawing up the final text of the programme. Lenin considered the fact that the Erfurt Programme said nothing about the dictatorship of the proletariat to be its chief defect and a cowardly concession to opportunism.
5. The Anti-Socialist Law (Exceptional Law Against the Socialists) was enacted in Germany by the Bismarck government in 1878 to combat the working-class and socialist movement. Under this law, all Social-Democratic Party organisations, all mass organisations of the workers, and the working-class press were banned, socialist literature was confiscated and the Social-Democrats were persecuted, to the point of banishment. These repressive measures did not, however, break the Social-Democratic Party, which readjusted itself to illegal conditions. *Der Sozial-Demokrat*, the party’s Central Organ, was published abroad and party congresses were held at regular intervals (1880, 1883 and 1887). In Germany herself, the Social-Democratic organisations and groups were coming back to life underground, an illegal Central Committee leading their activities. Besides, the Party widely used legal opportunities to establish closer links with the working people, and its influence was growing steadily. At the Reichstag elections in 1890, it polled three times as many votes as in 1878.

Marx and Engels did much to help the Social-Democrats. In 1890 popular pressure and the growing working-class movement led to the annulment of the Anti-Socialist Law.

6. See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1973, pp. 178–89.

Further below, on pp. 454, 455, 456–58 of this volume, Lenin is quoting from the same work (*op. cit.*, pp. 179–80, 184, 187–89).

7. The Los-von-Kirche-Bewegung (the “Leave-the-Church” movement), or Kirchenaustrittsbewegung (Movement to Secede from the Church) assumed a vast scale in Germany before the First World War. In January 1914 *Neue Zeit* began, with the revisionist Paul Gdhre’s article “Kirchenaustrittsbewegung und Sozialdemokratie” (“The Movement to Secede from the Church and Social-Democracy”), to discuss the attitude of the German Social-Democratic Party to the movement. During that discussion prominent German Social-Democratic leaders failed to rebuff Göhre, who affirmed that the party should remain neutral towards the Movement to Secede from the Church and forbid its members to engage in propaganda against religion and the Church on behalf of the party.

Lenin took notice of the discussion while working on material for *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (see present edition, Vol. 39, p. 591).

8. Lassalleans—supporters of the German petty-bourgeois socialist Ferdinand Lassalle, members of the General Association of German Workers founded at the Congress of Workers’ Organisations, held in Leipzig in 1863, to counterbalance the bourgeois progressists who were trying to gain influence over the working class. The first President of the Association was Lassalle, who formulated its programme and the fundamentals of its tactics. The Association’s political programme was declared to be the struggle for universal suffrage, and its economic programme, the struggle for workers’ production associations, to be subsidised by the state. In their practical activities, Lassalle and his followers adapted themselves to the hegemony of Prussia and supported the Great Power policy of Bismarck. “Objectively,” wrote Engels to Marx on January 27, 1865, “this was a base action and a betrayal of the whole working-class movement to the Prussians.” Marx and Engels frequently and sharply criticised the theory, tactics, and organisational principles of the Lassalleans as an opportunist trend in the German working-class movement.
9. See Frederick Engels, “Vorwort zur Broschüre Internationales aus dem ‘Volksstaat’ (1871–1875),” *Marx-Engels, Werke*, Bd. 22, Berlin, 1963, S. 417–18.

Chapter 5: The Economic Basis for the Withering Away of the State

Marx explains this question most thoroughly in his Critique of the Gotha Programme (letter to Bracke, May 5, 1875, which was not published until 1891 when it was printed in *Neue Zeit*, vol. IX, 1, and which has appeared in Russian in a special edition). The polemical part of this remarkable work, which contains a criticism of Lassalleanism, has, so to speak, overshadowed its positive part, namely, the analysis of the connection between the development of communism and the withering away of the state.

1. Presentation of the Question by Marx

From a superficial comparison of Marx's letter to Bracke of May 5, 1875, with Engels' letter to Bebel of March 28, 1875, which we examined above, it might appear that Marx was much more of a "champion of the state" than Engels, and that the difference of opinion between the two writers on the question of the state was very considerable.

Engels suggested to Bebel that all chatter about the state be dropped altogether, that the word "state" be eliminated from the programme altogether and the word "community" substituted for it. Engels even declared that the Commune was long a state in the proper sense of the word. Yet Marx even spoke of the "future state in communist society," i.e., he would seem to recognize the need for the state even under communism.

But such a view would be fundamentally wrong. A closer examination shows that Marx's and Engels' views on the state and its withering away were completely identical, and that Marx's expression quoted above refers to the state in the process of withering away.

Clearly, there can be no question of specifying the moment of the future "withering away," the more so since it will obviously be a lengthy process. The apparent difference between Marx and Engels is due to the fact that they dealt with different subjects and pursued different aims. Engels set out to show Bebel graphically, sharply, and in broad outline the utter absurdity of the current prejudices concerning the state (shared to no small degree by Lassalle). Marx only touched upon this question in passing, being interested in another subject, namely, the development of communist society.

The whole theory of Marx is the application of the theory of development—in its most consistent, complete, considered and pithy form—to modern capitalism. Naturally, Marx was faced with the problem of applying

this theory both to the forthcoming collapse of capitalism and to the future development of future communism.

On the basis of what facts, then, can the question of the future development of future communism be dealt with?

On the basis of the fact that it has its origin in capitalism, that it develops historically from capitalism, that it is the result of the action of a social force to which capitalism gave birth. There is no trace of an attempt on Marx's part to make up a utopia, to indulge in idle guess-work about what cannot be known. Marx treated the question of communism in the same way as a naturalist would treat the question of the development of, say, a new biological variety, once he knew that it had originated in such and such a way and was changing in such and such a definite direction.

To begin with, Marx brushed aside the confusion the Gotha Programme brought into the question of the relationship between state and society. He wrote:

“Present-day society’ is capitalist society, which exists in all civilized countries, being more or less free from medieval admixture, more or less modified by the particular historical development of each country, more or less developed. On the other hand, the ‘present-day state’ changes with a country’s frontier. It is different in the Prusso-German Empire from what it is in Switzerland, and different in England from what it is in the United States. ‘The present-day state’ is, therefore, a fiction.

“Nevertheless, the different states of the different civilized countries, in spite of their motley diversity of form, all have this in common, that they are based on modern bourgeois society, only one more or less capitalistically developed. They have, therefore, also certain essential characteristics in common. In this sense it is possible to speak of the ‘present-day state’, in contrast with the future, in which its present root, bourgeois society, will have died off.

“The question then arises: what transformation will the state undergo in communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to present state functions? This question can only be answered scientifically, and one does not get a flea-hop nearer to the problem by a thousandfold combination of the word people with the word state.”¹

After thus ridiculing all talk about a “people’s state,” Marx formulated the question and gave warning, as it were, that those seeking a scientific answer to it should use only firmly-established scientific data.

The first fact that has been established most accurately by the whole theory of development, by science as a whole—a fact that was ignored

by the utopians, and is ignored by the present-day opportunists, who are afraid of the socialist revolution—is that, historically, there must undoubtedly be a special stage, or a special phase, of transition from capitalism to communism.

2. *The Transition from Capitalism to Communism*

Marx continued:

“Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.”

Marx bases this conclusion on an analysis of the role played by the proletariat in modern capitalist society, on the data concerning the development of this society, and on the irreconcilability of the antagonistic interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

Previously the question was put as follows: to achieve its emancipation, the proletariat must overthrow the bourgeoisie, win political power and establish its revolutionary dictatorship.

Now the question is put somewhat differently: the transition from capitalist society—which is developing towards communism—to communist society is impossible without a “political transition period,” and the state in this period can only be the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

What, then, is the relation of this dictatorship to democracy?

We have seen that the Communist Manifesto simply places side by side the two concepts: “to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class” and “to win the battle of democracy.” On the basis of all that has been said above, it is possible to determine more precisely how democracy changes in the transition from capitalism to communism.

In capitalist society, providing it develops under the most favourable conditions, we have a more or less complete democracy in the democratic republic. But this democracy is always hemmed in by the narrow limits set by capitalist exploitation, and consequently always remains, in effect, a democracy for the minority, only for the propertied classes, only for the rich. Freedom in capitalist society always remains about the same as it was in the ancient Greek republics: freedom for the slave-owners. Owing to the conditions of capitalist exploitation, the modern wage slaves are so crushed by want and poverty that “they cannot be bothered with democracy,” “cannot

be bothered with politics”; in the ordinary, peaceful course of events, the majority of the population is debarred from participation in public and political life.

The correctness of this statement is perhaps most clearly confirmed by Germany, because constitutional legality steadily endured there for a remarkably long time—nearly half a century (1871–1914)—and during this period the Social-Democrats were able to achieve far more than in other countries in the way of “utilizing legality,” and organized a larger proportion of the workers into a political party than anywhere else in the world.

What is this largest proportion of politically conscious and active wage slaves that has so far been recorded in capitalist society? One million members of the Social-Democratic Party—out of 15,000,000 wage-workers! Three million organized in trade unions—out of 15,000,000!

Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich—that is the democracy of capitalist society. If we look more closely into the machinery of capitalist democracy, we see everywhere, in the “petty”—supposedly petty—details of the suffrage (residential qualifications, exclusion of women, etc.), in the technique of the representative institutions, in the actual obstacles to the right of assembly (public buildings are not for “paupers”!), in the purely capitalist organization of the daily press, etc., etc.,—we see restriction after restriction upon democracy. These restrictions, exceptions, exclusions, obstacles for the poor seem slight, especially in the eyes of one who has never known want himself and has never been in close contact with the oppressed classes in their mass life (and nine out of 10, if not 99 out of 100, bourgeois publicists and politicians come under this category); but in their sum total these restrictions exclude and squeeze out the poor from politics, from active participation in democracy.

Marx grasped this essence of capitalist democracy splendidly when, in analyzing the experience of the Commune, he said that the oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class shall represent and repress them in parliament!

But from this capitalist democracy—that is inevitably narrow and stealthily pushes aside the poor, and is therefore hypocritical and false through and through—forward development does not proceed simply, directly and smoothly, towards “greater and greater democracy,” as the liberal professors and petty-bourgeois opportunists would have us believe. No, forward development, i.e., development towards communism, proceeds through the dictatorship of the proletariat, and cannot do otherwise, for the resistance of the capitalist exploiters cannot be broken by anyone else or in any other way.

And the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the organization of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class for the purpose of suppressing the oppressors, cannot result merely in an expansion of democracy. Simultaneously with an immense expansion of democracy, which for the first time becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the money-bags, the dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of restrictions on the freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists. We must suppress them in order to free humanity from wage slavery, their resistance must be crushed by force; it is clear that there is no freedom and no democracy where there is suppression and where there is violence.

Engels expressed this splendidly in his letter to Bebel when he said, as the reader will remember, that “the proletariat needs the state, not in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist.”

Democracy for the vast majority of the people, and suppression by force, i.e., exclusion from democracy, of the exploiters and oppressors of the people—this is the change democracy undergoes during the transition from capitalism to communism.

Only in communist society, when the resistance of the capitalists have disappeared, when there are no classes (i.e., when there is no distinction between the members of society as regards their relation to the social means of production), only then “the state . . . ceases to exist,” and “it becomes possible to speak of freedom.” Only then will a truly complete democracy become possible and be realized, a democracy without any exceptions whatever. And only then will democracy begin to wither away, owing to the simple fact that, freed from capitalist slavery, from the untold horrors, savagery, absurdities, and infamies of capitalist exploitation, people will gradually become accustomed to observing the elementary rules of social intercourse that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copy-book maxims. They will become accustomed to observing them without force, without coercion, without subordination, without the special apparatus for coercion called the state.

The expression “the state withers away” is very well-chosen, for it indicates both the gradual and the spontaneous nature of the process. Only habit can, and undoubtedly will, have such an effect; for we see around us on millions of occasions how readily people become accustomed to observing the necessary rules of social intercourse when there is no exploitation, when there is nothing that arouses indignation, evokes protest and revolt, and creates the need for suppression.

And so in capitalist society we have a democracy that is curtailed, wretched, false, a democracy only for the rich, for the minority. The dictatorship of the proletariat, the period of transition to communism, will for the first time create democracy for the people, for the majority, along with the necessary suppression of the exploiters, of the minority. Communism alone is capable of providing really complete democracy, and the more complete it is, the sooner it will become unnecessary and wither away of its own accord.

In other words, under capitalism we have the state in the proper sense of the word, that is, a special machine for the suppression of one class by another, and, what is more, of the majority by the minority. Naturally, to be successful, such an undertaking as the systematic suppression of the exploited majority by the exploiting minority calls for the utmost ferocity and savagery in the matter of suppressing, it calls for seas of blood, through which mankind is actually wading its way in slavery, serfdom and wage labor.

Furthermore, during the transition from capitalism to communism suppression is still necessary, but it is now the suppression of the exploiting minority by the exploited majority. A special apparatus, a special machine for suppression, the “state,” is still necessary, but this is now a transitional state. It is no longer a state in the proper sense of the word; for the suppression of the minority of exploiters by the majority of the wage slaves of yesterday is comparatively so easy, simple and natural a task that it will entail far less bloodshed than the suppression of the risings of slaves, serfs or wage-laborers, and it will cost mankind far less. And it is compatible with the extension of democracy to such an overwhelming majority of the population that the need for a special machine of suppression will begin to disappear. Naturally, the exploiters are unable to suppress the people without a highly complex machine for performing this task, but the people can suppress the exploiters even with a very simple “machine,” almost without a “machine,” without a special apparatus, by the simple organization of the armed people (such as the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, we would remark, running ahead).

Lastly, only communism makes the state absolutely unnecessary, for there is nobody to be suppressed—“nobody” in the sense of a class, of a systematic struggle against a definite section of the population. We are not utopians, and do not in the least deny the possibility and inevitability of excesses on the part of *individual persons*, or the need to stop such excesses. In the first place, however, no special machine, no special apparatus of suppression, is needed for this: this will be done by the armed people themselves, as simply and as readily as any crowd of civilized people, even in modern society, interferes to put a stop to a scuffle or to prevent a woman from being assaulted. And, secondly, we know that the fundamental social cause of excesses, which consist

in the violation of the rules of social intercourse, is the exploitation of the people, their want and their poverty. With the removal of this chief cause, excesses will inevitably begin to “wither away.” We do not know how quickly and in what succession, but we do know they will wither away. With their withering away the state will also wither away.

Without building utopias, Marx defined more fully what can be defined now regarding this future, namely, the differences between the lower and higher phases (levels, stages) of communist society.

3. The First Phase of Communist Society

In the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx goes into detail to disprove Lassalle’s idea that under socialism the worker will receive the “undiminished” or “full product of his labor.” Marx shows that from the whole of the social labor of society there must be deducted a reserve fund, a fund for the expansion of production, a fund for the replacement of the “wear and tear” of machinery, and so on. Then, from the means of consumption must be deducted a fund for administrative expenses, for schools, hospitals, old people’s homes, and so on.

Instead of Lassalle’s hazy, obscure, general phrase (“the full product of his labor to the worker”), Marx makes a sober estimate of exactly how socialist society will have to manage its affairs. Marx proceeds to make a concrete analysis of the conditions of life of a society in which there will be no capitalism, and says:

“What we have to deal with here [in analyzing the programme of the workers’ party] is a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it comes.”

It is this communist society, which has just emerged into the light of day out of the womb of capitalism and which is in every respect stamped with the birthmarks of the old society, that Marx terms the “first,” or lower, phase of communist society.

The means of production are no longer the private property of individuals. The means of production belong to the whole of society. Every member of society, performing a certain part of the socially-necessary work, receives a certificate from society to the effect that he has done a certain amount of work. And with this certificate he receives from the public store of consumer goods a corresponding quantity of products. After a deduction

is made of the amount of labor which goes to the public fund, every worker, therefore, receives from society as much as he has given to it.

“Equality” apparently reigns supreme.

But when Lassalle, having in view such a social order (usually called socialism, but termed by Marx the first phase of communism), says that this is “equitable distribution,” that this is “the equal right of all to an equal product of labor,” Lassalle is mistaken and Marx exposes the mistake.

“Hence, the equal right,” says Marx, in this case still certainly conforms to “bourgeois law,” which, like all law, implies inequality. All law is an application of an equal measure to different people who in fact are not alike, are not equal to one another. That is why the “equal right” is violation of equality and an injustice. In fact, everyone, having performed as much social labor as another, receives an equal share of the social product (after the above-mentioned deductions).

But people are not alike: one is strong, another is weak; one is married, another is not; one has more children, another has less, and so on. And the conclusion Marx draws is:

“...With an equal performance of labor, and hence an equal share in the social consumption fund, one will in fact receive more than another, one will be richer than another, and so on. To avoid all these defects, the right instead of being equal would have to be unequal.”

The first phase of communism, therefore, cannot yet provide justice and equality; differences, and unjust differences, in wealth will still persist, but the exploitation of man by man will have become impossible because it will be impossible to seize the means of production—the factories, machines, land, etc.—and make them private property. In smashing Lassalle’s petty-bourgeois, vague phrases about “equality” and “justice” in general, Marx shows the course of development of communist society, which is compelled to abolish at first only the “injustice” of the means of production seized by individuals, and which is unable at once to eliminate the other injustice, which consists in the distribution of consumer goods “according to the amount of labor performed” (and not according to needs).

The vulgar economists, including the bourgeois professors and “our” Tugan, constantly reproach the socialists with forgetting the inequality of people and with “dreaming” of eliminating this inequality. Such a reproach, as we see, only proves the extreme ignorance of the bourgeois ideologists.

Marx not only most scrupulously takes account of the inevitable inequality of men, but he also takes into account the fact that the mere

conversion of the means of production into the common property of the whole society (commonly called “socialism”) does not remove the defects of distribution and the inequality of “bourgeois laws” which continues to prevail so long as products are divided “according to the amount of labor performed.” Continuing, Marx says:

“But these defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society as it is when it has just emerged, after prolonged birth pangs, from capitalist society. Law can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby.”

And so, in the first phase of communist society (usually called socialism) “bourgeois law” is not abolished in its entirety, but only in part, only in proportion to the economic revolution so far attained, i.e., only in respect of the means of production. “Bourgeois law” recognizes them as the private property of individuals. Socialism converts them into common property. To that extent—and to that extent alone—“bourgeois law” disappears.

However, it persists as far as its other part is concerned; it persists in the capacity of regulator (determining factor) in the distribution of products and the allotment of labor among the members of society. The socialist principle, “He who does not work shall not eat,” is already realized; the other socialist principle, “An equal amount of products for an equal amount of labor,” is also already realized. But this is not yet communism, and it does not yet abolish “bourgeois law,” which gives unequal individuals, in return for unequal (really unequal) amounts of labor, equal amounts of products.

This is a “defect,” says Marx, but it is unavoidable in the first phase of communism; for if we are not to indulge in utopianism, we must not think that having overthrown capitalism people will at once learn to work for society without any rules of law. Besides, the abolition of capitalism does not immediately create the economic prerequisites for such a change.

Now, there are no other rules than those of “bourgeois law.” To this extent, therefore, there still remains the need for a state, which, while safeguarding the common ownership of the means of production, would safeguard equality in labor and in the distribution of products.

The state withers away insofar as there are no longer any capitalists, any classes, and, consequently, no class can be suppressed.

But the state has not yet completely withered away, since the still remains the safeguarding of “bourgeois law,” which sanctifies actual inequality. For the state to wither away completely, complete communism is necessary.

4. *The Higher Phase of Communist Society*

Marx continues:

“In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor, and with it also the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished, after labor has become not only a livelihood but life’s prime want, after the productive forces have increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois law be left behind in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!”

Only now can we fully appreciate the correctness of Engels’ remarks mercilessly ridiculing the absurdity of combining the words “freedom” and “state.” So long as the state exists there is no freedom. When there is freedom, there will be no state.

The economic basis for the complete withering away of the state is such a high state of development of communism at which the antithesis between mental and physical labor disappears, at which there consequently disappears one of the principal sources of modern social inequality—a source, moreover, which cannot on any account be removed immediately by the mere conversion of the means of production into public property, by the mere expropriation of the capitalists.

This expropriation will make it possible for the productive forces to develop to a tremendous extent. And when we see how incredibly capitalism is already retarding this development, when we see how much progress could be achieved on the basis of the level of technique already attained, we are entitled to say with the fullest confidence that the expropriation of the capitalists will inevitably result in an enormous development of the productive forces of human society. But how rapidly this development will proceed, how soon it will reach the point of breaking away from the division of labor, of doing away with the antithesis between mental and physical labor, of transforming labor into “life’s prime want”—we do not and cannot know.

That is why we are entitled to speak only of the inevitable withering away of the state, emphasizing the protracted nature of this process and its dependence upon the rapidity of development of the higher phase of communism, and leaving the question of the time required for, or the concrete forms of, the withering away quite open, because there is no material for answering these questions.

The state will be able to wither away completely when society adopts the rule: “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs,” i.e., when people have become so accustomed to observing the fundamental rules of social intercourse and when their labor has become so productive that they will voluntarily work according to their ability. “The narrow horizon of bourgeois law,” which compels one to calculate with the heartlessness of a Shylock whether one has not worked half an hour more than anybody else—this narrow horizon will then be left behind. There will then be no need for society, in distributing the products, to regulate the quantity to be received by each; each will take freely “according to his needs.”

From the bourgeois point of view, it is easy to declare that such a social order is “sheer utopia” and to sneer at the socialists for promising everyone the right to receive from society, without any control over the labor of the individual citizen, any quantity of truffles, cars, pianos, etc. Even to this day, most bourgeois “savants” confine themselves to sneering in this way, thereby betraying both their ignorance and their selfish defence of capitalism.

Ignorance—for it has never entered the head of any socialist to “promise” that the higher phase of the development of communism will arrive; as for the greatest socialists’ forecast that it will arrive, it presupposes not the present ordinary run of people, who, like the seminary students in Pomyalovsky’s stories,² are capable of damaging the stocks of public wealth “just for fun,” and of demanding the impossible.

Until the “higher” phase of communism arrives, the socialists demand the strictest control by society and by the state over the measure of labor and the measure of consumption; but this control must start with the expropriation of the capitalists, with the establishment of workers’ control over the capitalists, and must be exercised not by a state of bureaucrats, but by a state of armed workers.

The selfish defence of capitalism by the bourgeois ideologists (and their hangers-on, like the Tseretelis, Chernovs, and Co.) consists in that they substitute arguing and talk about the distant future for the vital and burning question of present-day politics, namely, the expropriation of the capitalists, the conversion of all citizens into workers and other employees of one huge “syndicate”—the whole state—and the complete subordination of the entire work of this syndicate to a genuinely democratic state, the state of the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies.

In fact, when a learned professor, followed by the philistine, followed in turn by the Tseretelis and Chernovs, talks of wild utopias, of the demagogic promises of the Bolsheviks, of the impossibility of “introducing” socialism, it is the higher stage, or phase, of communism he has in mind, which no

one has ever promised or even thought to “introduce,” because, generally speaking, it cannot be “introduced.”

And this brings us to the question of the scientific distinction between socialism and communism which Engels touched on in his above-quoted argument about the incorrectness of the name “Social-Democrat.” Politically, the distinction between the first, or lower, and the higher phase of communism will in time, probably, be tremendous. But it would be ridiculous to recognize this distinction now, under capitalism, and only individual anarchists, perhaps, could invest it with primary importance (if there still are people among the anarchists who have learned nothing from the “Plekhanov” conversion of the Kropotkins, of Grave, Corneliseen, and other “stars” of anarchism into social-chauvinists or “anarcho-trenchists,” as Ghe, one of the few anarchists who have still preserved a sense of humor and a conscience, has put it).

But the scientific distinction between socialism and communism is clear. What is usually called socialism was termed by Marx the “first,” or lower, phase of communist society. Insofar as the means of production becomes common property, the word “communism” is also applicable here, providing we do not forget that this is not complete communism. The great significance of Marx’s explanations is that here, too, he consistently applies materialist dialectics, the theory of development, and regards communism as something which develops out of capitalism. Instead of scholastically invented, “concocted” definitions and fruitless disputes over words (What is socialism? What is communism?), Marx gives an analysis of what might be called the stages of the economic maturity of communism.

In its first phase, or first stage, communism cannot as yet be fully mature economically and entirely free from traditions or vestiges of capitalism. Hence the interesting phenomenon that communism in its first phase retains “the narrow horizon of bourgeois law.” Of course, bourgeois law in regard to the distribution of consumer goods inevitably presupposes the existence of the bourgeois state, for law is nothing without an apparatus capable of enforcing the observance of the rules of law.

It follows that under communism there remains for a time not only bourgeois law, but even the bourgeois state, without the bourgeoisie!

This may sound like a paradox or simply a dialectical conundrum of which Marxism is often accused by people who have not taken the slightest trouble to study its extraordinarily profound content.

But in fact, remnants of the old, surviving in the new, confront us in life at every step, both in nature and in society. And Marx did not arbitrarily insert a scrap of “bourgeois” law into communism, but indicated what

is economically and politically inevitable in a society emerging out of the womb of capitalism.

Democracy means equality. The great significance of the proletariat's struggle for equality and of equality as a slogan will be clear if we correctly interpret it as meaning the abolition of classes. But democracy means only formal equality. And as soon as equality is achieved for all members of society in relation to ownership of the means of production, that is, equality of labor and wages, humanity will inevitably be confronted with the question of advancing further from formal equality to actual equality, i.e., to the operation of the rule "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." By what stages, by means of what practical measures humanity will proceed to this supreme aim we do not and cannot know. But it is important to realize how infinitely mendacious is the ordinary bourgeois conception of socialism as something lifeless, rigid, fixed once and for all, whereas in reality only socialism will be the beginning of a rapid, genuine, truly mass forward movement, embracing first the majority and then the whole of the population, in all spheres of public and private life.

Democracy is of enormous importance to the working class in its struggle against the capitalists for its emancipation. But democracy is by no means a boundary not to be overstepped; it is only one of the stages on the road from feudalism to capitalism, and from capitalism to communism.

Democracy is a form of the state, it represents, on the one hand, the organized, systematic use of force against persons; but, on the other hand, it signifies the formal recognition of equality of citizens, the equal right of all to determine the structure of, and to administer, the state. This, in turn, results in the fact that, at a certain stage in the development of democracy, it first welds together the class that wages a revolutionary struggle against capitalism—the proletariat, and enables it to crush, smash to atoms, wipe off the face of the earth the bourgeois, even the republican-bourgeois, state machine, the standing army, the police and the bureaucracy and to substitute for them a more democratic state machine, but a state machine nevertheless, in the shape of armed workers who proceed to form a militia involving the entire population.

Here "quantity turns into quality": such a degree of democracy implies overstepping the boundaries of bourgeois society and beginning its socialist reorganization. If really all take part in the administration of the state, capitalism cannot retain its hold. The development of capitalism, in turn, creates the preconditions that enable really "all" to take part in the administration of the state. Some of these preconditions are: universal literacy, which has already been achieved in a number of the most advanced capitalist

countries, then the “training and disciplining” of millions of workers by the huge, complex, socialized apparatus of the postal service, railways, big factories, large-scale commerce, banking, etc., etc.

Given these economic preconditions, it is quite possible, after the overthrow of the capitalists and the bureaucrats, to proceed immediately, overnight, to replace them in the control over production and distribution, in the work of keeping account of labor and products, by the armed workers, by the whole of the armed population. (The question of control and accounting should not be confused with the question of the scientifically trained staff of engineers, agronomists, and so on. These gentlemen are working today in obedience to the wishes of the capitalists and will work even better tomorrow in obedience to the wishes of the armed workers.)

Accounting and control—that is *mainly* what is needed for the “smooth working,” for the proper functioning, of the *first phase* of communist society. *All* citizens are transformed into hired employees of the state, which consists of the armed workers. *All* citizens becomes employees and workers of a *single* countrywide state “syndicate.” All that is required is that they should work equally, do their proper share of work, and get equal pay; the accounting and control necessary for this have been *simplified* by capitalism to the utmost and reduced to the extraordinarily simple operations—which any literate person can perform—of supervising and recording, knowledge of the four rules of arithmetic, and issuing appropriate receipts.³

When the *majority* of the people begin independently and everywhere to keep such accounts and exercise such control over the capitalists (now converted into employees) and over the intellectual gentry who preserve their capitalist habits, this control will really become universal, general, and popular; and there will be no getting away from it, there will be “nowhere to go.”

The whole of society will have become a single office and a single factory, with equality of labor and pay.

But this “factory” discipline, which the proletariat, after defeating the capitalists, after overthrowing the exploiters, will extend to the whole of society, is by no means our ideal, or our ultimate goal. It is only a necessary *step* for thoroughly cleansing society of all the infamies and abominations of capitalist exploitation, *and for further* progress.

From the moment all members of society, or at least the vast majority, have learned to administer the state *themselves*, have taken this work into their own hands, have organized control over the insignificant capitalist minority, over the gentry who wish to preserve their capitalist habits and over the workers who have been thoroughly corrupted by capitalism—from this moment the need for government of any kind begins to disappear

altogether. The more complete the democracy, the nearer the moment when it becomes unnecessary. The more democratic the “state” which consists of the armed workers, and which is “no longer a state in the proper sense of the word,” the more rapidly *every form* of state begins to wither away.

For when *all* have learned to administer and actually to independently administer social production, independently keep accounts and exercise control over the parasites, the sons of the wealthy, the swindlers and other “guardians of capitalist traditions,” the escape from this popular accounting and control will inevitably become so incredibly difficult, such a rare exception, and will probably be accompanied by such swift and severe punishment (for the armed workers are practical men and not sentimental intellectuals, and they scarcely allow anyone to trifle with them), that the *necessity* of observing the simple, fundamental rules of the community will very soon become a *habit*.

Then the door will be thrown wide open for the transition from the first phase of communist society to its higher phase, and with it to the complete withering away of the state.

Notes

1. See Karl Marx, Critique of the Gotha Programme (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1973, p. 26).
Further below, on pp. 464, 470, 471–73 of this volume, Lenin is quoting from the same work by Marx (op. cit., pp. 26, 17, 19).
2. Reference is to the pupils of a seminary who won notoriety by their extreme ignorance and barbarous customs. They were portrayed by N. G. Pomyalovsky, a Russian author.
3. When the more important functions of the state are reduced to such accounting and control by the workers themselves, it will cease to be a “political state” and “public functions will lose their political character and become mere administrative functions” (cf. above, Chapter IV, 2, Engels’ controversy with the anarchists).

Chapter 6: The Vulgarization of Marxism by the Opportunists

The question of the relation of the state to the social revolution, and of the social revolution to the state, like the question of revolution generally, was given very little attention by the leading theoreticians and publicists of the Second International (1889–1914). But the most characteristic thing about the process of the gradual growth of opportunism that led to the collapse of the Second International in 1914 is the fact that even when these people were squarely faced with this question they tried to evade it or ignored it.

In general, it may be said that evasiveness over the question of the relation of the proletarian revolution to the state—an evasiveness which benefited and fostered opportunism—resulted in the distortion of Marxism and in its complete vulgarization.

To characterize this lamentable process, if only briefly, we shall take the most prominent theoreticians of Marxism: Plekhanov and Kautsky.

1. *Plekhanov's Controversy with the Anarchists*

Plekhanov wrote a special pamphlet on the relation of anarchism to socialism, entitled *Anarchism and Socialism*, which was published in German in 1894.

In treating this subject, Plekhanov contrived completely to evade the most urgent, burning, and most politically essential issue in the struggle against anarchism, namely, the relation of the revolution to the state, and the question of the state in general! His pamphlet falls into two distinct parts: one of them is historical and literary, and contains valuable material on the history of the ideas of Stirner, Proudhon, and others; the other is philistine, and contains a clumsy dissertation on the theme that an anarchist cannot be distinguished from a bandit.

It is a most amusing combination of subjects and most characteristic of Plekhanov's whole activity on the eve of the revolution and during the revolutionary period in Russia. In fact, in the years 1905 to 1917, Plekhanov revealed himself as a semi-doctrinaire and semi-philistine who, in politics, trailed in the wake of the bourgeoisie.

We have now seen how, in their controversy with the anarchists, Marx and Engels with the utmost thoroughness explained their views on the relation of revolution to the state. In 1891, in his foreword to Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme, Engels wrote that "we"—that is, Engels and Marx—"were at that time, hardly two years after the Hague Congress of the [First]

International,¹ engaged in the most violent struggle against Bakunin and his anarchists.”

The anarchists had tried to claim the Paris Commune as their “own,” so to say, as a collaboration of their doctrine; and they completely misunderstood its lessons and Marx’s analysis of these lessons. Anarchism has given nothing even approximating true answers to the concrete political questions: Must the old state machine be smashed? And what should be put in its place?

But to speak of “anarchism and socialism” while completely evading the question of the state, and disregarding the whole development of Marxism before and after the Commune, meant inevitably slipping into opportunism. For what opportunism needs most of all is that the two questions just mentioned should not be raised at all. That in itself is a victory for opportunism.

2. *Kautsky’s Controversy with the Opportunists*

Undoubtedly, an immeasurably larger number of Kautsky’s works have been translated into Russian than into any other language. It is not without reason that some German Social-Democrats say in jest that Kautsky is read more in Russia than in Germany (let us say, in parenthesis, that this jest has a far deeper historical meaning than those who first made it suspect. The Russian workers, by making in 1905 an unusually great and unprecedented demand for the best works of the best Social-Democratic literature and editions of these works in quantities unheard of in other countries, rapidly transplanted, so to speak, the enormous experience of a neighboring, more advanced country to the young soil of our proletarian movement).

Besides his popularization of Marxism, Kautsky is particularly known in our country for his controversy with the opportunists, with Bernstein at their head. One fact, however, is almost unknown, one which cannot be ignored if we set out to investigate how Kautsky drifted into the morass of unbelievably disgraceful confusion and defence of social-chauvinism during the supreme crisis of 1914–15. This fact is as follows: shortly before he came out against the most prominent representatives of opportunism in France (Millerand and Jaures) and in Germany (Bernstein), Kautsky betrayed very considerable vacillation. The Marxist *Zarya*,² which was published in Stuttgart in 1901–02, and advocated revolutionary proletarian views, was forced to enter into controversy with Kautsky and describe as “elastic” the half-hearted, evasive resolution, conciliatory towards the opportunists, that he proposed at the International Socialist Congress in Paris in 1900.³ Kautsky’s

letters published in Germany reveal no less hesitancy on his part before he took the field against Bernstein.

Of immeasurably greater significance, however, is the fact that, in his very controversy with the opportunists, in his formulation of the question and his manner of treating it, we can now see, as we study the history of Kautsky's latest betrayal of Marxism, his systematic deviation towards opportunism precisely on the question of the state.

Let us take Kautsky's first important work against opportunism, *Bernstein and the Social-Democratic Programme*. Kautsky refutes Bernstein in detail, but here is a characteristic thing:

Bernstein, in his *Premises of Socialism*, of Herostratean fame, accuses Marxism of "Blanquism" (an accusation since repeated thousands of times by the opportunists and liberal bourgeoisie in Russia against the revolutionary Marxists, the Bolsheviks). In this connection Bernstein dwells particularly on Marx's *The Civil War in France*, and tries, quite unsuccessfully, as we have seen, to identify Marx's views on the lessons of the Commune with those of Proudhon. Bernstein pays particular attention to the conclusion which Marx emphasized in his 1872 preface to the *Communist Manifesto*, namely, that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes."

This statement "pleased" Bernstein so much that he used it no less than three times in his book, interpreting it in the most distorted, opportunist way.

As we have seen, Marx meant that the working-class must smash, break, shatter (*sprengung*, explosion—the expression used by Engels) the whole state machine. But according to Bernstein it would appear as though Marx in these words warned the working class against excessive revolutionary zeal when seizing power.

A cruder more hideous distortion of Marx's idea cannot be imagined.

How, then, did Kautsky proceed in his most detailed refutation of Bernsteinism?

He refrained from analyzing the utter distortion of Marxism by opportunism on this point. He cited the above-quoted passage from Engels' preface to Marx's *Civil War* and said that according to Marx the working class cannot simply take over the ready-made state machinery, but that, generally speaking, it can take it over—and that was all. Kautsky did not say a word about the fact that Bernstein attributed to Marx the very opposite of Marx's real idea, that since 1852 Marx had formulated the task of the proletarian revolution as being to "smash" the state machine.

The result was that the most essential distinction between Marxism and opportunism on the subject of the tasks of the proletarian revolution was slurred over by Kautsky!

“We can quite safely leave the solution of the problems of the proletarian dictatorship of the future,” said Kautsky, writing “against” Bernstein. (p. 172, German edition)

This is not a polemic against Bernstein, but, in essence, a concession to him, a surrender to opportunism; for at present the opportunists ask nothing better than to “quite safely leave to the future” all fundamental questions of the tasks of the proletarian revolution.

From 1852 to 1891, or for 40 years, Marx and Engels taught the proletariat that it must smash the state machine. Yet, in 1899, Kautsky, confronted with the complete betrayal of Marxism by the opportunists on this point, fraudulently substituted for the question whether it is necessary to smash this machine the question for the concrete forms in which it is to be smashed, and then sought refuge behind the “indisputable” (and barren) philistine truth that concrete forms cannot be known in advance!!

A gulf separates Marx and Kautsky over their attitude towards the proletarian party’s task of training the working class for revolution.

Let us take the next, more mature, work by Kautsky, which was also largely devoted to a refutation of opportunist errors. It is his pamphlet, *The Social Revolution*. In this pamphlet, the author chose as his special theme the question of “the proletarian revolution” and “the proletarian regime.” He gave much that was exceedingly valuable, but he avoided the question of the state. Throughout the pamphlet the author speaks of the winning of state power—and no more; that is, he has chosen a formula which makes a concession to the opportunists, inasmuch as it admits the possibility of seizing power without destroying the state machine. The very thing which Marx in 1872 declared to be “obsolete” in the programme of the *Communist Manifesto*, is revived by Kautsky in 1902.

A special section in the pamphlet is devoted to the “forms and weapons of the social revolution.” Here Kautsky speaks of the mass political strike, of civil war, and of the “instruments of the might of the modern large state, its bureaucracy and the army”; but he does not say a word about what the Commune has already taught the workers. Evidently, it was not without reason that Engels issued a warning, particularly to the German socialists, against “superstitious reverence” for the state.

Kautsky treats the matter as follows: the victorious proletariat “will carry out the democratic programme,” and he goes on to formulate its clauses. But he does not say a word about the new material provided in 1871 on the subject of the replacement of bourgeois democracy by proletarian democracy. Kautsky disposes of the question by using such “impressive-sounding” banalities as:

“Still, it goes without saying that we shall not achieve supremacy under the present conditions. Revolution itself presupposes long and deep-going struggles, which, in themselves, will change our present political and social structure.”

Undoubtedly, this “goes without saying,” just as the fact that horses eat oats of the Volga flows into the Caspian. Only it is a pity that an empty and bombastic phrase about “deep-going” struggles is used to avoid a question of vital importance to the revolutionary proletariat, namely, what makes its revolution “deep-going” in relation to the state, to democracy, as distinct from previous, non-proletarian revolutions.

By avoiding this question, Kautsky in practice makes a concession to opportunism on this most essential point, although in words he declares stern war against it and stresses the importance of the “idea of revolution” (how much is this “idea” worth when one is afraid to teach the workers the concrete lessons of revolution?), or says, “revolutionary idealism before everything else,” or announces that the English workers are now “hardly more than petty bourgeois.”

“The most varied form of enterprises—bureaucratic [??], trade unionist, co-operative, private . . . can exist side by side in socialist society,” Kautsky writes. “. . . There are, for example, enterprises which cannot do without a bureaucratic [??] organization, such as the railways. Here the democratic organization may take the following shape: the workers elect delegates who form a sort of parliament, which establishes the working regulations and supervises the management of the bureaucratic apparatus. The management of other countries may be transferred to the trade unions, and still others may become co-operative enterprises.”

This argument is erroneous; it is a step backward compared with the explanations Marx and Engels gave in the seventies, using the lessons of the Commune as an example.

As far as the supposedly necessary “bureaucratic” organization is concerned, there is no difference whatever between a railway and any other enterprise in large-scale machine industry, any factory, large shop, or large-scale capitalist agricultural enterprise. The technique of all these enterprises

makes absolutely imperative the strictest discipline, the utmost precision on the part of everyone in carry out his allotted task, for otherwise the whole enterprise may come to a stop, or machinery or the finished product may be damaged. In all these enterprises the workers will, of course, “elect delegates who will form a sort of parliament.”

The whole point, however, is that this “sort of parliament” will not be a parliament in the sense of a bourgeois parliamentary institution. The whole point is that this “sort of parliament” will not merely “establish the working regulations and supervise the management of the bureaucratic apparatus,” as Kautsky, whose thinking does not go beyond the bounds of bourgeois parliamentarianism, imagines. In socialist society, the “sort of parliament” consisting of workers’ deputies will, of course, “establish the working regulations and supervise the management” of the “apparatus,” but this apparatus will not be “bureaucratic.”

Kautsky has not reflected at all on Marx’s words: “The Commune was a working, not parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time.”

Kautsky has not understood at all the difference between bourgeois parliamentarism, which combines democracy (not for the people) with bureaucracy (against the people), and proletarian democracy, which will take immediate steps to cut bureaucracy down to the roots, and which will be able to carry these measures through to the end, to the complete abolition of bureaucracy, to the introduction of complete democracy for the people.

Kautsky here displays the same old “superstitious reverence” for the state, and “superstitious belief” in bureaucracy.

Let us now pass to the last and best of Kautsky’s works against the opportunists, his pamphlet *The Road to Power* (which, I believe, has not been published in Russian, for it appeared in 1909, when reaction was at its height in our country). This pamphlet is a big step forward, since it does not deal with the revolutionary programme in general, as the pamphlet of 1899 against Bernstein, or with the tasks of the social revolution irrespective of the time of its occurrence, as the 1902 pamphlet, *The Social Revolution*; it deals with the concrete conditions which compels us to recognize that the “era of revolutions” is setting in.

The author explicitly points to the aggravation of class antagonisms in general and to imperialism, which plays a particularly important part in this respect. After the “revolutionary period of 1789–1871” in Western Europe, he says, a similar period began in the East in 1905. A world war is approaching with menacing rapidity. “It [the proletariat] can no longer talk of premature revolution.” “We have entered a revolutionary period.” The “revolutionary era is beginning.”

These statements are perfectly clear. This pamphlet of Kautsky's should serve as a measure of comparison of what the German Social-Democrats promised to be before the imperialist war and the depth of degradation to which they, including Kautsky himself, sank when the war broke out. "The present situation," Kautsky wrote in the pamphlet under survey, "is fraught with the danger that we [i.e., the German Social-Democrats] may easily appear to be more 'moderate' than we really are." It turned out that in reality the German Social-Democratic Party was much more moderate and opportunist than it appeared to be!

It is all the more characteristic, therefore, that although Kautsky so explicitly declared that the era of revolution had already begun, in the pamphlet which he himself said was devoted to an analysis of the "political revolution," he again completely avoided the question of the state.

These evasions of the question, these omissions and equivocations, inevitably added up to that complete swing-over to opportunism with which we shall now have to deal.

Kautsky, the German Social-Democrats' spokesman, seems to have declared: I abide by revolutionary views (1899), I recognize, above all, the inevitability of the social revolution of the proletariat (1902), I recognize the advent of a new era of revolutions (1909). Still, I am going back on what Marx said as early as 1852, since the question of the tasks of the proletarian revolution in relation to the state is being raised (1912).

It was in this point-blank form that the question was put in Kautsky's controversy with Pannekoek.

3. *Kautsky's Controversy with Pannekoek*

In opposing Kautsky, Pannekoek came out as one of the representatives of the "Left radical" trend which included Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Radek, and others. Advocating revolutionary tactics, they were united in the conviction that Kautsky was going over to the "Centre," which wavered in an unprincipled manner between Marxism and opportunism. This view was proved perfectly correct by the war, when this "Centrist" (wrongly called Marxist) trend, or Kautskyism, revealed itself in all its repulsive wretchedness.

In an article touching on the question of the state, entitled "Mass Action and Revolution" (*Neue Zeit*, 1912, Vol. XXX, 2), Pannekoek described kautsky's attitude as one of "passive radicalism," as "a theory of inactive expectancy." "Kautsky refuses to see the process of revolution," wrote Pannekoek (p.616). In presenting the matter in this way, Pannekoek

approached the subject which interests us, namely, the tasks of the proletarian revolution in relation to the state.

“The struggle of the proletariat,” he wrote, “is not merely a struggle against the bourgeoisie for state power, but a struggle *against* state power. . . . The content of this [the proletarian] revolution is the destruction and dissolution [Auflosung] of the instruments of power of the state with the aid of the instruments of power of the proletariat. (p. 544) “The struggle will cease only when, as the result of it, the state organization is completely destroyed. The organization of the majority will then have demonstrated its superiority by destroying the organization of the ruling minority.” (p. 548)

The formulation in which Pannekoek presented his ideas suffers from serious defects. But its meaning is clear nonetheless, and it is interesting to note how Kautsky combated it.

“Up to now,” he wrote, “the antithesis between the Social-Democrats and the anarchists has been that the former wished to win the state power while the latter wished to destroy it. Pannekoek wants to do both.” (p. 724)

Although Pannekoek’s exposition lacks precision and concreteness—not to speak of other shortcomings of his article which have no bearing on the present subject—Kautsky seized precisely on the point of principle raised by Pannekoek; and on this fundamental point of principle Kautsky completely abandoned the Marxist position and went over wholly to opportunism. His definition of the distinction between the Social-Democrats and the anarchists is absolutely wrong; he completely vulgarizes and distorts Marxism.

The distinction between Marxists and the anarchists is this: (1) The former, while aiming at the complete abolition of the state, recognize that this aim can only be achieved after classes have been abolished by the socialist revolution, as the result of the establishment of socialism, which leads to the withering away of the state. The latter want to abolish the state completely overnight, not understanding the conditions under which the state can be abolished. (2) The former recognize that after the proletariat has won political power it must completely destroy the old state machine and replace it by a new one consisting of an organization of the armed workers, after the type of the Commune. The latter, while insisting on the destruction of the state machine, have a very vague idea of what the proletariat will put in its place and how it will use its revolutionary power. The anarchists even deny that the revolutionary proletariat should use the state power, they reject its revolutionary dictatorship. (3) The former demand that the

proletariat be trained for revolution by utilizing the present state. The anarchists reject this.

In this controversy, it is not Kautsky but Pannekoek who represents Marxism, for it was Marx who taught that the proletariat cannot simply win state power in the sense that the old state apparatus passes into new hands, but must smash this apparatus, must break it and replace it by a new one.

Kautsky abandons Marxism for the opportunist camp, for this destruction of the state machine, which is utterly unacceptable to the opportunists, completely disappears from his argument, and he leaves a loophole for them in that “conquest” may be interpreted as the simple acquisition of a majority.

To cover up his distortion of Marxism, Kautsky behaves like a doctrinaire: he puts forward a “quotation” from Marx himself. In 1850, Marx wrote that a “resolute centralization of power in the hands of the state authority” was necessary, and Kautsky triumphantly asks: does Pannekoek want to destroy “Centralism”?

This is simply a trick, like Bernstein’s identification of the views of Marxism and Proudhonism on the subject of federalism as against centralism.

Kautsky’s “quotation” is neither here nor there. Centralism is possible with both the old and the new state machine. If the workers voluntarily unite their armed forces, this will be centralism, but it will be based on the “complete destruction” of the centralized state apparatus—the standing army, the police, and the bureaucracy. Kautsky acts like an outright swindler by evading the perfectly well-known arguments of Marx and Engels on the Commune and plucking out a quotation which has nothing to do with the point at issue.

“Perhaps he [Pannekoek],” Kautsky continues, “wants to abolish the state functions of the officials? But we cannot do without officials even in the party and trade unions, let alone in the state administration. And our programme does not demand the abolition of state officials, but that they be elected by the people. . . . We are discussing here not the form the administrative apparatus of the ‘future state’ will assume, but whether our political struggle abolishes [literally dissolves—auflost] the state power *before we have captured it*. [Kautsky’s italics] Which ministry with its officials could be abolished?” Then follows an enumeration of the ministries of education, justice, finance, and war. “No, not one of the present ministries will be removed by our political struggle against the government. . . . I repeat, in order to prevent misunderstanding: we are not discussing here the form the ‘future state’ will be given by the victorious Social-Democrats, but how the present state is changed by our opposition.” (p. 725)

This is an obvious trick. Pannekoek raised the question of revolution. Both the title of his article and the passages quoted above clearly indicate this. By skipping to the question of “opposition,” Kautsky substitutes the opportunist for the revolutionary point of view. What he says means: at present we are an opposition; what we shall be after we have captured power, that we shall see. Revolution has vanished! And that is exactly what the opportunists wanted.

The point at issue is neither opposition nor political struggle in general, but revolution. Revolution consists in the proletariat destroying the “administrative apparatus” and the whole state machine, replacing it by a new one, made up of the armed workers. Kautsky displays a “superstitious reverence” for “ministries”; but why can they not be replaced, say, by committees of specialists working under sovereign, all-powerful Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies?

The point is not at all whether the “ministries” will remain, or whether “committees of specialists” or some other bodies will be set up; that is quite immaterial. The point is whether the old state machine (bound by thousands of threads to the bourgeoisie and permeated through and through with routine and inertia) shall remain, or be destroyed and replaced by a new one. Revolution consists not in the new class commanding, governing with the aid of the old state machine, but in this class smashing this machine and commanding, governing with the aid of a new machine. Kautsky slurs over this basic idea of Marxism, or he does not understand it at all.

His question about officials clearly shows that he does not understand the lessons of the Commune or the teachings of Marx. “We cannot do without officials even in the party and the trade unions. . . .”

We cannot do without officials under capitalism, under the rule of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat is oppressed, the working people are enslaved by capitalism. Under capitalism, democracy is restricted, cramped, curtailed, mutilated by all the conditions of wage slavery, and the poverty and misery of the people. This and this alone is the reason why the functionaries of our political organizations and trade unions are corrupted—or rather tend to be corrupted—by the conditions of capitalism and betray a tendency to become bureaucrats, i.e., privileged persons divorced from the people and standing above the people.

That is the essence of bureaucracy; and until the capitalists have been expropriated and the bourgeoisie overthrown, even proletarian functionaries will inevitably be “bureaucratized” to a certain extent.

According to Kautsky, since elected functionaries will remain under socialism, so will officials, so will the bureaucracy! This is exactly where he is

wrong. Marx, referring to the example of the Commune, showed that under socialism functionaries will cease to be “bureaucrats,” to be “officials,” they will cease to be so in proportion as—in addition to the principle of election of officials—the principle of recall at any time is also introduced, as salaries are reduced to the level of the wages of the average workman, and as parliamentary institutions are replaced by “working bodies, executive and legislative at the same time.”

As a matter of fact, the whole of Kautsky’s argument against Pannekoek, and particularly the former’s wonderful point that we cannot do without officials even in our party and trade union organizations, is merely a repetition of Bernstein’s old “arguments” against Marxism in general. In his renegade book, *The Premises of Socialism*, Bernstein combats the ideas of “primitive” democracy, combats what he calls “doctrinaire democracy”: binding mandates, unpaid officials, impotent central representative bodies, etc. to prove that this “primitive” democracy is unsound, Bernstein refers to the experience of the British trade unions, as interpreted by the Webbs.⁴ Seventy years of development “in absolute freedom,” he says (p.137, German edition), convinced the trade unions that primitive democracy was useless, and they replaced it by ordinary democracy, i.e., parliamentarism combined with bureaucracy.

In reality, the trade unions did not develop “in absolute freedom” but in absolute capitalist slavery, under which, it goes without saying, a number of concessions to the prevailing evil, violence, falsehood, exclusion of the poor from the affairs of “higher” administration, “cannot be done without.” Under socialism much of “primitive” democracy will inevitably be revived, since, for the first time in the history of civilized society the mass of population will rise to taking an independent part, not only in voting and elections, but also in the everyday administration of the state. Under socialism all will govern in turn and will soon become accustomed to no one governing.

Marx’s critico-analytical genius saw in the practical measures of the Commune the turning-point which the opportunists fear and do not want to recognize because of their cowardice, because they do not want to break irrevocably with the bourgeoisie, and which the anarchists do not want to see, either because they are in a hurry or because they do not understand at all the conditions of great social changes. “We must not even think of destroying the old state machine; how can we do without ministries and officials” argues the opportunist, who is completely saturated with philistinism and who, at bottom, not only does not believe in revolution, in the creative power of revolution, but lives in mortal dread of it (like our Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries).

“We must think only of destroying the old state machine; it is no use probing into the concrete lessons of earlier proletarian revolutions and analyzing what to put in the place of what has been destroyed, and how,” argues the anarchist (the best of the anarchist, of course, and not those who, following the Kropotkins and Co., trail behind the bourgeoisie). Consequently, the tactics of the anarchist become the tactics of despair instead of a ruthlessly bold revolutionary effort to solve concrete problems while taking into account the practical conditions of the mass movement.

Marx teaches us to avoid both errors; he teaches us to act with supreme boldness in destroying the entire old state machine, and at the same time he teaches us to put the question concretely: the Commune was able in the space of a few weeks to start building a new, proletarian state machine by introducing such-and-such measures to provide wider democracy and to uproot bureaucracy. Let us learn revolutionary boldness from the Communards; let us see in their practical measures the outline of really urgent and immediately possible measures, and then, following this road, we shall achieve the complete destruction of bureaucracy.

The possibility of this destruction is guaranteed by the fact that socialism will shorten the working day, will raise the people to a new life, will create such conditions for the majority of the population as will enable everybody, without exception, to perform “state functions,” and this will lead to the complete withering away of every form of state in general.

“Its object [the object of the mass strike],” Kautsky continues, “cannot be to destroy the state power; its only object can be to make the government compliant on some specific question, or to replace a government hostile to the proletariat by one willing to meet it half-way [*entgegenkommende*] . . . But never, under no circumstances can it [that is, the proletarian victory over a hostile government] lead to the destruction of the state power; it can lead only to a certain shifting [*verschiebung*] of the balance of forces within the state power. . . . The aim of our political struggle remains, as in the past, the conquest of state power by winning a majority in parliament and by raising parliament to the ranks of master of the government.” (pp. 726, 727, 732)

This is nothing but the purest and most vulgar opportunism: repudiating revolution in deeds, while accepting it in words. Kautsky’s thoughts go no further than a “government . . . willing to meet the proletariat half-way”—a step backward to philistinism compared with 1847, when the *Communist Manifesto* proclaimed “the organization of the proletariat as the ruling class.”

Kautsky will have to achieve his beloved “unity” with the Scheidmanns, Plekhanovs, and Vanderveldes, all of whom agree to fight for a government “willing to meet the proletariat half-way.”

We, however, shall break with these traitors to socialism, and we shall fight for the complete destruction of the old state machine, in order that the armed proletariat itself *may become the government*. These are two vastly different things.

Kautsky will have to enjoy the pleasant company of the Legiens and Davids, Plekhanovs, Potresovs, Tseretelis, and Chernovs, who are quite willing to work for the “shifting of the balance of forces within the state power,” for “winning a majority in parliament,” and “raising parliament to the ranks of master of the government.” A most worthy object, which is wholly acceptable to the opportunists and which keeps everything within the bounds of the bourgeois parliamentary republic.

We, however, shall break with the opportunists; and the entire class-conscious proletariat will be with us in the fight—not to “shift the balance of forces,” but to overthrow the bourgeoisie, to destroy bourgeois parliamentarism, for a democratic republic after the type of the Commune, or a republic of Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, for the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

* * *

To the right of Kautsky in international socialism there are trends such as *Socialist Monthly*⁵ in Germany (Legien, David, Kolb, and many others, including the Scandinavian Stauning and Branting), Jaures’ followers and Vandervelde in France and Belgium; Turait, Treves, and other Right-wingers of the Italian Party; the Fabians and “Independents” (the Independent labor Party, which, in fact, has always been dependent on the Liberals) in Britain; and the like. All these gentry, who play a tremendous, very often a predominant role in the parliamentary work and the press of their parties, repudiate outright the dictatorship of the proletariat and pursue a policy of undisguised opportunism. In the eyes of these gentry, the “dictatorship” of the proletariat “contradicts” democracy!! There is really no essential distinction between them and the petty-bourgeois democrats.

Taking this circumstance into consideration, we are justified in drawing the conclusion that the Second International, that is, the overwhelming majority of its official representatives, has completely sunk into opportunism. The experience of the Commune has been not only ignored but distorted. far from inculcating in the workers’ minds the idea that the time is nearing when they must act to smash the old state machine, replace it by a new one, and in this way make their political rule the foundation for the socialist reorganization of society, they have actually preached to the masses

the very opposite and have depicted the “conquest of power” in a way that has left thousands of loopholes for opportunism.

The distortion and hushing up of the question of the relation of the proletarian revolution to the state could not but play an immense role at a time when states, which possess a military apparatus expanded as a consequence of imperialist rivalry, have become military monsters which are exterminating millions of people in order to settle the issue as to whether Britain or Germany—this or that finance capital—is to rule the world.*

Notes

* The MS. continues as follows:

Chapter VII: The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917

The subject indicated in the title of this chapter is so vast that volumes could be written about it. In the present pamphlet we shall have to confine ourselves, naturally, to the most important lessons provided by experience, those bearing directly upon the tasks of the proletariat in the revolution with regard to state power. [Here the manuscript breaks off—Ed.]

1. The Hague Congress of the First international sat from September 2–7, 1872. It was attended by 65 delegates, among whom were Marx and Engels. The powers of the General Council and the political activity of the proletariat were among the items on the agenda. The Congress deliberations were marked throughout by a sharp struggle against the Bakuninists. The Congress passed a resolution extending the General Council’s powers. Its resolution “On the Political Activity of the Proletariat” stated that the proletariat should organise a political party of its own to ensure the triumph of the social revolution and that the winning of political power was becoming its great task. The Congress expelled Bakunin and Guillaume from the International as disorganisers and founders of a new, anti-proletarian party.
2. *Zarya* (Dawn)—a Marxist scientific and political journal published in Stuttgart in 1901–02 by the editors of *Iskra*. Four issues appeared in three instalments.
3. Reference is to the Fifth World Congress of the Second international, which met in Paris from September 23 to 27, 1900. On the fundamental issue, “The Winning of Political Power, and Alliances with Bourgeois Parties,” whose discussion was prompted by A. Millerand becoming a member of the Valdeck-Rousseau counter-revolutionary government, the Congress carried a motion tabled by Kautsky. The resolution said that “the entry of a single Socialist into a bourgeois Ministry cannot be considered as the normal beginning for winning political power: it can never be anything but a temporary and exceptional

makeshift in an emergency situation.” Afterwards opportunists frequently referred to this point to justify their collaboration with the bourgeoisie.

Zarya published (No. 1, April 1901) an article by Plekhanov entitled “A Few Words About the Latest World Socialist Congress in Paris. An Open Letter to the Comrades Who Have Empowered Me,” which sharply criticised Kautsky’s resolution.

4. This refers to Sydney and Beatrice Webb, *Industrial Democracy*.
5. *Socialist Monthly* (*Sozialistische Monatshefte*)—the principal journal of the opportunists among the German Social-Democrats, a periodical of international opportunism. It was published in Berlin from 1897 to 1933. During the world imperialist war of 1914–18 it took a social-chauvinist stand.

PostScript to the First Edition

This pamphlet was written in August and September 1917. I had already drawn up the plan for the next, the seventh chapter, “The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917.” Apart from the title, however, I had no time to write a single line of the chapter; I was “interrupted” by a political crisis—the eve of the October revolution of 1917. Such an “interruption” can only be welcomed; but the writing of the second part of this pamphlet (“The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917”) will probably have to be put off for a long time. It is more pleasant and useful to go through the “experience of revolution” than to write about it.

The Author

Petrograd

November 30, 1917

“Left-Wing” Communism: An Infantile Disorder

Study and Discussion Guide

Before you read the text, make a list of the relevant political organizations, cultural associations, unions, cooperatives, and mass organizations in your area.

I

1. What is the main purpose of this introduction?
2. Why does Lenin include the excerpt from Kautsky?

II

1. What two reasons does Lenin give for the Bolshevik's success (their retention of state power)?
2. How is the discipline of the revolutionary party built and maintained?
3. How is this different from standard conceptions of discipline?

III

1. In this section Lenin divides the 15 years of “practical history” the Bolsheviks went through that allowed them to succeed. What is the significance of each period?
2. What do the non-revolutionary periods have in common?
3. What do the revolutionary periods have in common?

IV

1. Other than social-chauvinism, what was the Bolshevik’s other enemy within the working-class movement?
2. What were the Bolshevik’s three critiques of the Socialist Revolutionaries?
3. Why were the “Left” Bolsheviks expelled from the Party in 1908?
4. Why was the parliamentary boycott in 1905 correct? How did the Bolshevik’s determine this?
5. What was the primary thing the Bolshevik’s gained from this boycott?
6. What about the 1906, 1907, and 1908 boycotts? Were these correct? Why or why not?
7. Why were the Bolshevik’s able to persevere during the period of 1908–1914?
8. Not all compromises are the same. What are the two kinds that Lenin distinguishes between? How can you tell them apart?

V

1. What are the historical and material reasons for the “Left” opposition within the German Communist Party?
2. What does Lenin say the “abolition of classes” means, and how were the Bolshevik’s pursuing it?
3. What are the potentially damaging consequences of illegal work and keeping leadership secret? What example does Lenin give?
4. Agent provocateurs are to be expected. What is one way that the party combats their influence and effect?

VI

1. How did the Bolshevik Party relate to the unions and the workers?
2. During the revolutionary struggle, how did the Bolshevik’s reach out to the masses?

3. What specific examples does Lenin give? What general conclusion can be drawn from these examples about working with the masses?
4. Why does it not make sense to talk about “from below” *or* “from above,” or about leaders *or* masses?
5. Can the proletariat develop without unions?
6. What does Lenin mean when he says that strikes are schools?
7. In what ways are unions important to revolution?
8. What is the effect of refusing to work in trade unions under reactionary leadership?
9. If you want to help the masses, where do you have to work?
10. What’s the most extreme example Lenin gives of how far the Bolsheviks went to reach the masses of workers?
11. Can you think of a comparable possible scenario today? What would it look like?
12. Given all that Lenin has said about working in reactionary organizations, what approach should we take to events like the Women’s March?

VII

1. What is the difference between parliament being obsolete in a propaganda (political) sense vs. the practical sense?
2. What does Lenin think about the role of criticism within the party?
3. Lenin notes that, “the ‘Lefts’ in Germany have mistaken *their desire*, their politico-ideological attitude, for objective reality.” What does he mean by this?
4. Why might it be tempting to mistake your desire for objective reality? How can you guard against it?
5. How did the Bolsheviks relate to the Constituent Assembly before and after the October Revolution?
6. What is the final conclusion Lenin draws?
7. What can we learn from Russia’s “lengthy, painful and sanguinary” experience between 1903–1917?

VIII

1. What does Engels say the difference is between the German Communists and the Blanquists?
2. Lenin returns to the two kinds of compromises he distinguished earlier. How do these two different compromises show up in strikes?
3. Can we formulate a rule concerning compromises? Why or why not?
4. Why does Lenin compare the war against the bourgeoisie with the ascent of a mountain? What lessons do you draw from this?

5. Should we work to win over masses even if those masses are wavering and unreliable?
6. Should our attitude toward them change after a revolution?
7. Between 1903–1912, what compromise did the Bolsheviks make? How did they approach that compromise in practice?
8. During the October Revolution the Bolsheviks entered into another compromise. What was this, and how did they approach it in practice?
9. How should communists relate to the vacillations of the petty-bourgeois democrats?
10. Can you think of a current example of such a group? What would it look like to relate to them in such a way?

IX

1. What does it mean to say “politics is a science and an art that does not fall from the skies or come gratis”?
2. Is propaganda alone enough to bring about a revolution? If not, what else is needed?
3. What significance does this have for education?
4. Lenin gives a short formula for what is required for a revolution. What two things are required? What does this have to do with the pamphlet?
5. Lenin writes, “I want to support Henderson in the same way as the rope supports a hanged man.” What does he mean by this?

X

1. What is “the fundamental law of all great revolutions?”
2. What does this law mean in practical terms?
3. What are the difficulties of being a revolutionary in non-revolutionary times?
4. Lenin identifies “only one thing” the communist movement is lacking. What is it?
5. If you had to add a section to this pamphlet about social media, what would it say?

“Left-Wing” Communism: An Infantile Disorder

Written: April–May 1920

Source: Collected Works, Volume 31, pp. 17–118

In What Sense We Can Speak of the International Significance of the Russian Revolution

In the first months after the proletariat in Russia had won political power (October 25 [November 7], 1917), it might have seemed that the enormous difference between backward Russia and the advanced countries of Western Europe would lead to the proletarian revolution in the latter countries bearing very little resemblance to ours. We now possess quite considerable international experience, which shows very definitely that certain fundamental features of our revolution have a significance that is not local, or peculiarly national, or Russian alone, but international. I am not speaking here of international significance in the broad sense of the term: not merely several but all the primary features of our revolution, and many of its secondary features, are of international significance in the meaning of its effect: on all countries. I am speaking of it in the narrowest sense of the word, taking international significance to mean the international validity or the historical inevitability of a repetition, on an international scale, of what

Learning with Lenin, pages 551–639

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has taken place in our country. It must be admitted that certain fundamental features of our revolution do possess that significance.

It would, of course, be grossly erroneous to exaggerate this truth and to extend it beyond certain fundamental features of our revolution. It would also be erroneous to lose sight of the fact that, soon after the victory of the proletarian revolution in at least one of the advanced countries, a sharp change will probably come about: Russia will cease to be the model and will once again become a backward country (in the “Soviet” and the socialist sense).

At the present moment in history, however, it is the Russian model that reveals to *all* countries something—and something highly significant—of their near and inevitable future. Advanced workers in all lands have long realised this; more often than not, they have grasped it with their revolutionary class instinct rather than realised it. Herein lies the international “significance” (in the narrow sense of the word) of Soviet power, and of the fundamentals of Bolshevik theory and tactics. The “revolutionary” leaders of the Second International, such as Kautsky in Germany and Otto Bauer and Friedrich Adler in Austria, have failed to understand this, which is why they have proved to be reactionaries and advocates of the worst kind of opportunism and social treachery. Incidentally, the anonymous pamphlet entitled *The World Revolution (Weltrevolution)*, which appeared in Vienna in 1919 (*Sozialistische Bücherei*, Heft 11; Ignaz Brand), very clearly reveals their entire thinking and their entire range of ideas, or, rather, the full extent of their stupidity, pedantry, baseness and betrayal of working-class interests—and that, moreover, under the guise of “defending” the idea of “world revolution.”

We shall, however, deal with this pamphlet in greater detail some other time. We shall here note only one more point: in bygone days, when he was still a Marxist and not a renegade, Kautsky, dealing with the question as an historian, foresaw the possibility of a situation arising in which the revolutionary spirit of the Russian proletariat would provide a model to Western Europe. This was in 1902, when Kautsky wrote an article for the revolutionary *Iskra*, [1] entitled “The Slavs and Revolution.” Here is what he wrote in the article:

“At the present time [in contrast with 1848] it would seem that not only have the Slavs entered the ranks of the revolutionary nations, but that the centre of revolutionary thought and revolutionary action is shifting more and more to the Slavs. The revolutionary centre is shifting from the West to the East. In the first half of the nineteenth century it was located in France, at times in England. In 1848 Germany too joined the ranks of the revolu-

tionary nations The new century has begun with events which suggest the idea that we are approaching a further shift of the revolutionary centre, namely, to Russia Russia, which has borrowed so much revolutionary initiative from the West, is now perhaps herself ready to serve the West as a source of revolutionary energy. The Russian revolutionary movement that is now flaring up will perhaps prove to be the most potent means of exorcising the spirit of flabby philistinism and coldly calculating politics that is beginning to spread in our midst, and it may cause the fighting spirit and the passionate devotion to our great ideals to flare up again. To Western Europe, Russia has long ceased to be a bulwark of reaction and absolutism. I think the reverse is true today. Western Europe is becoming Russia’s bulwark of reaction and absolutism The Russian revolutionaries might perhaps have coped with the tsar long ago had they not been compelled at the same time to fight his ally—European capital. Let us hope that this time they will succeed in coping with both enemies, and that the new ‘Holy Alliance’ will collapse more rapidly than its predecessors did. However the present struggle in Russia may end, the blood and suffering of the martyrs whom, unfortunately, it will produce in too great numbers, will not have been in vain. They will nourish the shoots of social revolution throughout the civilised world and make them grow more luxuriantly and rapidly. In 1848 the Slavs were a killing frost which blighted the flowers of the people’s spring. Perhaps they are now destined to be the storm that will break the ice of reaction and irresistibly bring with it a new and happy spring for the nations” (Karl Kautsky, “The Slavs and Revolution,” *Iskra*, Russian Social-Democratic revolutionary newspaper, No. 18, March 10, 1902).

How well Karl Kautsky wrote eighteen years ago!

Note

1. The old *Iskra*—the first illegal Marxist newspaper in Russia. It was founded by V. I. Lenin in 1900, and played a decisive role in the formation of revolutionary Marxist party of the working class in Russia. *Iskra*’s first issue appeared in Leipzig in December 1900, the following issues being brought out in Munich, and then beginning with July 1902—in London, and after the spring of 1903—in Geneva.

On Lenin’s initiative and with his participation, the editorial staff drew up a draft of the Party’s Programme (published in *Iskra* No. 21), and prepared the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P., at which the Russian revolutionary Marxist party was actually founded.

Soon after the Second Congress, the Mensheviks, supported by Plekhanov, won control of *Iskra*. Beginning with issue No. 52, *Iskra* ceased to be an organ of the revolutionary Marxists.

An Essential Condition of the Bolsheviks' Success

It is, I think, almost universally realised at present that the Bolsheviks could not have retained power for two and a half months, let alone two and a half years, without the most rigorous and truly iron discipline in our Party, or without the fullest and unreserved support from the entire mass of the working class, that is, from all thinking, honest, devoted and influential elements in it, capable of leading the backward strata or carrying the latter along with them.

The dictatorship of the proletariat means a most determined and most ruthless war waged by the new class against a *more powerful* enemy, the bourgeoisie, whose resistance is increased *tenfold* by their overthrow (even if only in a single country), and whose power lies, not only in the strength of international capital, the strength and durability of their international connections, but also in the *force of habit*, in the strength of *small-scale production*. Unfortunately, small-scale production is still widespread in the world, and small-scale production *engenders* capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously, and on a mass scale. All these reasons make the dictatorship of the proletariat necessary, and victory over the bourgeoisie is impossible without a long, stubborn and desperate life-and-death struggle which calls for tenacity, discipline, and a single and inflexible will.

I repeat: the experience of the victorious dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia has clearly shown even to those who are incapable of thinking or have had no occasion to give thought to the matter that absolute centralisation and rigorous discipline of the proletariat are an essential condition of victory over the bourgeoisie.

This is often dwelt on. However, not nearly enough thought is given to what it means, and under what conditions it is possible. Would it not be better if the salutations addressed to the Soviets and the Bolsheviks were *more frequently* accompanied by a *profound analysis* of the reasons *why* the Bolsheviks have been able to build up the discipline needed by the revolutionary proletariat?

As a current of political thought and as a political party, Bolshevism has existed since 1903. Only the history of Bolshevism during the *entire* period of its existence can satisfactorily explain why it has been able to build up and maintain, under most difficult conditions, the iron discipline needed for the victory of the proletariat.

The first questions to arise are: how is the discipline of the proletariat's revolutionary party maintained? How is it tested? How is it reinforced? First,

by the class-consciousness of the proletarian vanguard and by its devotion to the revolution, by its tenacity, self-sacrifice and heroism. Second, by its ability to link up, maintain the closest contact, and—if you wish—merge, in certain measure, with the broadest masses of the working people—primarily with the proletariat, *but also with the non-proletarian* masses of working people. Third, by the correctness of the political leadership exercised by this vanguard, by the correctness of its political strategy and tactics, provided the broad masses have seen, *from their own experience*, that they are correct. Without these conditions, discipline in a revolutionary party really capable of being the party of the advanced class, whose mission it is to overthrow the bourgeoisie and transform the whole of society, cannot be achieved. Without these conditions, all attempts to establish discipline inevitably fall flat and end up in phrasemongering and clowning. On the other hand, these conditions cannot emerge at once. They are created only by prolonged effort and hard-won experience. Their creation is facilitated by a correct revolutionary theory, which, in its turn, is not a dogma, but assumes final shape only in close connection with the practical activity of a truly mass and truly revolutionary movement.

The fact that, in 1917–20, Bolshevism was able, under unprecedentedly difficult conditions, to build up and successfully maintain the strictest centralisation and iron discipline was due simply to a number of historical peculiarities of Russia.

On the one hand, Bolshevism arose in 1903 on a very firm foundation of Marxist theory. The correctness of this revolutionary theory, and of it alone, has been proved, not only by world experience throughout the nineteenth century, but especially by the experience of the seekings and vacillations, the errors and disappointments of revolutionary thought in Russia. For about half a century—approximately from the forties to the nineties of the last century—progressive thought in Russia, oppressed by a most brutal and reactionary tsarism, sought eagerly for a correct revolutionary theory, and followed with the utmost diligence and thoroughness each and every “last word” in this sphere in Europe and America. Russia achieved Marxism—the only correct revolutionary theory—through the *agonyshe* experienced in the course of half a century of unparalleled torment and sacrifice, of unparalleled revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, devoted searching, study, practical trial, disappointment, verification, and comparison with European experience. Thanks to the political emigration caused by tsarism, revolutionary Russia, in the second half of the nineteenth century, acquired a wealth of international links and excellent information on the forms and theories of the world revolutionary movement, such as no other country possessed.

On the other hand, Bolshevism, which had arisen on this granite foundation of theory, went through fifteen years of practical history (1903–17) unequalled anywhere in the world in its wealth of experience. During those fifteen years, no other country knew anything even approximating to that revolutionary experience, that rapid and varied succession of different forms of the movement—legal and illegal, peaceful and stormy, underground and open, local circles and mass movements, and parliamentary and terrorist forms. In no other country has there been concentrated, in so brief a period, such a wealth of forms, shades, and methods of struggle of *all* classes of modern society, a struggle which, owing to the backwardness of the country and the severity of the tsarist yoke, matured with exceptional rapidity, and assimilated most eagerly and successfully the appropriate “last word” of American and European political experience.

The Principal Stages in the History of Bolshevism

The Years of Preparation for Revolution (1903–05)

The approach of a great storm was sensed everywhere. All classes were in a state of ferment and preparation. Abroad, the press of the political exiles discussed the theoretical aspects of *all* the fundamental problems of the revolution. Representatives of the three main classes, of the three principal political trends—the liberal-bourgeois, the petty-bourgeois-democratic (concealed behind “social-democratic” and “social-revolutionary” labels [2]), and the proletarian-revolutionary—anticipated and prepared the impending open class struggle by waging a most bitter struggle on issues of programme and tactics. *All* the issues on which the masses waged an armed struggle in 1905–07 and 1917–20 can (and should) be studied, in their embryonic form, in the press of the period. Among these three main trends there were, of course, a host of intermediate, transitional or half-hearted forms. It would be more correct to say that those political and ideological trends which were genuinely of a class nature crystallised in the struggle of press organs, parties, factions and groups; the classes were forging the requisite political and ideological weapons for the impending battles.

The years of revolution (1905–07). All classes came out into the open. All programmatic and tactical views were tested by the action of the masses. In its extent and acuteness, the strike struggle had no parallel anywhere in the world. The economic strike developed into a political strike, and the latter into insurrection. The relations between the proletariat, as the leader, and the vacillating and unstable peasantry, as the led, were tested in

practice. The Soviet form of organisation came into being in the spontaneous development of the struggle. The controversies of that period over the significance of the Soviets anticipated the great struggle of 1917–20. The alternation of parliamentary and non-parliamentary forms of struggle, of the tactics of boycotting parliament and that of participating in parliament, of legal and illegal forms of struggle, and likewise their interrelations and connections—all this was marked by an extraordinary wealth of content. As for teaching the fundamentals of political science to masses and leaders, to classes and parties alike, each month of this period was equivalent to an entire year of “peaceful” and “constitutional” development. Without the “dress rehearsal” of 1905, the victory of the October Revolution in 1917 would have been impossible.

The years of reaction (1907–10). Tsarism was victorious. All the revolutionary and opposition parties were smashed. Depression, demoralisation, splits, discord, defection, and pornography took the place of politics. There was an ever greater drift towards philosophical idealism; mysticism became the garb of counter-revolutionary sentiments. At the same time, however, it was this great defeat that taught the revolutionary parties and the revolutionary class a real and very useful lesson, a lesson in historical dialectics, a lesson in an understanding of the political struggle, and in the art and science of waging that struggle. It is at moments of need that one learns who one’s friends are. Defeated armies learn their lesson.

Victorious tsarism was compelled to speed up the destruction of the remnants of the pre-bourgeois, patriarchal mode of life in Russia. The country’s development along bourgeois lines proceeded apace. Illusions that stood outside and above class distinctions, illusions concerning the possibility of avoiding capitalism, were scattered to the winds. The class struggle manifested itself in a quite new and more distinct way.

The revolutionary parties had to complete their education. They were learning how to attack. Now they had to realise that such knowledge must be supplemented with the knowledge of how to retreat in good order. They had to realise—and it is from bitter experience that the revolutionary class learns to realise this—that victory is impossible unless one has learned how to attack and retreat properly. Of all the defeated opposition and revolutionary parties, the Bolsheviks effected the most orderly retreat, with the least loss to their “army,” with its core best preserved, with the least significant splits (in point of depth and incurability), with the least demoralisation, and in the best condition to resume work on the broadest scale and in the most correct and energetic manner. The Bolsheviks achieved this only because they ruthlessly exposed and expelled the revolutionary phrase-mongers, those who did not wish to understand that one had to

retreat, that one had to know how to retreat, and that one had absolutely to learn how to work legally in the most reactionary of parliaments, in the most reactionary of trade unions, co-operative and insurance societies and similar organisations.

The years of revival (1910–14). At first progress was incredibly slow, then, following the Lena events of 1912, it became somewhat more rapid. Overcoming unprecedented difficulties, the Bolsheviks thrust back the Mensheviks, whose role as bourgeois agents in the working-class movement was clearly realised by the entire bourgeoisie after 1905, and whom the bourgeoisie therefore supported in a thousand ways against the Bolsheviks. But the Bolsheviks would never have succeeded in doing this had they not followed the correct tactics of combining illegal work with the utilisation of “legal opportunities,” which they made a point of doing. In the elections to the arch-reactionary Duma, the Bolsheviks won the full support of the worker curia.

The First Imperialist World War (1914–17). Legal parliamentarianism, with an extremely reactionary “parliament,” rendered most useful service to the Bolsheviks, the party of the revolutionary proletariat. The Bolshevik deputies were exiled to Siberia. [3] All shades of social-imperialism social-chauvinism, social-patriotism, inconsistent and consistent internationalism, pacifism, and the revolutionary repudiation of pacifist illusions found full expression in the Russian émigré press. The learned fools and the old women of the Second International, who had arrogantly and contemptuously turned up their noses at the abundance of “factions” in the Russian socialist movement and at the bitter struggle they were waging among themselves, were unable—when the war deprived them of their vaunted “legality” in *all* the advanced countries—to organise anything even approximating such a free (illegal) interchange of views and such a free (illegal) evolution of correct views as the Russian revolutionaries did in Switzerland and in a number of other countries. That was why both the avowed social-patriots and the “Kautskyites” of all countries proved to be the worst traitors to the proletariat. One of the principal reasons why Bolshevism was able to achieve victory in 1917–20 was that, since the end of 1914, it has been ruthlessly exposing the baseness and vileness of social-chauvinism and “Kautskyism” (to which Longuetism [4,5] in France, the views of the Fabians [6] and the leaders of the Independent Labour Party [7] in Britain, of Turati in Italy, etc., correspond), the masses later becoming more and more convinced, from their own experience, of the correctness of the Bolshevik views.

The second revolution in Russia (February to October 1917). Tsarism’s senility and obsolescence had (with the aid of the blows and hardships of a most agonising war) created an incredibly destructive force directed against

it. Within a few days Russia was transformed into a democratic bourgeois republic, freer—in war conditions—than any other country in the world. The leaders of the opposition and revolutionary parties began to set up a government, just as is done in the most “strictly parliamentary” republics; the fact that a man had been a leader of an opposition party in parliament—even in a most reactionary parliament—*facilitated* his subsequent role in the revolution.

In a few weeks the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries thoroughly assimilated all the methods and manners, the arguments and sophistries of the European heroes of the Second International, of the ministerialists [8] and other opportunist riff-raff. Everything we now read about the Scheidemanns and Noskes, about Kautsky and Hilferding, Renner and Austerlitz, Otto Bauer and Fritz Adler, Turati and Longuet, about the Fabians and the leaders of the Independent Labour Party of Britain—all this seems to us (and indeed is) a dreary repetition, a reiteration, of an old and familiar refrain. We have already witnessed all this in the instance of the Mensheviks. As history would have it, the opportunists of a backward country became the forerunners of the opportunists in a number of advanced countries.

If the heroes of the Second International have all gone bankrupt and have disgraced themselves over the question of the significance and role of the Soviets and Soviet rule; if the leaders of the three very important parties which have now left the Second International (namely, the German Independent Social-Democratic Party, [9] the French Longuetists and the British Independent Labour Party) have disgraced themselves and become entangled in this question in a most “telling” fashion; if they have all shown themselves slaves to the prejudices of petty-bourgeois democracy (fully in the spirit of the petty-bourgeois of 1848 who called themselves “Social-Democrats”)—then we can only say that we have *already* witnessed *all this* in the instance of the Mensheviks. As history would have it, the Soviets came into being in Russia in 1905; from February to October 1917 they were turned to a false use by the Mensheviks, who went bankrupt because of their inability to understand the role and significance of the Soviets; today the idea of Soviet power has emerged *throughout the world* and is spreading among the proletariat of all countries with extraordinary speed. Like our Mensheviks, the old heroes of the Second International are *everywhere* going bankrupt, because they are incapable of understanding the role and significance of the Soviets. Experience has proved that, on certain very important questions of the proletarian revolution, *all* countries will inevitably have to do what Russia has done.

Despite views that are today often to be met with in Europe and America, the Bolsheviks began their victorious struggle against the parliamentary

and (in fact) bourgeois republic and against the Mensheviks in a very cautious manner, and the preparations they made for it were by no means simple. At the beginning of the period mentioned, we did *not* call for the overthrow of the government but explained that it was impossible to overthrow it *without* first changing the composition and the temper of the Soviets. We did not proclaim a boycott of the bourgeois parliament, the Constituent Assembly, but said—and following the April (1917) Conference of our Party began to state officially in the name of the Party—that a bourgeois republic with a Constituent Assembly would be better than a bourgeois republic without a Constituent Assembly, but that a “workers’ and peasants’ ” republic, a Soviet republic, would be better than any bourgeois-democratic, parliamentary republic. Without such thorough, circumspect and long preparations, we could not have achieved victory in October 1917, or have consolidated that victory.

Notes

2. The reference is to the Mensheviks (who formed the Right and opportunist wing of Social-Democracy in the R.S.D.L.P.), and to the Socialist-Revolutionaries.
3. The reference is to the Bolshevik deputies to the Fourth Duma, namely, A. Y. Badayev, M. K. Muranov, G. I. Petrovsky, F. N. Samoilov and N. R. Shagov. At the Duma’s session of July 26 (August 8), 1914, at which the representatives of all the bourgeois-landowner Duma groups approved tsarist Russia’s entry into the imperialist war, the Bolshevik Duma group declared a firm protest; they refused to vote for war credits and launched revolutionary propaganda among the people. In November 1914 the Bolshevik deputies were arrested, in February 1915 they were brought to trial, and exiled for life to Turukhansk Territory in Eastern Siberia. The courageous speeches made by the Bolshevik deputies at their trial, exposing the autocracy, played an important part in anti-war propaganda and in revolutionising the toiling masses.
4. *Longuetism*—the Centrist trend within the French Socialist Party, headed by Jean Longuet. During the First World War of 1914–18, the Longuetists conducted a policy of conciliation with the social-chauvinists. They rejected the revolutionary struggle and came out for “defence of country” in the imperialist war. Lenin called them petty-bourgeois nationalists.
5. After the victory of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia, the Longuetists called themselves supporters of the proletarian dictatorship, but in fact they remained opposed to it. In December 1920 the Longuetists, together with the avowed reformists, broke away from the Party and joined the so-called Two-and-a-Half International.
6. *Fabians*—members of the Fabian Society, a British reformist organisation founded in 1884. The membership consisted, in the main, of bourgeois intellectuals. The Fabians denied the necessity of the proletariat’s class struggle and the socialist revolution, and contended that the transition from capitalism to socialism was possible only through petty reforms and the gradual reor-

ganisation of society. In 1900 the Fabian Society joined the Labour Party. The Fabians are characterised by Lenin in “British Pacifism and British Dislike of Theory” (see present edition, Vol. 21, pp. 260–65) and elsewhere.

7. The *Independent Labour Party of Britain* (I.L.P.)—a reformist organisation founded in 1893 by leaders of the “new trade unions,” in conditions of a revival of the strike struggle and the mounting movement for British working-class independence of the bourgeois parties. The I.L.P. included members of the “new trade unions” and those of a number of the old trade unions, as well as intellectuals and petty bourgeoisie who were under the influence of the Fabians. The I.L.P. was headed by James Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald. From its very inception, the I.L.P. took a bourgeois-reformist stand, laying particular stress on parliamentary forms of struggle and parliamentary deals with the Liberals. Lenin wrote of the I.L.P. that “in reality it is an opportunist party always dependent on the bourgeoisie.”
8. *Ministerialism* (or “ministerial socialism,” or else Millerandism)—the opportunist tactic of socialists’ participation in reactionary bourgeois governments. The term appeared when in 1899, the French socialist Millerand joined the bourgeois government of Waldeck-Rousseau.
9. The *Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany*—a Centrist party founded in April 1917.

A split took place at the Congress of the Independent Social-Democratic Party, held in Halle in October 1920, the majority joining the Communist Party of Germany in December 1920. The Right wing formed a separate party, retaining the old name of the Independent Social-Democratic Party. In 1922 the “Independents” re-joined the German Social-Democratic Party.

The Struggle Against Which Enemies Within the Working-Class Movement Helped Bolshevism Develop, Gain Strength, and Become Steeled

First and foremost, the struggle against opportunism which in 1914 definitely developed into social-chauvinism and definitely sided with the bourgeoisie, against the proletariat. Naturally, this was Bolshevism's principal enemy within the working-class movement. It still remains the principal enemy on an international scale. The Bolsheviks have been devoting the greatest attention to this enemy. This aspect of Bolshevik activities is now fairly well known abroad too.

It was, however, different with Bolshevism's other enemy within the working-class movement. Little is known in other countries of the fact that Bolshevism took shape, developed and became steeled in the long years of struggle against *petty-bourgeois revolutionism*, which smacks of anarchism, or borrows something from the latter and, in all essential matters, does not measure up to the conditions and requirements of a consistently proletarian class struggle. Marxist theory has established—and the experience of all European revolutions and revolutionary movements has fully confirmed—that the petty proprietor, the small master (a social type existing on a very extensive and even mass scale in many European countries), who, under capitalism, always suffers oppression and very frequently a most acute and rapid deterioration in his conditions of life, and even ruin, easily goes to revolutionary extremes, but is incapable of perseverance, organisation, discipline and steadfastness. A petty bourgeois driven to frenzy by the horrors of capitalism is a social phenomenon which, like anarchism, is characteristic of all capitalist countries. The instability of such revolutionism, its barrenness, and its tendency to turn rapidly into submission, apathy, phantasms, and even a frenzied infatuation with one bourgeois fad or another—all this is common knowledge. However, a theoretical or abstract recognition of these truths does not at all rid revolutionary parties of old errors, which always crop up at unexpected occasions, in somewhat new forms, in a hitherto unfamiliar garb or surroundings, in an unusual—a more or less unusual—situation.

Anarchism was not infrequently a kind of penalty for the opportunist sins of the working-class movement. The two monstrosities complemented each other. And if in Russia—despite the more petty-bourgeois composition of her population as compared with the other European countries—anarchism's influence was negligible during the two revolutions (of 1905 and 1917) and the preparations for them, this should no doubt stand partly to the credit of Bolshevism, which has always waged a most ruthless and

uncompromising struggle against opportunism. I say “partly,” since of still greater importance in weakening anarchism’s influence in Russia was the circumstance that in the past (the seventies of the nineteenth century) it was able to develop inordinately and to reveal its absolute erroneousness, its unfitness to serve the revolutionary class as a guiding theory.

When it came into being in 1903, Bolshevism took over the tradition of a ruthless struggle against petty-bourgeois, semi-anarchist (or dilettante-anarchist) revolutionism, a tradition which had always existed in revolutionary Social-Democracy and had become particularly strong in our country during the years 1900–03, when the foundations for a mass party of the revolutionary proletariat were being laid in Russia. Bolshevism took over and carried on the struggle against a party which, more than any other, expressed the tendencies of petty-bourgeois revolutionism, namely, the “Socialist-Revolutionary” Party, and waged that struggle on three main issues. First, that party, which rejected Marxism, stubbornly refused (or, it might be more correct to say: was unable) to understand the need for a strictly objective appraisal of the class forces and their alignment, before taking any political action. Second, this party considered itself particularly “revolutionary,” or “Left,” because of its recognition of individual terrorism, assassination—something that we Marxists emphatically rejected. It was, of course, only on grounds of expediency that we rejected individual terrorism, whereas people who were capable of condemning “on principle” the terror of the Great French Revolution, or, in general, the terror employed by a victorious revolutionary party which is besieged by the bourgeoisie of the whole world, were ridiculed and laughed to scorn by Plekhanov in 1900–03, when he was a Marxist and a revolutionary. Third, the “Socialist-Revolutionaries” thought it very “Left” to sneer at the comparatively insignificant opportunist sins of the German Social-Democratic Party, while they themselves imitated the extreme opportunists of that party, for example, on the agrarian question, or on the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

History, incidentally, has now confirmed on a vast and world-wide scale the opinion we have always advocated, namely, that German *revolutionary* Social-Democracy (note that as far back as 1900–03 Plekhanov demanded Bernstein’s expulsion from the Party, and in 1913 the Bolsheviks, always continuing this tradition, exposed Legien’s¹⁰ baseness, vileness and treachery) *came closest* to being the party the revolutionary proletariat needs in order to achieve victory. Today, in 1920, after all the ignominious failures and crises of the war period and the early post-war years, it can be plainly seen that, of all the Western parties, the German revolutionary Social-Democrats produced the finest leaders, and recovered and gained new strength more rapidly than the others did. This may be seen in the instances both of the

Spartacists¹¹ and the Left, proletarian wing of the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, which is waging an incessant struggle against the opportunism and spinelessness of the Kautskys, Hilferdings, Ledebours and Crispiens. If we now cast a glance to take in a complete historical period, namely, from the Paris Commune to the first Socialist Soviet Republic, we shall find that Marxism's attitude to anarchism in general stands out most definitely and unmistakably. In the final analysis, Marxism proved to be correct, and although the anarchists rightly pointed to the opportunist views on the state prevalent among most of the socialist parties, it must be said, first, that this opportunism was connected with the distortion, and even deliberate suppression, of Marx's views on the state (in my book, *The State and Revolution*, I pointed out that for thirty-six years, from 1875 to 1911, Bebel withheld a letter by Engels,¹² which very clearly, vividly, bluntly and definitively exposed the opportunism of the current Social-Democratic views on the state); second, that the rectification of these opportunist views, and the recognition of Soviet power and its superiority to bourgeois parliamentary democracy proceeded most rapidly and extensively among those trends in the socialist parties of Europe and America that were most Marxist.

The struggle that Bolshevism waged against "Left" deviations within its own Party assumed particularly large proportions on two occasions: in 1908, on the question of whether or not to participate in a most reactionary "parliament" and in the legal workers' societies, which were being restricted by most reactionary laws; and again in 1918 (the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk¹³), on the question of whether one "compromise" or another was permissible.

In 1908 the "Left" Bolsheviks were expelled from our Party for stubbornly refusing to understand the necessity of participating in a most reactionary "parliament."¹⁴ The "Lefts"—among whom there were many splendid revolutionaries who subsequently were (and still are) commendable members of the Communist Party—based themselves particularly on the successful experience of the 1905 boycott. When, in August 1905, the tsar proclaimed the convocation of a consultative "parliament,"¹⁵ the Bolsheviks called for its boycott, in the teeth of all the opposition parties and the Mensheviks, and the "parliament" was in fact swept away by the revolution of October 1905.¹⁶ The boycott proved correct at the time, not because non-participation in reactionary parliaments is correct in general, but because we accurately appraised the objective situation, which was leading to the rapid development of the mass strikes first into a political strike, then into a revolutionary strike, and finally into an uprising. Moreover, the struggle centred at that time on the question of whether the convocation of the first representative assembly should be left to the tsar, or an attempt should be made to wrest its convocation from the old regime. When there was not,

and could not be, any certainty that the objective situation was of a similar kind, and when there was no certainty of a similar trend and the same rate of development, the boycott was no longer correct.

The Bolsheviks’ boycott of “parliament” in 1905 enriched the revolutionary proletariat with highly valuable political experience and showed that, when legal and illegal parliamentary and non-parliamentary forms of struggle are combined, it is sometimes useful and even essential to reject parliamentary forms. It would, however, be highly erroneous to apply this experience blindly, imitatively and uncritically to *other* conditions and *other* situations. The Bolsheviks’ boycott of the Duma in 1906 was a mistake, although a minor and easily remediable one.* The boycott of the Duma in 1907, 1908 and subsequent years was a most serious error and difficult to remedy, because, on the one hand, a very rapid rise of the revolutionary tide and its conversion into an uprising was not to be expected, and, on the other hand, the entire historical situation attendant upon the renovation of the bourgeois monarchy called for legal and illegal activities being combined. Today, when we look back at this fully completed historical period, whose connection with subsequent periods has now become quite clear, it becomes most obvious that in 1908–14 the Bolsheviks *could not have* preserved (let alone strengthened and developed) the core of the revolutionary party of the proletariat, had they not upheld, in a most strenuous struggle, the viewpoint that it was *obligatory* to combine legal and illegal forms of struggle, and that it was *obligatory* to participate even in a most reactionary parliament and in a number of other institutions hemmed in by reactionary laws (sick benefit societies, etc.).

In 1918 things did not reach a split. At that time the “Left” Communists formed only a separate group or “faction” within our Party, and that not for long. In the same year, 1918, the most prominent representatives of “Left Communism,” for example, Comrades Radek and Bukharin, openly acknowledged their error. It had seemed to them that the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was a compromise with the imperialists, which was inexcusable on principle and harmful to the party of the revolutionary proletariat. It was indeed a compromise with the imperialists, but it was a compromise which, under the circumstances, *had to be made*.

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

Imagine that your car is held up by armed bandits. You hand them over your money, passport, revolver and car. In return you are rid of the pleasant company of the bandits. That is unquestionably a compromise. “*Do ut des*” (I “give” you money, fire-arms and a car “so that you give” me the opportunity to get away from you with a whole skin). It would, however, be difficult to find a sane man who would declare such a compromise to be “inadmissible on principle,” or who would call the compromiser an accomplice of the bandits (even though the bandits might use the car and the firearms for further robberies). Our compromise with the bandits of German imperialism was just that kind of compromise.

But when, in 1914–18 and then in 1918–20, the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries in Russia, the Scheidemannites (and to a large extent the Kautskyites) in Germany, Otto Bauer and Friedrich Adler (to say nothing of the Renners and Co.) in Austria, the Renaudels and Longuets and Co. in France, the Fabians, the Independents and the Labourites in Britain entered into *compromises* with the bandits of their own bourgeoisie, and sometimes of the “Allied” bourgeoisie, and *against* the revolutionary proletariat of their own countries, all these gentlemen were actually acting as *accomplices in banditry*.

The conclusion is clear: to reject compromises “on principle,” to reject the permissibility of compromises in general, no matter of what kind, is childishness, which it is difficult even to consider seriously. A political leader who desires to be useful to the revolutionary proletariat must be able to distinguish *concrete* cases of compromises that are inexcusable and are an expression of opportunism and *treachery*; he must direct all the force of criticism, the full intensity of merciless exposure and relentless war, against *these concrete* compromises, and not allow the past masters of “practical” socialism and the parliamentary Jesuits to dodge and wriggle out of responsibility by means of disquisitions on “compromises in general.” It is in this way that the “leaders” of the British trade unions, as well as of the Fabian society and the “Independent” Labour Party, dodge responsibility *for the treachery they have perpetrated*, for having made *a compromise* that is really tantamount to the worst kind of opportunism, treachery and betrayal.

There are different kinds of compromises. One must be able to analyse the situation and the concrete conditions of each compromise, or of each variety of compromise. One must learn to distinguish between a man who has given up his money and fire-arms to bandits so as to lessen the evil they can do and to facilitate their capture and execution, and a man who gives his money and fire-arms to bandits so as to share in the loot. In politics this is by no means always as elementary as it is in this childishly simple example.

However, anyone who is out to think up for the workers some kind of recipe that will provide them with cut-and-dried solutions for all contingencies, or promises that the policy of the revolutionary proletariat will never come up against difficult or complex situations, is simply a charlatan.

To leave no room for misinterpretation, I shall attempt to outline, if only very briefly, several fundamental rules for the analysis of concrete compromises.

The party which entered into a compromise with the German imperialists by signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had been evolving its internationalism in practice ever since the end of 1914. It was not afraid to call for the defeat of the tsarist monarchy and to condemn “defence of country” in a war between two imperialist robbers. The parliamentary representatives of this party preferred exile in Siberia to taking a road leading to ministerial portfolios in a bourgeois government. The revolution that overthrew tsarism and established a democratic republic put this party to a new and tremendous test—it did not enter into any agreements with its “own” imperialists, but prepared and brought about their overthrow. When it had assumed political power, this party did not leave a vestige of either landed or capitalist ownership. After making public and repudiating the imperialists’ secret treaties, this party proposed peace to *all* nations, and yielded to the violence of the Brest-Litovsk robbers only after the Anglo-French imperialists had torpedoed the conclusion of a peace, and after the Bolsheviks had done everything humanly possible to hasten the revolution in Germany and other countries. The absolute correctness of this compromise, entered into by such a party in such a situation, is becoming ever clearer and more obvious with every day.

The Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries in Russia (like all the leaders of the Second International throughout the world, in 1914–20) began with treachery—by directly or indirectly justifying “defence of country,” i.e., the defence of *their own* predatory bourgeoisie. They continued their treachery by entering into a coalition with the bourgeoisie of *their own* country, and fighting, together with *their own* bourgeoisie, against the revolutionary proletariat of their own country. Their bloc, first with Kerensky and the Cadets, and then with Kolchak and Denikin in Russia—like the bloc of their *confrères* abroad with the bourgeoisie of *their* respective countries—was in fact desertion to the side of the bourgeoisie, against the proletariat. From beginning to end, *their* compromise with the bandits of imperialism meant their becoming *accomplices* in imperialist banditry.

Notes

10. Lenin is referring probably to his article “What Should Not Be Copied from the German Labour Movement,” published in the Bolshevik magazine *Prosveshcheniye* in April 1914 (see present edition, Vol. 20, pp. 254–58). Here Lenin exposed the treacherous behaviour of Karl Legien, the German Social-Democrat who in 1912, in addressing the Congress of the U.S.A., praised U.S. official circles and bourgeois parties.
11. *Spartacists*—members of the Spartacus League founded in January 1916, during the First World War, under the leadership of Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring and Clara Zetkin. The Spartacists conducted revolutionary anti-war propaganda among the masses, and exposed the expansionist policy of German imperialism and the treachery of the Social-Democratic leaders. However, the Spartacists—the German Left wing—did not get rid of their semi-Menshevik errors on the most important questions of theory and tactics. A criticism of the German Left-wing’s mistakes is given in Lenin’s works “On Junius’s Pamphlet” (see present edition, Vol. 22, pp. 297–305), “A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism” (see Vol. 23, pp. 28–76) and elsewhere.

In April 1917, the Spartacists joined the Centrist Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, preserving their organisational independence. After the November 1918 revolution in Germany, the Spartacists broke away from the “Independents,” and in December of the same year founded the Communist Party of Germany.

12. The reference is to Frederick Engels’s letter to August Bebel, written on March 18–28, 1875.
13. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed between Soviet Russia and the powers of the Quadruple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey) on March 3, 1918, at Brest-Litovsk and ratified on March 15 by the Fourth (Extraordinary) All-Russia Congress of Soviets. The peace terms were very harsh for Soviet Russia. According to the treaty, Poland, almost all the Baltic states, and part of Byelorussia were placed under the control of Germany and Austria-Hungary. The Ukraine was separated from Soviet Russia, becoming a state dependent on Germany. Turkey gained control of the cities of Kars, Batum and Ardagan. In August 1918, Germany imposed on Soviet Russia a supplementary treaty and a financial agreement containing new and exorbitant demands.

The treaty prevented further needless loss of life, and gave the R.S.F.S.R. the ability to shift its attention to urgent domestic matters. The signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk promoted the struggle for peace among the broad masses of all the warring nations, and denounced the war as a struggle between imperialist powers. On November 13, 1918, following the November revolution in Germany, which overthrew the monarchist regime, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee annulled the predatory Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

14. The reference is to the otzovists [*the term otzovist derives from the Russian verb “otzovat” meaning “to recall.”—Ed.*] and ultimatumists, the struggle against whom developed in 1908, and in 1909 resulted in the expulsion of A. Bogdan-

ov, the otzovist leader, from the Bolshevik Party. Behind a screen of revolutionary phrases, the otzovists demanded the recall of the Social-Democrat deputies from the Third Duma and the cessation of activities in legal organisations such as the trade unions, the co-operatives, etc. Ultimatumism was a variety of otzovism. The ultimatumists did not realise the necessity of conducting persistent day-by-day work with the Social-Democrat deputies, so as to make them consistent revolutionary parliamentarians. They proposed that an ultimatum should be presented to the Social-Democratic group in the Duma, demanding their absolute subordination to decisions of the Party’s Central Committee; should the deputies fail to comply, they were to be recalled from the Duma. A conference of the enlarged editorial board of the Bolshevik paper *Proletary*, held in June 1909, pointed out in its decision that “Bolshevism, as a definite trend in the R.S.D.L.P., had nothing in common either with otzovism or with ultimatumism.” The conference urged the Bolsheviks “to wage a most resolute struggle against these deviations from the path of revolutionary Marxism” (*KPSS v rezolutsiyakh i resheniyakh syezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK [The C.P.S.U. in the Resolutions and Decisions of Its Congresses, Conferences and Plenums of the Central Committee]*, Part I, 1954, p. 221).

15. On August 6 (19), 1905, the tsar’s manifesto was made public, proclaiming the law on the setting up of the Duma and the election procedures. This body was known as the Bulygin Duma, after A.G. Bulygin, the Minister of the Interior, whom the tsar entrusted with drawing up the Duma draft. According to the latter, the Duma had no legislative functions, but could merely discuss certain questions as a consultative body under the tsar. The Bolsheviks called upon the workers and peasants to actively boycott the Bulygin Duma, and concentrate all agitation on the slogans of an armed uprising, a revolutionary army, and a provisional revolutionary government. The boycott campaign against the Bulygin Duma was used by the Bolsheviks to mobilise all the revolutionary forces, organise mass political strikes, and prepare for an armed uprising. Elections to the Bulygin Duma were not held and the government was unable to convene it. The Duma was swept away by the mounting tide of the revolution and the all-Russia October political strike of 1905.
16. Lenin is referring to the *all-Russia October political strike of 1905*, during the first Russian revolution. This strike, which involved over two million people, was conducted under the slogan of the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy, an active boycott of the Bulygin Duma, the summoning of a Constituent Assembly and the establishment of a democratic republic. The all-Russia political strike showed the strength of the working-class movement, fostered the development of the revolutionary struggle in the countryside, the army and the navy. The October strike led the proletariat to the December armed uprising. Concerning the October strike, see the article by V. I. Lenin “The All-Russia Political Strike” (present edition, Vol. 9, pp. 392–95).

* What applies to individuals also applies—with necessary modifications—to politics and parties. It is not he who makes no mistakes that is intelligent. There are no such men, nor can there be. It is he whose errors are not very grave and who is able to rectify them easily and quickly that is intelligent.

“Left-Wing” Communism in Germany. The Leaders, the Party, the Class, the Masses

The German Communists we must now speak of call themselves, not “Left-wingers” but, if I am not mistaken, an “opposition on principle.”¹⁷ From what follows below it will, however, be seen that they reveal all the symptoms of the “infantile disorder of Leftism.”

Published by the “local group in Frankfurt am Main,” a pamphlet reflecting the point of view of this opposition, and entitled *The Split in the Communist Party of Germany (The Spartacus League)* sets forth the substance of this opposition’s views most saliently, and with the utmost clarity and concision. A few quotations will suffice to acquaint the reader with that substance:

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

“. . . Politically, the transitional period [between capitalism and socialism] is one of the proletarian dictatorship. . . .”

“. . . The question arises: who is to exercise this dictatorship: *the Communist Party or the proletarian class?* . . . *Fundamentally*, should we strive for a dictatorship of the Communist Party, or for a dictatorship of the proletarian class? . . .”

(All italics as in the original)

The author of the pamphlet goes on to accuse the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany of seeking ways of achieving a *coalition with the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany*, and of raising “*the question of recognising, in principle, all political means*” of struggle, including parliamentarianism, with the sole purpose of concealing its actual and main efforts to form a coalition with the Independents. The pamphlet goes on to say:

“The opposition have chosen another road. They are of the opinion that the question of the rule of the Communist Party and of the dictatorship of the Party is merely one of tactics. In any case, rule by the Communist Party is the ultimate form of any party rule. *Fundamentally*, we must work for the dictatorship of the proletarian class. And all the measures of the Party, its organisations, methods of struggle, strategy and tactics should be directed to that end. Accordingly, all compromise with other parties, all reversion to parliamentary forms of struggle which have become historically and politically obsolete, and any policy of manoeuvring and compromise must be emphatically rejected.” “Specifically proletarian methods of revolutionary struggle must be strongly emphasised. New forms of organisation must be

created on the widest basis and with the widest scope in order to enlist the most extensive proletarian circles and strata to take part in the revolutionary struggle under the leadership of the Communist Party. A *Workers' Union*, based on factory organisations, should be the rallying point for all revolutionary elements. This should unite all workers who follow the slogan: ‘Get out of the trade unions!’ It is here that the militant proletariat musters its ranks for battle. Recognition of the class struggle, of the Soviet system and of the dictatorship should be sufficient for enrolment. All subsequent political education of the fighting masses and their political orientation in the struggle are the task of the Communist Party, which stands outside the Workers’ Union. . . .

“...Consequently, two Communist parties are now arrayed against each other:

“*One is a party of leaders*, which is out to organise the revolutionary struggle and to direct it from *above*, accepting compromises and parliamentarianism so as to create a situation enabling it to join a coalition government exercising a dictatorship.

“*The other is a mass party*, which expects an upsurge of the revolutionary struggle from *below*, which knows and applies a single method in this struggle—a method which clearly leads to the goal—and rejects all parliamentary and opportunist methods. That single method is the unconditional *overthrow of the bourgeoisie*, so as then to set up the proletarian class dictatorship for the accomplishment of socialism

“... There—the dictatorship of leaders; here—the dictatorship of the masses! That is our slogan.”

Such are the main features characterising the views of the opposition in the German Communist Party.

Any Bolshevik who has consciously participated in the development of Bolshevism since 1903 or has closely observed that development will at once say, after reading these arguments, “What old and familiar rubbish! What ‘Left-wing’ childishness!”

But let us examine these arguments a little more closely.

The mere presentation of the question—“dictatorship of the party *or* dictatorship of the class; dictatorship (party) of the leaders, *or* dictatorship (party) of the masses?”—testifies to most incredibly and hopelessly muddled thinking. These people want to *invent* something quite out of the ordinary, and, in their effort to be clever, make themselves ridiculous. It is common knowledge that the masses are divided into classes, that the masses can be contrasted with classes only by contrasting the vast majority in general, regardless of division according to status in the social system of production, with categories holding a definite status in the social system of production;

that as a rule and in most cases—at least in present-day civilised countries—classes are led by political parties; that political parties, as a general rule, are run by more or less stable groups composed of the most authoritative, influential and experienced members, who are elected to the most responsible positions, and are called leaders. All this is elementary. All this is clear and simple. Why replace this with some kind of rigmarole, some new Volapük? On the one hand, these people seem to have got muddled when they found themselves in a predicament, when the party's abrupt transition from legality to illegality upset the customary, normal and simple relations between leaders, parties and classes. In Germany, as in other European countries, people had become too accustomed to legality, to the free and proper election of "leaders" at regular party congresses, to the convenient method of testing the class composition of parties through parliamentary elections, mass meetings the press, the sentiments of the trade unions and other associations, etc. When, instead of this customary procedure, it became necessary, because of the stormy development of the revolution and the development of the civil war, to go over rapidly from legality to illegality, to combine the two, and to adopt the "inconvenient" and "undemocratic" methods of selecting, or forming, or preserving "groups of leaders"—people lost their bearings and began to think up some unmitigated nonsense. Certain members of the Communist Party of Holland, who were unlucky enough to be born in a small country with traditions and conditions of highly privileged and highly stable legality, and who had never seen a transition from legality to illegality, probably fell into confusion, lost their heads, and helped create these absurd inventions.

On the other hand, one can see simply a thoughtless and incoherent use of the now "fashionable" terms: "masses" and "leaders." These people have heard and memorised a great many attacks on "leaders," in which the latter have been contrasted with the "masses"; however, they have proved unable to think matters out and gain a clear understanding of what it was all about.

The divergence between "leaders" and "masses" was brought out with particular clarity and sharpness in all countries at the end of the imperialist war and following it. The principal reason for this was explained many times by Marx and Engels between the years 1852 and 1892, from the example of Britain. That country's exclusive position led to the emergence, from the "masses," of a semi-petty-bourgeois, opportunist "labour aristocracy." The leaders of this labour aristocracy were constantly going over to the bourgeoisie, and were directly or indirectly on its pay roll. Marx earned the honour of incurring the hatred of these disreputable persons by openly branding them as traitors. Present-day (twentieth-century) imperialism has given a few advanced countries an exceptionally privileged position, which, everywhere in

the Second International, has produced a certain type of traitor, opportunist, and social-chauvinist leaders, who champion the interests of their own craft, their own section of the labour aristocracy. The opportunist parties have become separated from the "masses," i.e., from the broadest strata of the working people, their majority, the lowest-paid workers. The revolutionary proletariat cannot be victorious unless this evil is combated, unless the opportunist, social-traitor leaders are exposed, discredited and expelled. That is the policy the Third International has embarked on.

To go so far, in this connection, as to contrast, *in general*, the dictatorship of the masses with a dictatorship of the leaders is ridiculously absurd, and stupid. What is particularly amusing is that, in fact, instead of the old leaders, who hold generally accepted views on simple matters, *new leaders* are brought forth (under cover of the slogan "Down with the leaders!"), who talk rank stuff and nonsense. Such are Laufenberg, Wolffheim, Horner,¹⁸ Karl Schroder, Friedrich Wendel and Karl Erler,^{*2} in Germany. Erler's attempts to give the question more "profundity" and to proclaim that in general political parties are unnecessary and "bourgeois" are so supremely absurd that one can only shrug one's shoulders. It all goes to drive home the truth that a minor error can always assume monstrous proportions if it is persisted in, if profound justifications are sought for it, and if it is carried to its logical conclusion.

Repudiation of the Party principle and of Party discipline—that is what the opposition has *arrived at*. And this is tantamount to completely disarming the proletariat in *the interests of the bourgeoisie*. It all adds up to that petty-bourgeois diffuseness and instability, that incapacity for sustained effort, unity and organised action, which, if encouraged, must inevitably destroy any proletarian revolutionary movement. From the standpoint of communism, repudiation of the Party principle means attempting to leap from the eve of capitalism's collapse (in Germany), not to the lower or the intermediate phase of communism, but to the higher. We in Russia (in the third year since the overthrow of the bourgeoisie) are making the first steps in the transition from capitalism to socialism or the lower stage of communism. Classes still remain, and will remain everywhere *for years after* the proletariat's conquest of power. Perhaps in Britain, where there is no peasantry (but where petty proprietors exist), this period may be shorter. The abolition of classes means, not merely ousting the landowners and the capitalists—that is something we accomplished with comparative ease; it also means *abolishing the small commodity producers*, and they *cannot be ousted*, or crushed; we *must learn to live* with them. They can (and must) be transformed and re-educated only by means of very prolonged, slow, and cautious organisational work. They surround the proletariat on every side with a petty-bourgeois

atmosphere, which permeates and corrupts the proletariat, and constantly causes among the proletariat relapses into petty-bourgeois spinelessness, disunity, individualism, and alternating moods of exaltation and dejection. The strictest centralisation and discipline are required within the political party of the proletariat in order to counteract this, in order that the *organisational* role of the proletariat (and that is its *principal* role) may be exercised correctly, successfully and victoriously. The dictatorship of the proletariat means a persistent struggle—bloody and bloodless, violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative—against the forces and traditions of the old society. The force of habit in millions and tens of millions is a most formidable force. Without a party of iron that has been tempered in the struggle, a party enjoying the confidence of all honest people in the class in question, a party capable of watching and influencing the mood of the masses, such a struggle cannot be waged successfully. It is a thousand times easier to vanquish the centralised big bourgeoisie than to “vanquish” the millions upon millions of petty proprietors; however, through their ordinary, everyday, imperceptible, elusive and demoralising activities, they produce the *very* results which the bourgeoisie need and which tend to *restore* the bourgeoisie. Whoever brings about even the slightest weakening of the iron discipline of the party of the proletariat (especially during its dictatorship), is actually aiding the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.

Parallel with the question of the leaders, the party, the class, the masses, we must pose the question of the “reactionary” trade unions. But first I shall take the liberty of making a few concluding remarks based on the experience of our Party. There *have always been* attacks on the “dictatorship of leaders” in our Party. The first time I heard such attacks, I recall, was in 1895, when, officially, no party yet existed, but a central group was taking shape in St. Petersburg, which was to assume the leadership of the district groups.²⁰ At the Ninth Congress of our Party (April 1920),²¹ there was a small opposition, which also spoke against the “dictatorship of leaders,” against the “oligarchy,” and so on. There is therefore nothing surprising, new, or terrible in the “infantile disorder” of “Left-wing communism” among the Germans. The ailment involves no danger, and after it the organism even becomes more robust. In our case, on the other hand, the rapid alternation of legal and illegal work, which made it necessary to keep the general staff—the leaders—under cover and cloak them in the greatest secrecy, sometimes gave rise to extremely dangerous consequences. The worst of these was that in 1912 the *agent provocateur* Malinovsky got into the Bolshevik Central Committee. He betrayed scores and scores of the best and most loyal comrades, caused them to be sentenced to penal servitude,

and hastened the death of many of them. That he did not cause still greater harm was due to the correct balance between legal and illegal work. As member of the Party’s Central Committee and Duma deputy, Malinovsky was forced, in order to gain our confidence, to help us establish legal daily papers, which even under tsarism were able to wage a struggle against the Menshevik opportunism and to spread the fundamentals of Bolshevism in a suitably disguised form. While, with one hand, Malinovsky sent scores and scores of the finest Bolsheviks to penal servitude and death, he was obliged, with the other, to assist in the education of scores and scores of thousands of new Bolsheviks through the medium of the legal press. Those German (and also British, American, French and Italian) comrades who are faced with the task of learning how to conduct revolutionary work within the reactionary trade unions would do well to give serious thought to this fact.*³

In many countries, including the most advanced, the bourgeoisie are undoubtedly sending *agents provocateurs* into the Communist parties and will continue to do so. A skilful combining of illegal and legal work is one of the ways to combat this danger.

Notes

17. The “*opposition on principle*”—a group of German Left-wing Communists advocating anarcho-syndicalist views. When the Second Congress of the Communist Party of Germany, which was held in Heidelberg in October 1919, expelled the opposition, the latter formed the so-called Communist Workers’ Party of Germany, in April 1920. To facilitate the unification of all German communist forces and win over the finest proletarian elements in the C.W.P.G., the opposition was temporarily admitted into the Communist International in November 1920 with the rights of a sympathising member.

However, the Executive Committee of the Communist International still considered the United Communist Party of Germany to be the only authoritative section of the Comintern. C.W.P.G.’s representatives were admitted into the Comintern on the condition that they merged with the United Communist Party of Germany and supported all its activities. The C.W.P.G. leaders, however, failed to observe these conditions. The Third Congress of the Communist International, which was held in June–July 1921, and wanted solidarity with workers who still followed the C.W.P.G. leaders, resolved to give the C.W.P.G. two months to call a congress and settle the question of affiliation. The C.W.P.G. Leaders did not obey the Third Congress’s resolution and thus placed themselves outside the Communist International. Later the C.W.P.G. degenerated into a small sectarian group without any support in the working class.

18. *Horner, Karl*—Anton Pannekoek.
 19. *Kommunistische Arbeiterzeitung* (The Communist Workers’ Newspaper)—organ of the anarcho-syndicalist group of the German Leftwing Communists (see

- Note 17). The newspaper was published in Hamburg from 1919 till 1927. Karl Erler, who is mentioned by V. I. Lenin, was Heinrich Laufenberg's pen-name.
20. The reference is to the *League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class* organised by V. I. Lenin in the autumn of 1895. The League of Struggle united about twenty Marxist circles in St. Petersburg. It was headed by the Central Group including V. I. Lenin, A. A. Vaneyev, P. K. Zaporozhets, G. M. Krzhizhanovsky, N. K. Krupskaya, L. Martov, M. A. Silvin, V. V. Starkov, and others; five members headed by V. I. Lenin directed the League's activities. The organisation was divided into district groups. Progressive workers such as I. V. Babushkin, V. A. Shelgunov and others linked these groups with the factories.
- The St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class was, in V. I. Lenin's words, the embryo of a revolutionary party based on the working-class movement and giving leadership to the class struggle of the proletariat.
21. The Congress was held in Moscow from March 29 to April 5, 1920. The Ninth Congress was more numerous than any previous Party congresses. It was attended by 715 delegates—553 of them with full votes, and 162 with deliberative votes—representing a membership of 611,978. Represented were the Party organisations of Central Russia, the Ukraine, the Urals, Siberia and other regions recently liberated by the Red Army. Many of the delegates came to the Congress straight from the front.

The agenda of the Congress was as follows:

1. The report of the Central Committee.
2. The immediate tasks of economic construction.
3. The trade union movement.
4. Organisational questions.
5. The tasks of the Communist International.
6. The attitude towards the co-operatives.
7. The change-over to the militia system.
8. Elections to the Central Committee.
9. Miscellaneous.

The Congress was held under the guidance of V. I. Lenin, who was the main speaker on the political work of the Central Committee and replied to the debate on the report. He also spoke on economic construction and co-operation, made the speech at the closing of the Congress, and submitted a proposal on the list of candidates to the Party's Central Committee.

In the resolution "The Immediate Tasks of Economic Development" the Congress noted that "the basic condition of economic rehabilitation of the country is a steady implementation of the single economic plan for the coming historical epoch" (*KPSS v rezolutsiyakh i resheniyakh syezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK* [*The C.P.S.U. in the Resolutions and Decisions of Its Congresses, Conferences and Plenums of the Central Committee*], Part I, 1954, p. 478). The kingpin of the single economic plan was electrification, which V. I. Lenin considered a great programme for a period of 10 to 20 years. The directives of the Ninth Congress were the basis of the plan conclusively drawn up by the State Com-

mission for the Electrification of Russia (the GOELRO plan) and approved by the All-Russia Congress of Soviets in December 1920.

The Congress paid particular attention to the organisation of industrial management. The resolution on this question called for the establishment of competent, firm and energetic one-man management. Taking its guidance from Lenin, the Congress especially stressed the necessity to extensively enlist old and experienced experts.

The anti-Party group of Democratic Centralists, consisting of Sapronov, Osinsky, V. Smirnov and others, came out against the Party line. Behind a cover of phrases about Democratic Centralism but in fact distorting that principle, they denied the need for one-man management at factories, came out against strict Party and state discipline, and alleged that the Central Committee did not give effect to the principle of collective leadership.

The group of Democratic Centralists was supported at the Congress by Rykov, Tomsky, Milyutin and Lomov. The Congress rebuffed the Democratic Centralists and rejected their proposals.

The Congress gave special attention to labour emulation and communist *Subbotniks*. To stimulate such emulation, the extensive application of the bonus system of wages was recommended. The Congress resolved that May 1, the international proletarian holiday, which in 1920 fell on Saturday, should be a mass *Subbotnik* organised throughout Russia.

An important place in the work of the Congress was held by the question of trade unions, which was considered from the viewpoint of adapting the entire work of the trade unions to the accomplishment of the economic tasks. In a resolution on this question, the Congress distinctly defined the trade unions' role, their relations with the state and the Party, forms and methods of guidance of trade unions by the Communist Party, as well as forms of their participation in communist construction. The Congress decisively rebuffed the anarcho-syndicalist elements (Shlyapnikov, Lozovsky, Tomsky and Lutovinov), who advocated the “independence” of the trade unions and contraposed them to the Communist Party and the Soviet government.

At a closed meeting held on April 4, the Congress elected a new Central Committee of 19 members and 12 candidate members. The former included V.I. Lenin, A. A. Andreyev, F. E. Dzerzhinsky, M. I. Kalinin, Y. E. Rudzutak, F. A. Sergeyev (Artyom), and J. V. Stalin. On April 5 the Congress concluded its work.

*2 Karl Erler, “The Dissolution of the Party,” *Kommunistische Arbeiterzeitung*,¹⁹ Hamburg, February 7, 1920, No. 32:

“The working class cannot destroy the bourgeois state without destroying bourgeois democracy, and it cannot destroy bourgeois democracy without destroying parties.”

The more muddle-headed of the syndicalists and anarchists in the Latin countries may derive “satisfaction” from the fact that solid Germans, who evidently consider themselves Marxists (by their articles in the above-mentioned paper K. Erler and K. Horner have shown most plainly that they consider themselves sound Marxists, but talk incredible nonsense in a most ridiculous manner and reveal their failure to understand the ABCs of Marxism), go to the length of

making utterly inept statements. Mere acceptance of Marxism does not save one from errors. We Russians know this especially well, because Marxism has been very often the “fashion” in our country.

*3 Malinovsky was a prisoner of war in Germany. On his return to Russia when the Bolsheviks were in power he was instantly put on trial and shot by our workers. The Mensheviks attacked us most bitterly for our mistake—the fact that an *agent provocateur* had become a member of the Central Committee of our Party. But when, under Kerensky, we demanded the arrest and trial of Rodzyanko, the Chairman of the Duma, because he had known, even before the war, that Malinovsky was an *agent provocateur* and *had not informed* the Trudoviks and the workers in the Duma, neither the Mensheviks nor the Socialist-Revolutionaries in the Kerensky government supported our demand, and Rodzyanko remained at large and made off unhindered to join Denikin.

Should Revolutionaries Work in Reactionary Trade Unions?

The German “Lefts” consider that, as far as they are concerned, the reply to this question is an unqualified negative. In their opinion, declamations and angry outcries (such as uttered by K. Horner in a particularly “solid” and particularly stupid manner) against “reactionary” and “counter-revolutionary” trade unions are sufficient “proof” that it is unnecessary and even inexcusable for revolutionaries and Communists to work in yellow, social-chauvinist, compromising and counter-revolutionary trade unions of the Legien type.

However firmly the German “Lefts” may be convinced of the revolutionism of such tactics, the latter are in fact fundamentally wrong, and contain nothing but empty phrases.

To make this clear, I shall begin with our own experience, in keeping with the general plan of the present pamphlet, which is aimed at applying to Western Europe whatever is universally practicable, significant and relevant in the history and the present-day tactics of Bolshevism.

In Russia today, the connection between leaders, party, class and masses, as well as the attitude of the dictatorship of the proletariat and its party to the trade unions, are concretely as follows: the dictatorship is exercised by the proletariat organised in the Soviets; the proletariat is guided by the Communist Party of Bolsheviks, which, according to the figures of the latest Party Congress (April 1920), has a membership of 611,000. The membership varied greatly both before and after the October Revolution, and used to be much smaller, even in 1918 and 1919.²² We are apprehensive of

an excessive growth of the Party, because careerists and charlatans, who deserve only to be shot, inevitably do all they can to insinuate themselves into the ranks of the ruling party. The last time we opened wide the doors of the Party—to workers and peasants only—was when (in the winter of 1919) Yudenich was within a few versts of Petrograd, and Denikin was in Orel (about 350 versts from Moscow), i.e., when the Soviet Republic was in mortal danger, and when adventurers, careerists, charlatans and unreliable persons generally could not possibly count on making a profitable career (and had more reason to expect the gallows and torture) by joining the Communists.²³ The Party, which holds annual congresses (the most recent on the basis of one delegate per 1,000 members), is directed by a Central Committee of nineteen elected at the Congress, while the current work in Moscow has to be carried on by still smaller bodies, known as the Organising Bureau and the Political Bureau, which are elected at plenary meetings of the Central Committee, five members of the Central Committee to each bureau. This, it would appear, is a full-fledged “oligarchy.” No important political or organisational question is decided by any state institution in our republic without the guidance of the Party’s Central Committee.

In its work, the Party relies directly on the *trade unions*, which, according to the data of the last congress (April 1920), now have a membership of over four million and are formally *non-Party*. Actually, all the directing bodies of the vast majority of the unions, and primarily, of course, of the all-Russia general trade union centre or bureau (the All-Russia Central Council of Trade Unions), are made up of Communists and carry out all the directives of the Party. Thus, on the whole, we have a formally non-communist, flexible and relatively wide and very powerful proletarian apparatus, by means of which the Party is closely linked up with the *class* and the *masses*, and by means of which, under the leadership of the Party, the *class dictatorship* is exercised. Without close contacts with the trade unions, and without their energetic support and devoted efforts, not only in economic, *but also in military* affairs, it would of course have been impossible for us to govern the country and to maintain the dictatorship for two and a half months, let alone two and a half years. In practice, these very close contacts naturally call for highly complex and diversified work in the form of propaganda, agitation, timely and frequent conferences, not only with the leading trade union workers, but with influential trade union workers generally; they call for a determined struggle against the Mensheviks, who still have a certain though very small following to whom they teach all kinds of counter-revolutionary machinations, ranging from an ideological defence of (*bourgeois*) democracy and the preaching that the trade unions should

be “independent” (independent of proletarian state power!) to sabotage of proletarian discipline, etc., etc.

We consider that contacts with the “masses” through the trade unions are not enough. In the course of our revolution, practical activities have given rise to such institutions as *non-Party workers’ and peasants’ conferences*, and we strive by every means to support, develop and extend this institution in order to be able to observe the temper of the masses, come closer to them, meet their requirements, promote the best among them to state posts, etc. Under a recent decree on the transformation of the People’s Commissariat of State Control into the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection, non-Party conferences of this kind have been empowered to select members of the State Control to carry out various kinds of investigations, etc.

Then, of course, all the work of the Party is carried on through the Soviets, which embrace the working masses irrespective of occupation. The district congresses of Soviets are *democratic* institutions, the like of which even the best of the democratic republics of the bourgeois world have never known; through these congresses (whose proceedings the Party endeavours to follow with the closest attention), as well as by continually appointing class-conscious workers to various posts in the rural districts, the proletariat exercises its role of leader of the peasantry, gives effect to the dictatorship of the urban proletariat wages a systematic struggle against the rich, bourgeois, exploiting and profiteering peasantry, etc.

Such is the general mechanism of the proletarian state power viewed “from above,” from the standpoint of the practical implementation of the dictatorship. We hope that the reader will understand why the Russian Bolshevik who has known this mechanism for twenty-five years and has seen it develop out of small, illegal and underground circles, cannot help regarding all this talk about “from above” *or* “from below,” about the dictatorship of leaders *or* the dictatorship of the masses, etc., as ridiculous and childish nonsense, something like discussing whether a man’s left leg or right arm is of greater use to him.

We cannot but regard as equally ridiculous and childish nonsense the pompous, very learned, and frightfully revolutionary disquisitions of the German Lefts to the effect that Communists cannot and should not work in reactionary trade unions, that it is permissible to turn down such work, that it is necessary to withdraw from the trade unions and create a brand-new and immaculate “Workers’ Union” invented by very pleasant (and, probably, for the most part very youthful) Communists, etc., etc.

Capitalism inevitably leaves socialism the legacy, on the one hand, of the old trade and craft distinctions among the workers, distinctions evolved

in the course of centuries; on the other hand, trade unions, which only very slowly, in the course of years and years, can and will develop into broader industrial unions with less of the craft union about them (embracing entire industries, and not only crafts, trades and occupations), and later proceed, through these industrial unions, to eliminate the division of labour among people, to educate and school people, give them *all-round development and an all-round training*, so that they *are able to do everything*. Communism is advancing and must advance towards that goal, and *will reach* it, but only after very many years. To attempt in practice, today, to anticipate this future result of a fully developed, fully stabilised and constituted, fully comprehensive and mature communism would be like trying to teach higher mathematics to a child of four.

We can (and must) begin to build socialism, not with abstract human material, or with human material specially prepared by us, but with the human material bequeathed to us by capitalism. True, that is no easy matter, but no other approach to this task is serious enough to warrant discussion.

The trade unions were a tremendous step forward for the working class in the early days of capitalist development, inasmuch as they marked a transition from the workers’ disunity and helplessness to the *rudiments* of class organisation. When the *revolutionary party of the proletariat*, the *highest* form of proletarian class organisation, began to take shape (and the Party will not merit the name until it learns to weld the leaders into one indivisible whole with the class and the masses) the trade unions inevitably began to reveal *certain* reactionary features, a certain craft narrow-mindedness, a certain tendency to be non-political, a certain inertness, etc. However, the development of the proletariat did not, and could not, proceed anywhere in the world otherwise than through the trade unions, through reciprocal action between them and the party of the working class. The proletariat’s conquest of political power is a gigantic step forward for the proletariat as a class, and the Party must more than ever and in a new way, not only in the old, educate and guide the trade unions, at the same time bearing in mind that they are and will long remain an indispensable “school of communism” and a preparatory school that trains proletarians to exercise their dictatorship, an indispensable organisation of the workers for the gradual transfer of the management of the whole economic life of the country to the working *class* (and not to the separate trades), and later to all the working people.

In the sense mentioned above, a *certain* “reactionism” in the trade unions is *inevitable* under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Not to understand this means a complete failure to understand the fundamental conditions of the *transition* from capitalism to socialism. It would be egregious folly to fear *this* “reactionism” or to try to *evade* or leap over it, for it would

mean fearing that function of the proletarian vanguard which consists in training, educating, enlightening and drawing into the new life the most backward strata and masses of the working class and the peasantry. On the other hand, it would be a still graver error to postpone the achievement of the dictatorship of the proletariat until a time when there will not be a single worker with a narrow-minded craft outlook, or with craft and craft-union prejudices. The art of politics (and the Communist's correct understanding of his tasks) consists in correctly gauging the conditions and the moment when the vanguard of the proletariat can successfully assume power, when it is able—during and after the seizure of power—to win adequate support from sufficiently broad strata of the working class and of the non-proletarian working masses, and when it is able thereafter to maintain, consolidate and extend its rule by educating, training and attracting ever broader masses of the working people.

Further. In countries more advanced than Russia, a certain reactionism in the trade unions has been and was bound to be manifested in a far greater measure than in our country. Our Mensheviks found support in the trade unions (and to some extent still do so in a small number of unions), as a result of the latter's craft narrow-mindedness, craft selfishness and opportunism. The Mensheviks of the West have acquired a much firmer footing in the trade unions; there the *craft-union, narrow-minded, selfish, case-hardened, covetous, and petty-bourgeois "labour aristocracy," imperialist-minded, and imperialist-corrupted*, has developed into a much stronger section than in our country. That is incontestable. The struggle against the Gomperses, and against the Jouhaux, Hendersons, Merrheims, Legiens and Co. in Western Europe is much more difficult than the struggle against our Mensheviks, who are an *absolutely homogeneous* social and political type. This struggle must be waged ruthlessly, and it must unfailingly be brought—as we brought it—to a point when all the incorrigible leaders of opportunism and social-chauvinism are completely discredited and driven out of the trade unions. Political power cannot be captured (and the attempt to capture it should not be made) until the struggle has reached a *certain* stage. This "certain stage" will be *different* in different countries and in different circumstances; it can be correctly gauged only by thoughtful, experienced and knowledgeable political leaders of the proletariat in each particular country. (In Russia the elections to the Constituent Assembly in November 1917, a few days after the proletarian revolution of October 25, 1917, were one of the criteria of the success of this struggle. In these elections the Mensheviks were utterly defeated; they received 700,000 votes—1,400,000 if the vote in Transcaucasia is added—as against 9,000,000 votes polled by the Bolsheviks.

See my article, “The Constituent Assembly Elections and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat,”²⁴ in the *Communist International*²⁵ No. 7–8.)

We are waging a struggle against the “labour aristocracy” in the name of the masses of the workers and in order to win them over to our side; we are waging the struggle against the opportunist and social-chauvinist leaders in order to win the working class over to our side. It would be absurd to forget this most elementary and most self-evident truth. Yet it is this very absurdity that the German “Left” Communists perpetrate when, *because* of the reactionary and counter-revolutionary character of the trade union *top leadership*, they jump to the conclusion that . . . we must withdraw from the trade unions, refuse to work in them, and create new and *artificial* forms of labour organisation! This is so unpardonable a blunder that it is tantamount to the greatest service Communists could render the bourgeoisie. Like all the opportunist, social-chauvinist, and Kautskyite trade union leaders, our Mensheviks are nothing but “agents of the bourgeoisie in the working-class movement” (as we have always said the Mensheviks are), or “labour lieutenants of the capitalist class,” to use the splendid and profoundly true expression of the followers of Daniel De Leon in America. To refuse to work in the reactionary trade unions means leaving the insufficiently developed or backward masses of workers under the influence of the reactionary leaders, the agents of the bourgeoisie, the labour aristocrats, or “workers who have become completely bourgeois” (cf. Engels’s letter to Marx in 1858 about the British workers²⁶).

This ridiculous “theory” that Communists should not work in reactionary trade unions reveals with the utmost clarity the frivolous attitude of the “Left” Communists towards the question of influencing the “masses,” and their misuse of clamour about the “masses.” If you want to help the “masses” and win the sympathy and support of the “masses,” you should not fear difficulties, or pinpricks, chicanery, insults and persecution from the “leaders” (who, being opportunists and social-chauvinists, are in most cases directly or indirectly connected with the bourgeoisie and the police), but must absolutely *work wherever the masses are to be found*. You must be capable of any sacrifice, of overcoming the greatest obstacles, in order to carry on agitation and propaganda systematically, perseveringly, persistently and patiently in those institutions, societies and associations—even the most reactionary—in which proletarian or semi-proletarian masses are to be found. The trade unions and the workers’ co-operatives (the latter sometimes, at least) are the very organisations in which the masses are to be found. According to figures quoted in the Swedish paper *Folkets Dagblad Politiken* of March 10, 1920, the trade union membership in Great Britain increased from 5,500,000 at the end of 1917 to 6,600,000 at the end of 1918, an increase of 19 per cent. Towards the close

of 1919, the membership was estimated at 7,500,000. I have not got the corresponding figures for France and Germany to hand, but absolutely incontestable and generally known facts testify to a rapid rise in the trade union membership in these countries too.

These facts make crystal clear something that is confirmed by thousands of other symptoms, namely, that class-consciousness and the desire for organisation are growing among the proletarian masses, among the rank and file, among the backward elements. Millions of workers in Great Britain, France and Germany are *for the first time* passing from a complete lack of organisation to the elementary, lowest, simplest, and (to those still thoroughly imbued with bourgeois-democratic prejudices) most easily comprehensible form of organisation, namely, the trade unions; yet the revolutionary but imprudent Left Communists stand by, crying out “the masses,” “the masses!” but *refusing to work within the trade unions*, on the pretext that they are “reactionary,” and invent a brand-new, immaculate little “Workers’ Union,” which is guiltless of bourgeois-democratic prejudices and innocent of craft or narrow-minded craft-union sins, a union which, they claim, will be (!) a broad organisation. “Recognition of the Soviet system and the dictatorship” will be the *only* (!) condition of membership. (See the passage quoted above.)

It would be hard to imagine any greater ineptitude or greater harm to the revolution than that caused by the “Left” revolutionaries! Why, if we in Russia today, after two and a half years of unprecedented victories over the bourgeoisie of Russia and the Entente, were to make “recognition of the dictatorship” a condition of trade union membership, we would be doing a very foolish thing, damaging our influence among the masses, and helping the Mensheviks. The task devolving on Communists is to *convince* the backward elements, to work *among* them, and not to *fence themselves off* from them with artificial and childish “Left” slogans.

There can be no doubt that the Gomperses, the Hendersons, the Jonhauks and the Legiens are very grateful to those “Left” revolutionaries who, like the German opposition “on principle” (heaven preserve us from such “principles”!), or like some of the revolutionaries in the American Industrial Workers of the World²⁷ advocate quitting the reactionary trade unions and refusing to work in them. These men, the “leaders” of opportunism, will no doubt resort to every device of bourgeois diplomacy and to the aid of bourgeois governments, the clergy, the police and the courts, to keep Communists out of the trade unions, oust them by every means, make their work in the trade unions as unpleasant as possible, and insult, bait and persecute them. We must be able to stand up to all this, agree to make any sacrifice, and even—if need be—to resort to various stratagems, artifices

and illegal methods, to evasions and subterfuges, as long as we get into the trade unions, remain in them, and carry on communist work within them at all costs. Under tsarism we had no “legal opportunities” whatsoever until 1905. However, when Zubatov, agent of the secret police, organised Black-Hundred workers’ assemblies and workingmen’s societies for the purpose of trapping revolutionaries and combating them, we sent members of our Party to these assemblies and into these societies (I personally remember one of them, Comrade Babushkin, a leading St. Petersburg factory worker, shot by order of the tsar’s generals in 1906). They established contacts with the masses, were able to carry on their agitation, and succeeded in wresting workers from the influence of Zubatov’s agents.*⁴ Of course, in Western Europe, which is imbued with most deep-rooted legalistic, constitutionalist and bourgeois-democratic prejudices, this is more difficult of achievement. However, it can and must be carried out, and systematically at that.

The Executive Committee of the Third International must, in my opinion, positively condemn, and call upon the next congress of the Communist International to condemn both the policy of refusing to work in reactionary trade unions in general (explaining in detail why such refusal is unwise, and what extreme harm it does to the cause of the proletarian revolution) and, in particular, the line of conduct of some members of the Communist Party of Holland, who—whether directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly, wholly or partly, it does not matter—have supported this erroneous policy. The Third International must break with the tactics of the Second International, it must not evade or play down points at issue, but must pose them in a straightforward fashion. The whole truth has been put squarely to the “Independents” (the); the whole truth must likewise be put squarely to the “Left” Communists.

Notes

22. Between the February 1917 Revolution and 1919 inclusively, the Party’s membership changed as follows: by the Seventh All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) (April 1917) the Party numbered 80,000 members, by the Sixth R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Congress in July–August 1917—about 240,000, by the Seventh Congress of the R.C.P.(B.) in March 1918—not less than 270,000; by the Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.) in March 1919—313,766 members.
23. The reference is to *Party Week*, which was held in accordance with the resolution of the Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.) on building up the Party’s membership. The Party Week was conducted in conditions of the bitter struggle waged by the Soviet state against the foreign intervention and domestic counterrevolution. Party Week was first held in the Petrograd organisation of the R.C.P.(B.), August 10–17, 1919 (the second Party Week was held in Petrograd in October–November 1919); between September 20 and 28 a Party Week was

held in the Moscow Gubernia organisation. Summarising the experience of the first Party Weeks, the Plenum of the Central Committee of the R.C.P.(B.), held on September 26, 1919, resolved that Party Weeks should be held in cities, the countryside and the army. At the end of September, the Central Committee addressed a circular to all Party organisations pointing out that, as the re-registration and purge of the membership had been accomplished in almost all Party organisations, new members might be enrolled. The Central Committee stressed that during Party Weeks only industrial workers, peasants, and Red Army and Navy men should be admitted into the Party. As a result of Party Weeks, over 200,000 joined the Party in 38 gubernias of the European part of the R.S.F.S.R., more than a half of them being industrial workers. Over 25 per cent of the armed forces' strength joined the Party at the fronts.

24. See *LCW*, Vol. 30, pp. 253–75.

25. The *Communist International*—a journal, organ of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. It was published in Russian, German, French, English, Spanish and Chinese, the first issue appearing on May 1, 1919.

The journal published theoretical articles and documents of the Comintern, including a number of articles by Lenin. It elucidated the fundamental questions of Marxist-Leninist theory in connection with problems confronting the international working-class and communist movement and the experience of socialist construction in the Soviet Union. It also waged a struggle against various anti-Leninist tendencies.

Publication of the journal ceased in June 1943 in connection with the resolution adopted by the Presidium of the Comintern's Executive Committee on May 15, 1943, on the dissolution of the Communist International.

26. See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, 1965, p. 110.

27. The *Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.)*—a workers' trade union organisation, founded in the U.S.A. in 1905, and in the main organising unskilled and low-paid workers of various trades. Among its founders were such working-class leaders as Daniel De Leon, Eugene Debs and William Haywood. I.W.W. organisations were also set up in Canada, Australia, Britain, Latin America and South Africa. In conditions of the mass strike movement in the U.S.A., which developed under the influence of the Russian revolution of 1905–07, the I.W.W. organised a number of successful mass strikes, waged a struggle against the policy of class collaboration conducted by reformist leaders of the American Federation of Labor and Right-wing socialists. During the First World War of 1914–18, the organisation led a number of mass anti-war actions by the American working class. Some I.W.W. Leaders, among them William Haywood, welcomed the Great October Socialist Revolution and joined the Communist Party of the U.S.A. At the same time, anarcho-syndicalist features showed up in I.W.W. activities: it did not recognise the proletariat's political struggle, denied the Party's leading role and the necessity of the proletarian dictatorship, and refused to carry on work among the membership of the American Federation of Labor. In 1920 the organisation's anarcho-syndicalist leaders took advantage of the imprisonment of many revolutionaries and against the will of the trade union masses, rejected appeal by the Comintern's Executive Committee

that they join the Communist International. As a result of the leaders’ opportunist policy, the I.W.W. degenerated into a sectarian organisation, which soon lost all influence on the working-class movement.

*4 The Gomperses, Hendersons, Jouhaux and Legiens are nothing but Zubatovs, differing from our Zubatov only in their European garb and polish, and the civilised, refined and democratically suave manner of conducting their despicable policy.

Should We Participate in Bourgeois Parliaments?

It is with the utmost contempt—and the utmost levity—that the German “Left” Communists reply to this question in the negative. Their arguments? In the passage quoted above we read:

“...All reversion to parliamentary forms of struggle, which have become historically and politically obsolete, must be emphatically rejected...”

This is said with ridiculous pretentiousness, and is patently wrong. “Reversion” to parliamentarianism, forsooth! Perhaps there is already a Soviet republic in Germany? It does not look like it! How, then, can one speak of “reversion”? Is this not an empty phrase?

Parliamentarianism has become “historically obsolete.” That is true in the propaganda sense. However, everybody knows that this is still a far cry from overcoming it in *practice*. Capitalism could have been declared—and with full justice—to be “historically obsolete” many decades ago, but that does not at all remove the need for a very long and very persistent struggle *on the basis* of capitalism. Parliamentarianism is “historically obsolete” from the standpoint of *world history*, i.e., the *era* of bourgeois parliamentarianism is over, and the *era* of the proletarian dictatorship has *begun*. That is incontestable. But world history is counted in decades. Ten or twenty years earlier or later makes no difference when measured with the yardstick of world history; from the standpoint of world history it is a trifle that cannot be considered even approximately. But for that very reason, it is a glaring theoretical error to apply the yardstick of world history to practical politics.

Is parliamentarianism “politically obsolete”? That is quite a different matter. If that were true, the position of the “Lefts” would be a strong one. But it has to be proved by a most searching analysis, and the “Lefts” do not even know how to approach the matter. In the “Theses on Parliamentarianism,” published in the *Bulletin of the Provisional Bureau in Amsterdam of the Communist International* No. 1, February 1920, and obviously expressing the

Dutch-Left or Left-Dutch strivings, the analysis, as we shall see, is also hopelessly poor.

In the first place, contrary to the opinion of such outstanding political leaders as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the German “Lefts,” as we know, considered parliamentarianism “politically obsolete” even in January 1919. We know that the “Lefts” were mistaken. This fact alone utterly destroys, at a single stroke, the proposition that parliamentarianism is “politically obsolete.” It is for the “Lefts” to prove why their error, indisputable at that time, is no longer an error. They do not and cannot produce even a shred of proof. A political party’s attitude towards its own mistakes is one of the most important and surest ways of judging how earnest the party is and how it fulfils *in practice* its obligations towards its *class* and the *working people*. Frankly acknowledging a mistake, ascertaining the reasons for it, analysing the conditions that have led up to it, and thrashing out the means of its rectification—that is the hallmark of a serious party; that is how it should perform its duties, and how it should educate and train its *class*, and then the *masses*. By failing to fulfil this duty and give the utmost attention and consideration to the study of their patent error, the “Lefts” in Germany (and in Holland) have proved that they are not a *party of a class*, but a circle, not a *party of the masses*, but a group of intellectualists and of a few workers who ape the worst features of intellectualism.

Second, in the same pamphlet of the Frankfurt group of “Lefts,” which we have already cited in detail, we read:

“... The millions of workers who still follow the policy of the Centre [the Catholic ‘Centre’ Party] are counter-revolutionary. The rural proletarians provide the legions of counter-revolutionary troops.” (Page 3 of the pamphlet.)

Everything goes to show that this statement is far too sweeping and exaggerated. But the basic fact set forth here is incontrovertible, and its acknowledgment by the “Lefts” is particularly clear evidence of their mistake. How can one say that “parliamentarianism is politically obsolete,” when “millions” and “legions” of *proletarians* are not only still in favour of parliamentarianism in general, but are downright “counter-revolutionary”!? It is obvious that parliamentarianism in Germany is *not yet* politically obsolete. It is obvious that the “Lefts” in Germany have mistaken *their desire*, their politico-ideological attitude, for objective reality. That is a most dangerous mistake for revolutionaries to make. In Russia—where, over a particularly long period and in particularly varied forms, the most brutal and savage yoke of tsarism produced revolutionaries of diverse shades, revolutionaries who displayed amazing devotion, enthusiasm, heroism and will power—in Russia

we have observed this mistake of the revolutionaries at very close quarters; we have studied it very attentively and have a first-hand knowledge of it; that is why we can also see it especially clearly in others. Parliamentarianism is of course “politically obsolete” to the Communists in Germany; but—and that is the whole point—we must *not* regard what is obsolete *to us* as something obsolete *to a class, to the masses*. Here again we find that the “Lefts” do not know how to reason, do not know how to act as the party of a *class*, as the party of the *masses*. You must not sink to the level of the masses, to the level of the backward strata of the class. That is incontestable. You must tell them the bitter truth. You are in duty bound to call their bourgeois-democratic and parliamentary prejudices what they are—prejudices. But at the same time you must *soberly* follow the *actual* state of the class-consciousness and preparedness of the entire class (not only of its communist vanguard), and of all the *working people* (not only of their advanced elements).

Even if only a fairly large *minority* of the industrial workers, and not “millions” and “legions,” follow the lead of the Catholic clergy—and a similar minority of rural workers follow the landowners and kulaks (Grossbauern)—it *undoubtedly* signifies that parliamentarianism in Germany has not *yet* politically outlived itself, that participation in parliamentary elections and in the struggle on the parliamentary rostrum is *obligatory* on the party of the revolutionary proletariat *specifically* for the purpose of educating the backward strata of *its own class*, and for the purpose of awakening and enlightening the undeveloped, downtrodden and ignorant rural *masses*. Whilst you lack the strength to do away with bourgeois parliaments and every other type of reactionary institution, you *must* work within them because *it is there* that you will still find workers who are duped by the priests and stultified by the conditions of rural life; otherwise you risk turning into nothing but windbags.

Third, the “Left” Communists have a great deal to say in praise of us Bolsheviks. One sometimes feels like telling them to praise us less and to try to get a better knowledge of the Bolsheviks’ tactics. We took part in the elections to the Constituent Assembly, the Russian bourgeois parliament in September–November 1917. Were our tactics correct or not? If not, then this should be clearly stated and proved, for it is necessary in evolving the correct tactics for international communism. If they were correct, then certain conclusions must be drawn. Of course, there can be no question of placing conditions in Russia on a par with conditions in Western Europe. But as regards the particular question of the meaning of the concept that “parliamentarianism has become politically obsolete,” due account should be taken of our experience, for unless concrete experience is taken into account such concepts very easily turn into empty phrases. In September–November

1917, did we, the Russian Bolsheviks, not have *more* right than any Western Communists to consider that parliamentarianism was politically obsolete in Russia? Of course we did, for the point is not whether bourgeois parliaments have existed for a long time or a short time, but how far the masses of the working people are *prepared* (ideologically, politically and practically) to accept the Soviet system and to dissolve the bourgeois-democratic parliament (or allow it to be dissolved). It is an absolutely incontestable and fully established historical fact that, in September–November 1917, the urban working class and the soldiers and peasants of Russia were, because of a number of special conditions, exceptionally well prepared to accept the Soviet system and to disband the most democratic of bourgeois parliaments. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks did *not* boycott the Constituent Assembly, but took part in the elections both before *and after* the proletariat conquered political power. That these elections yielded exceedingly valuable (and to the proletariat, highly useful) political results has, I make bold to hope, been proved by me in the above-mentioned article, which analyses in detail the returns of the elections to the Constituent Assembly in Russia.

The conclusion which follows from this is absolutely incontrovertible: it has been proved that, far from causing harm to the revolutionary proletariat, participation in a bourgeois-democratic parliament, even a few weeks before the victory of a Soviet republic and even *after* such a victory, actually helps that proletariat to *prove* to the backward masses why such parliaments deserve to be done away with; it *facilitates* their successful dissolution, and *helps* to make bourgeois parliamentarianism “politically obsolete.” To ignore this experience, while at the same time claiming affiliation to the Communist *International*, which must work out its tactics internationally (not as narrow or exclusively national tactics, but as international tactics), means committing a gross error and actually abandoning internationalism in deed, while recognising it in word.

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

“When the capitalist system of production has broken down, and society is in a state of revolution, parliamentary action gradually loses importance as compared with the action of the masses themselves. When, in these conditions, parliament becomes the centre and organ of the counter-revolution, whilst, on the other hand, the labouring class builds up the instruments of its power in the Soviets, it may even prove necessary to abstain from all and any participation in parliamentary action.”

The first sentence is obviously wrong, since action by the masses, a big strike, for instance, is more important than parliamentary activity at *all* times, and not only during a revolution or in a revolutionary situation. This obviously untenable and historically and politically incorrect argument merely shows very clearly that the authors completely ignore both the general European experience (the French experience before the revolutions of 1848 and 1870; the German experience of 1878–90, etc.) and the Russian experience (see above) of the importance of *combining* legal and illegal struggle. This question is of immense importance both in general and in particular, because in *all* civilised and advanced countries the time is rapidly approaching when such a combination will more and more become—and has already partly become—mandatory on the party of the revolutionary proletariat, inasmuch as civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is maturing and is imminent, and because of savage persecution of the Communists by republican governments and bourgeois governments generally, which resort to any violation of legality (the example of America is edifying enough), etc. The Dutch, and the Lefts in general, have utterly failed to understand this highly important question.

The second sentence is, in the first place, historically wrong. We Bolsheviks participated in the most counterrevolutionary parliaments, and experience has shown that this participation was not only useful but indispensable to the party of the revolutionary proletariat, after the first bourgeois revolution in Russia (1905), so as to pave the way for the second bourgeois revolution (February 1917), and then for the socialist revolution (October 1917). In the second place, this sentence is amazingly illogical. If a parliament becomes an organ and a “centre” (in reality it never has been and never can be a “centre,” but that is by the way) of counter-revolution, while the workers are building up the instruments of their power in the form of the Soviets, then it follows that the workers must prepare—ideologically, politically and technically—for the struggle of the Soviets against parliament, for the dispersal of parliament by the Soviets. But it does not at all follow that this dispersal is hindered, or is not facilitated, by the presence of a Soviet opposition *within* the counter-revolutionary parliament. In the course of our victorious struggle against Denikin and Kolchak, we never found that the existence of a Soviet and proletarian opposition in their camp was immaterial to our victories. We know perfectly well that the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly on January 5, 1918 was not hampered but was actually facilitated by the fact that, within the counter-revolutionary Constituent Assembly which was about to be dispersed, there was a consistent Bolshevik, as well as an inconsistent, Left Socialist-Revolutionary Soviet opposition. The authors of the theses are engaged in muddled thinking;

they have forgotten the experience of many, if not all, revolutions, which shows the great usefulness, during a revolution, of a *combination* of mass action outside a reactionary parliament with an opposition sympathetic to (or, better still, directly supporting) the revolution within it. The Dutch, and the “Lefts” in general, argue in this respect like doctrinaires of the revolution, who have never taken part in a real revolution, have never given thought to the history of revolutions, or have naïvely mistaken subjective “rejection” of a reactionary institution for its actual destruction by the combined operation of a number of objective factors. The surest way of discrediting and damaging a new political (and not only political) idea is to reduce it to absurdity on the plea of defending it. For any truth, if “overdone” (as Dietzgen Senior put it), if exaggerated, or if carried beyond the limits of its actual applicability, can be reduced to an absurdity, and is even bound to become an absurdity under these conditions. That is just the kind of disservice the Dutch and German Lefts are rendering to the new truth of the Soviet form of government being superior to bourgeois-democratic parliaments. Of course, anyone would be in error who voiced the outmoded viewpoint or in general considered it impermissible, in all and any circumstances, to reject participation in bourgeois parliaments. I cannot attempt here to formulate the conditions under which a boycott is useful, since the object of this pamphlet is far more modest, namely, to study Russian experience in connection with certain topical questions of international communist tactics. Russian experience has provided us with one successful and correct instance (1905), and another that was incorrect (1906), of the use of a boycott by the Bolsheviks. Analysing the first case, we, see that we succeeded in *preventing* a reactionary government from *convening* a reactionary parliament in a situation in which extra-parliamentary revolutionary mass action (strikes in particular) was developing at great speed, when not a single section of the proletariat and the peasantry could support the reactionary government in any way, and when the revolutionary proletariat was gaining influence over the backward masses through the strike struggle and through the agrarian movement. It is quite obvious that *this* experience is not applicable to present-day European conditions. It is likewise quite obvious—and the foregoing arguments bear this out—that the advocacy, even if with reservations, by the Dutch and the other “Lefts” of refusal to participate in parliaments is fundamentally wrong and detrimental to the cause of the revolutionary proletariat.

In Western Europe and America, parliament has become most odious to the revolutionary vanguard of the working class. That cannot be denied. It can readily be understood, for it is difficult to imagine anything more infamous, vile or treacherous than the behaviour of the vast majority of socialist

and Social-Democratic parliamentary deputies during and after the war. It would, however, be not only unreasonable but actually criminal to yield to this mood when deciding *how* this generally recognised evil should be fought. In many countries of Western Europe, the revolutionary mood, we might say, is at present a "novelty," or a "rarity," which has all too long been vainly and impatiently awaited; perhaps that is why people so easily yield to that mood. Certainly, without a revolutionary mood among the masses, and without conditions facilitating the growth of this mood, revolutionary tactics will never develop into action. In Russia, however, lengthy, painful and sanguinary experience has taught us the truth that revolutionary tactics cannot be built on a revolutionary mood alone. Tactics must be based on a sober and strictly objective appraisal of *all* the class forces in a particular state (and of the states that surround it, and of all states the world over) as well as of the experience of revolutionary movements. It is very easy to show one's "revolutionary" temper merely by hurling abuse at parliamentary opportunism, or merely by repudiating participation in parliaments; its very ease, however, cannot turn this into a solution of a difficult, a very difficult, problem. It is far more difficult to create a really revolutionary parliamentary group in a European parliament than it was in Russia. That stands to reason. But it is only a particular expression of the general truth that it was easy for Russia, in the specific and historically unique situation of 1917, to *start* the socialist revolution, but it will be more difficult for Russia than for the European countries to *continue* the revolution and bring it to its consummation. I had occasion to point this out already at the beginning of 1918, and our experience of the past two years has entirely confirmed the correctness of this view. Certain specific conditions, viz., (1) the possibility of linking up the Soviet revolution with the ending, as a consequence of this revolution, of the imperialist war, which had exhausted the workers and peasants to an incredible degree; (2) the possibility of taking temporary advantage of the mortal conflict between the world's two most powerful groups of imperialist robbers, who were unable to unite against their Soviet enemy; (3) the possibility of enduring a comparatively lengthy civil war, partly owing to the enormous size of the country and to the poor means of communication; (4) the existence of such a profound bourgeois-democratic revolutionary movement among the peasantry that the party of the proletariat was able to adopt the revolutionary demands of the peasant party (the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, the majority of whose members were definitely hostile to Bolshevism) and realise them at once, thanks to the conquest of political power by the proletariat—all these specific conditions do not at present exist in Western Europe, and a repetition of such or similar conditions will not occur so easily. Incidentally, apart from a number of other causes, that

is why it is more difficult for Western Europe to *start* a socialist revolution than it was for us. To attempt to “circumvent” this difficulty by “skipping” the arduous job of utilising reactionary parliaments for revolutionary purposes is absolutely childish. You want to create a new society, yet you fear the difficulties involved in forming a good parliamentary group made up of convinced, devoted and heroic Communists, in a reactionary parliament! Is that not childish? If Karl Liebknecht in Germany and Z. Höglund in Sweden were able, even without mass support from below, to set examples of the truly revolutionary utilisation of reactionary parliaments, why should a rapidly growing revolutionary mass party, in the midst of the post-war disillusionment and embitterment of the masses, be unable to *forge* a communist group in the worst of parliaments? It is because, in Western Europe, the backward masses of the workers and—to an even greater degree—of the small peasants are much more imbued with bourgeois-democratic and parliamentary prejudices than they were in Russia because of that, it is *only* from within such institutions as bourgeois parliaments that Communists can (and must) wage a long and persistent struggle, undaunted by any difficulties, to expose, dispel and overcome these prejudices.

The German “Lefts” complain of bad “leaders” in their party, give way to despair, and even arrive at a ridiculous “negation” of “leaders.” But in conditions in which it is often necessary to hide “leaders” underground, the *evolution* of good “leaders,” reliable, tested and authoritative, is a very difficult matter; these difficulties *cannot* be successfully overcome without combining legal and illegal work, and *without testing the “leaders,” among other ways*, in parliaments. Criticism—the most keen, ruthless and uncompromising criticism—should be directed, not against parliamentarianism or parliamentary activities, but against those leaders who are unable—and still more against those who are *unwilling*—to utilise parliamentary elections and the parliamentary rostrum in a revolutionary and communist manner. Only such criticism—combined, of course, with the dismissal of incapable leaders and their replacement by capable ones—will constitute useful and fruitful revolutionary work that will simultaneously train the “leaders” to be worthy of the working class and of all working people, and train the masses to be able properly to understand the political situation and the often very complicated and intricate tasks that spring from that situation.*⁵

Notes

*⁵ I have had too little opportunity to acquaint myself with “Left-wing” communism in Italy. Comrade Bordiga and his faction of Abstentionist Communists (*Comunista astensionista*) are certainly wrong in advocating non-participation in parliament. But on one point, it seems to me, Comrade Bordiga is right—as

far as can be judged from two issues of his paper, *Il Soviet* (Nos. 3 and 4, January 18 and February 1, 1920), from four issues of Comrade Serrati's excellent periodical, *Comunismo* (Nos. 1-4, October 1-November 30, 1919), and from separate issues of Italian bourgeois papers which I have seen. Comrade Bordiga and his group are right in attacking Turati and his partisans, who remain in a party which has recognised Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and yet continue their former pernicious and opportunist policy as members of parliament. Of course, in tolerating this, Comrade Serrati and the entire Italian Socialist Party²⁸ are making a mistake which threatens to do as much harm and give rise to the same dangers as it did in Hungary, where the Hungarian Turatis sabotaged both the party and the Soviet government²⁹ from within. Such a mistaken, inconsistent, or spineless attitude towards the opportunist parliamentarians gives rise to "Left-wing" communism, on the one hand, and *to a certain extent* justifies its existence, on the other. Comrade Serrati is obviously wrong when he accuses Deputy Turati of being "inconsistent" (*Comunismo* No. 3), for it is the Italian Socialist Party itself that is inconsistent in tolerating such opportunist parliamentarians as Turati and Co.

28. From its foundation in 1892, the *Italian Socialist Party* saw a bitter ideological struggle between the opportunist and the revolutionary trends within it. At the Reggio Emilia Congress of 1912, the most outspoken reformists who supported the war and collaboration with the government and the bourgeoisie (Ivanoe Bonomi, Leonida Bissolati and others) were expelled from the party under pressure from the Left wing. After the outbreak of the First World War and prior to Italy's entry into it, the I.S.P. came out against the war and advanced the slogan: "Against war, for neutrality!" In December 1914, a group of renegades including Benito Mussolini, who advocated the bourgeoisie's imperialist policy and supported the war, were expelled from the party. When Italy entered the war on the Entente's side (May 1915), three distinct trends emerged in the Italian Socialist Party: 1) the Right wing, which aided the bourgeoisie in the conduct of the war; 2) the Centre, which united most of party members and came out under the slogan: "No part in the war, and no sabotage of the war" and 3) the Left wing, which took a firmer anti-war stand, but could not organise a consistent struggle against the war. The Left wing did not realise the necessity of converting the imperialist war into a civil war, and of a decisive break with the reformists.

After the October Socialist Revolution in Russia, the Left wing of the I.S.P. grew stronger, and the 16th Party Congress held on October 5-8, 1919, in Bologna, adopted a resolution on affiliation to the Third International. I.S.P. representatives took part in the work of the Second Congress of the Comintern. After the Congress Centrist Serrati, head of the delegation, declared against a break with the reformists. At the 17th Party Congress in Leghorn in January 1921, the Centrists, who were in the majority, refused to break with the reformists and to accept all the terms of admission into the Comintern. On January 21, 1921, the Left-wing delegates walked out of the Congress and founded the Communist Party of Italy.

29. Soviet rule was established in Hungary on March 21, 1919. The socialist revolution in Hungary was a peaceful one, the Hungarian bourgeoisie being unable

to resist the people. Incapable of overcoming its internal and external difficulties, it decided to hand over power for a while to the Right-wing Social-Democrats so as to prevent the development of the revolution. However, the Hungarian Communist Party's prestige had grown so great, and the demands of rank-and-file Social-Democrats for unity with the Communists had become so insistent that the leaders of the Social-Democratic Party proposed to the arrested Communist leaders the formation of a joint government. The Social-Democratic leaders were obliged to accept the terms advanced by the Communists during the negotiations, i.e., the formation of a Soviet government, disarmament of the bourgeoisie, the creation of a Red Army and people's militia, confiscation of the landed estates, the nationalisation of industry, an alliance with Soviet Russia, etc.

An agreement was simultaneously signed on the merging of the two parties to form the Hungarian Socialist Party. While the two parties were being merged, errors were made which later became clear. The merger was carried out mechanically, without isolation of the reformist elements.

At its first meeting, the Revolutionary Governmental Council adopted a resolution on the formation of the Red Army. On March 26, the Soviet Government of Hungary issued decrees on the nationalisation of industrial enterprises, transport, and the banks; on April 2, a decree was published on the monopoly of foreign trade. Workers' wages were increased by an average of 25 per cent, and an 8-hour working day was introduced. On April 3, land-reform law was issued, by which all estates exceeding 57 hectares in area were confiscated. The confiscated land, however, was not distributed among the land-starved and landless peasants, but was turned over to agricultural producers' cooperatives and state farms organised after the reform. The poor peasants, who had hoped to get land, were disappointed. This prevented the establishment of a firm alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry, and weakened Soviet power in Hungary.

The Entente imperialists instituted an economic blockade of the Soviet Republic. Armed intervention against the Hungarian Soviet Republic was organised, the advance of interventionist troops stirring up the Hungarian counter-revolutionaries. The treachery of the Right-wing Social-Democrats, who entered into an alliance with international imperialism, was one of the causes of the Hungarian Soviet Republic's downfall.

The unfavourable international situation in the summer of 1919, when Soviet Russia was encircled by enemies and therefore could not help the Hungarian Soviet Republic, also played a definite role. On August 1, 1919, as a result of joint actions by the foreign imperialist interventionists and the domestic counterrevolutionaries, Soviet power in Hungary was overthrown.

No Compromises?

In the quotation from the Frankfurt pamphlet, we have seen how emphatically the “Lefts” have advanced this slogan. It is sad to see people who no doubt consider themselves Marxists, and want to be Marxists, forget the fundamental truths of Marxism. This is what Engels—who, like Marx, was one of those rarest of authors whose every sentence in every one of their fundamental works contains a remarkably profound content—wrote in 1874, against the manifesto of the thirty-three Blanquist Communards:

“We are Communists’ [the Blanquist Communards wrote in their manifesto], ‘because we want to attain our goal without stopping at intermediate stations, without any compromises, which only postpone the day of victory and prolong the period of slavery.’

“The German Communists are Communists because, through all the intermediate stations and all compromises created, not by them but by the course of historical development, they clearly perceive and constantly pursue the final aim—the abolition of classes and the creation of a society in which there will no longer be private ownership of land or of the means of production. The thirty-three Blanquists are Communists just because they imagine that, merely because *they* want to skip the intermediate stations and compromises, the matter is settled, and if ‘it begins’ in the next few days—which they take for granted—and they take over power, ‘communism will be introduced’ the day after tomorrow. If that is not immediately possible, they are not Communists.

“What childish innocence it is to present one’s own impatience as a theoretically convincing argument!” (Frederick Engels, “Programme of the Blanquist Communards,”³⁰ from the German Social-Democratic newspaper *Volksstaat*, 1874, No. 73, given in the Russian translation of *Articles, 1871–1875*, Petrograd, 1919, pp. 52–53).

In the same article, Engels expresses his profound esteem for Vaillant, and speaks of the “unquestionable merit” of the latter (who, like Guesde, was one of the most prominent leaders of international socialism until their betrayal of socialism in August 1914). But Engels does not fail to give a detailed analysis of an obvious error. Of course, to very young and inexperienced revolutionaries, as well as to petty-bourgeois revolutionaries of even very respectable age and great experience, it seems extremely “dangerous,” incomprehensible and wrong to “permit compromises.” Many sophists (being unusually or excessively “experienced” politicians) reason exactly in the same way as the British leaders of opportunism mentioned by Comrade Lansbury: “If the Bolsheviks are permitted a certain compromise, why should we not be permitted any kind of compromise?” However, proletarians schooled

in numerous strikes (to take only this manifestation of the class struggle) usually assimilate in admirable fashion the very profound truth (philosophical, historical, political and psychological) expounded by Engels. Every proletarian has been through strikes and has experienced “compromises” with the hated oppressors and exploiters, when the workers have had to return to work either without having achieved anything or else agreeing to only a partial satisfaction of their demands. Every proletarian—as a result of the conditions of the mass struggle and the acute intensification of class antagonisms he lives among—sees the difference between a compromise enforced by objective conditions (such as lack of strike funds, no outside support, starvation and exhaustion)—a compromise which in no way minimises the revolutionary devotion and readiness to carry on the struggle on the part of the workers who have agreed to such a compromise—and, on the other hand, a compromise by traitors who try to ascribe to objective causes their self-interest (strike-breakers also enter into “compromises”!), their cowardice, desire to toady to the capitalists, and readiness to yield to intimidation, sometimes to persuasion, sometimes to sops, and sometimes to flattery from the capitalists. (The history of the British labour movement provides a very large number of instances of such treacherous compromises by British trade union leaders, but, in one form or another, almost all workers in all countries have witnessed the same sort of thing.)

Naturally, there are individual cases of exceptional difficulty and complexity, when the greatest efforts are necessary for a proper assessment of the actual character of this or that “compromise,” just as there are cases of homicide when it is by no means easy to establish whether the homicide was fully justified and even necessary (as, for example, legitimate self-defence), or due to unpardonable negligence, or even to a cunningly executed perfidious plan. Of course, in politics, where it is sometimes a matter of extremely complex relations—national and international—between classes and parties, very many cases will arise that will be much more difficult than the question of a legitimate “compromise” in a strike or a treacherous “compromise” by a strike-breaker, treacherous leader, etc. It would be absurd to formulate a recipe or general rule (“No compromises!”) to suit all cases. One must use one’s own brains and be able to find one’s bearings in each particular instance. It is, in fact, one of the functions of a party organisation and of party leaders worthy of the name, to acquire, through the prolonged, persistent, variegated and comprehensive efforts of all thinking representatives of a given class,³⁰ the knowledge, experience and—in addition to knowledge and experience—the political flair necessary for the speedy and correct solution of complex political problems.³⁰

Naïve and quite inexperienced people imagine that the permissibility of compromise *in general* is sufficient to obliterate any distinction between opportunism, against which we are waging, and must wage, an unremitting struggle, and revolutionary Marxism, or communism. But if such people do not yet know that in nature and in society *all* distinctions are fluid and up to a certain point conventional, nothing can help them but lengthy training, education, enlightenment, and political and everyday experience. In the practical questions that arise in the politics of any particular or specific historical moment, it is important to single out those which display the principal type of intolerable and treacherous compromises, such as embody an opportunism that is fatal to the revolutionary class, and to exert all efforts to explain them and combat them. During the 1914–18 imperialist war between two groups of equally predatory countries, social-chauvinism was the principal and fundamental type of opportunism, i.e., support of "defence of country," which in *such* a war was really equivalent to defence of the predatory interests of one's "own" bourgeoisie. After the war, defence of the robber League of Nations,³¹ defence of direct or indirect alliances with the bourgeoisie of one's own country against the revolutionary proletariat and the "Soviet" movement, and defence of bourgeois democracy and bourgeois parliamentarianism against "Soviet power" became the principal manifestations of those intolerable and treacherous compromises, whose sum total constituted an opportunism fatal to the revolutionary proletariat and its cause.

"...All compromise with other parties...any policy of manoeuvring and compromise must be emphatically rejected,"

the German Lefts write in the Frankfurt pamphlet.

It is surprising that, with such views, these Lefts do not emphatically condemn Bolshevism! After all, the German Lefts cannot but know that the entire history of Bolshevism, both before and after the October Revolution, is *full* of instances of changes of tack, conciliatory tactics and compromises with other parties, including bourgeois parties!

To carry on a war for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie, a war which is a hundred times more difficult, protracted and complex than the most stubborn of ordinary wars between states, and to renounce in advance any change of tack, or any utilisation of a conflict of interests (even if temporary) among one's enemies, or any conciliation or compromise with possible allies (even if they are temporary, unstable, vacillating or conditional allies)—is that not ridiculous in the extreme? Is it not like making a difficult ascent of an unexplored and hitherto inaccessible mountain and

refusing in advance ever to move in zigzags, ever to retrace one's steps, or ever to abandon a course once selected, and to try others? And yet people so immature and inexperienced (if youth were the explanation, it would not be so bad; young people are preordained to talk such nonsense for a certain period) have met with support—whether direct or indirect, open or covert, whole or partial, it does not matter—from some members of the Communist Party of Holland.

After the first socialist revolution of the proletariat, and the overthrow of the bourgeoisie in some country, the proletariat of that country remains *for a long time weaker* than the bourgeoisie, simply because of the latter's extensive international links, and also because of the spontaneous and continuous restoration and regeneration of capitalism and the bourgeoisie by the small commodity producers of the country which has overthrown the bourgeoisie. The more powerful enemy can be vanquished only by exerting the utmost effort, and by the most thorough, careful, attentive, skilful and *obligatory* use of any, even the smallest, rift between the enemies, any conflict of interests 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 any, even the smallest, opportunity of winning a mass ally, even though this ally is temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable and conditional. Those who do not understand this reveal a failure to understand even the smallest grain of Marxism, of modern scientific socialism *in general*. Those who have not proved *in practice*, 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 help the revolutionary class in its struggle to emancipate all toiling humanity from the exploiters. And this applies equally to the period *before* and *after* the proletariat has won political power.

Our theory is not a dogma, but a *guide to action*, said Marx and Engels.³² The greatest blunder, the greatest crime, committed by such “out-and-out” Marxists as Karl Kautsky, Otto Bauer, etc., is that they have not understood this and have been unable to apply it at crucial moments of the proletarian revolution. “Political activity is not like the pavement of Nevsky Prospekt” (the well-kept, broad and level pavement of the perfectly straight principal thoroughfare of St. Petersburg), N. G. Chernyshevsky, the great Russian socialist of the pre-Marxist period, used to say. Since Chernyshevsky's time, disregard or forgetfulness of this truth has cost Russian revolutionaries countless sacrifices. We must strive at all costs to *prevent* the Left Communists and West-European and American revolutionaries that are devoted to the working class from paying *as dearly* as the backward Russians did to learn this truth.

Prior to the downfall of tsarism, the Russian revolutionary Social-Democrats made repeated use of the services of the bourgeois liberals, i.e., they concluded numerous practical compromises with the latter. In 1901–02, even prior to the appearance of Bolshevism, the old editorial board of *Iskra* (consisting of Plekhanov, Axelrod, Zasulich, Martov, Potresov and myself) concluded (not for long, it is true) a formal political alliance with Struve, the political leader of bourgeois liberalism, while at the same time being able to wage an unremitting and most merciless ideological and political struggle against bourgeois liberalism and against the slightest manifestation of its influence in the working-class movement. The Bolsheviks have always adhered to this policy. Since 1905 they have systematically advocated an alliance between the working class and the peasantry, against the liberal bourgeoisie and tsarism, never, however, refusing to support the bourgeoisie against tsarism (for instance, during second rounds of elections, or during second ballots) and never ceasing their relentless ideological and political struggle against the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the bourgeois-revolutionary peasant party, exposing them as petty-bourgeois democrats who have falsely described themselves as socialists. During the Duma elections of 1907, the Bolsheviks entered briefly into a formal political bloc with the Socialist-Revolutionaries. Between 1903 and 1912, there were periods of several years in which we were formally united with the Mensheviks in a single Social-Democratic Party, but we *never stopped* our ideological and political struggle against them as opportunists and vehicles of bourgeois influence on the proletariat. During the war, we concluded certain compromises with the Kautskyites, with the Left Mensheviks (Martov), and with a section of the Socialist-Revolutionaries (Chernov and Natanson); we were together with them at Zimmerwald and Kienthal,³³ and issued joint manifestos. However, we never ceased and never relaxed our ideological and political struggle against the Kautskyites, Martov and Chernov (when Natanson died in 1919, a “Revolutionary-Communist” Narodnik,³⁴ he was very close to and almost in agreement with us). At the very moment of the October Revolution, we entered into an informal but very important (and very successful) political bloc with the petty-bourgeois peasantry by adopting the *Socialist-Revolutionary* agrarian programme *in its entirety*, without a single alteration—i.e., we effected an undeniable compromise in order to prove to the peasants that we wanted, not to “steam-roller” them but to reach agreement with them. At the same time we proposed (and soon after effected) a formal political bloc, including participation in the government, with the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, who dissolved this bloc after the conclusion of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and then, in July 1918, went to the length of armed rebellion, and subsequently of an armed struggle, against us.

It is therefore understandable why the attacks made by the German Lefts against the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany for entertaining the idea of a bloc with the Independents (the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany—the Kautskyites) are absolutely inane, in our opinion, and clear proof that the “Lefts” are in the *wrong*. In Russia, too, there were Right Mensheviks (participants in the Kerensky government), who corresponded to the German Scheidemanns, and Left Mensheviks (Martov), corresponding to the German Kautskyites and standing in opposition to the Right Mensheviks. A gradual shift of the worker masses from the Mensheviks over to the Bolsheviks was to be clearly seen in 1917. At the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets, held in June 1917, we had only 13 per cent of the votes; the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks had a majority. At the Second Congress of Soviets (October 25, 1917, old style) we had 51 per cent of the votes. Why is it that in Germany the *same* and absolutely *identical* shift of the workers from Right to Left did not immediately strengthen the Communists, but first strengthened the midway Independent Party, although the latter never had independent political ideas or an independent policy, but merely wavered between the Scheidemanns and the Communists?

One of the evident reasons was the *erroneous* tactics of the German Communists, who must fearlessly and honestly admit this error and learn to rectify it. The error consisted in their denial of the need to take part in the reactionary bourgeois parliaments and in the reactionary trade unions; the error consisted in numerous manifestations of that “Left-wing” infantile disorder which has now come to the surface and will consequently be cured the more thoroughly, the more rapidly and with greater advantage to the organism.

The German Independent Social-Democratic Party is obviously not a homogeneous body. Alongside the old opportunist leaders (Kautsky, Hilferding and apparently, to a considerable extent, Crispian, Ledebour and others)—these have revealed their inability to understand the significance of Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and their inability to lead the proletariat’s revolutionary struggle—there has emerged in this party a Left and proletarian wing, which is growing most rapidly. Hundreds of thousands of members of this party (which has, I think, a membership of some three-quarters of a million) are proletarians who are abandoning Scheidemann and are rapidly going over to communism. This proletarian wing has already proposed—at the Leipzig Congress of the Independents (1919)—immediate and unconditional affiliation to the Third International. To fear a “compromise” with this wing of the party is positively ridiculous. On the contrary, it is the *duty* of Communists to seek *and find* a

suitable form of compromise with them, a compromise which, on the one hand, will facilitate and accelerate the necessary complete fusion with this wing and, on the other, will in no way hamper the Communists in their ideological and political struggle against the opportunist Right wing of the Independents. It will probably be no easy matter to devise a suitable form of compromise—but only a charlatan could promise the German workers and the German Communists an "easy" road to victory.

Capitalism would not be capitalism if the proletariat *pur sang* were not surrounded by a large number of exceedingly motley types intermediate between the proletarian and the semi-proletarian (who earns his livelihood in part by the sale of his labour-power), between the semi-proletarian and the small peasant (and petty artisan, handicraft worker and small master in general), between the small peasant and the middle peasant, and so on, and if the proletariat itself were not divided into more developed and less developed strata, if it were not divided according to territorial origin, trade, sometimes according to religion, and so on. From all this follows the necessity, the absolute necessity, for the Communist Party, the vanguard of the proletariat, its class-conscious section, to resort to changes of tack, to conciliation and compromises with the various groups of proletarians, with the various parties of the workers and small masters. It is entirely a matter of *knowing how* to apply these tactics in order to *raise*—not lower—the *general* level of proletarian class-consciousness, revolutionary spirit, and ability to fight and win. Incidentally, it should be noted that the Bolsheviks' victory over the Mensheviks called for the application of tactics of changes of tack, conciliation and compromises, not only before *but also after* the October Revolution of 1917, but the changes of tack and compromises were, of course, such as assisted, boosted and consolidated the Bolsheviks at the expense of the Mensheviks. The petty-bourgeois democrats (including the Mensheviks) inevitably vacillate between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, between bourgeois democracy and the Soviet system, between reformism and revolutionism, between love for the workers and fear of the proletarian dictatorship, etc. The Communists' proper tactics should consist in *utilising* these vacillations, not ignoring them; utilising them calls for concessions to elements that are turning towards the proletariat—when ever and in the measure that they turn towards the proletariat—in addition to fighting those who turn towards the bourgeoisie. As a result of the application of the correct tactics, Menshevism began to disintegrate, and has been disintegrating more and more in our country; the stubbornly opportunist leaders are being isolated, and the best of the workers and the best elements among the petty-bourgeois democrats are being brought into our camp. This is a lengthy process, and the hasty "decision"—"No

compromises, no manoeuvres”—can only prejudice the strengthening of the revolutionary proletariat’s influence and the enlargement of its forces.

Lastly, one of the undoubted errors of the German “Lefts” lies in their downright refusal to recognise the Treaty of Versailles. The more “weightily” and “pompously,” the more “emphatically” and peremptorily this viewpoint is formulated (by K. Horner, for instance), the less sense it seems to make. It is not enough, under the present conditions of the international proletarian revolution, to repudiate the preposterous absurdities of “National Bolshevism” (Laufenberg and others), which has gone to the length of advocating a bloc with the German bourgeoisie for a war against the Entente. One must realise that it is utterly false tactics to refuse to admit that a Soviet Germany (if a German Soviet republic were soon to arise) would have to recognise the Treaty of Versailles for a time, and to submit to it. From this it does not follow that the Independents—at a time when the Scheidemanns were in the government, when the Soviet government in Hungary had not yet been overthrown, and when it was still possible that a Soviet revolution in Vienna would support Soviet Hungary—were right, *under the circumstances*, in putting forward the demand that the Treaty of Versailles should be signed. At that time the Independents tacked and manoeuvred very clumsily, for they more or less accepted responsibility for the Scheidemann traitors, and more or less backslid from advocacy of a ruthless (and most calmly conducted) class war against the Scheidemanns, to advocacy of a “classless” or “above-class” standpoint.

In the present situation, however, the German Communists should obviously not deprive themselves of freedom of action by giving a positive and categorical promise to repudiate the Treaty of Versailles in the event of communism’s victory. That would be absurd. They should say: the Scheidemanns and the Kautskyites have committed a number of acts of treachery hindering (and in part quite ruining) the chances of an alliance with Soviet Russia and Soviet Hungary. We Communists will do all we can to *facilitate* and *pave the way* for such an alliance. However, we are in no way obligated to repudiate the Treaty of Versailles, come what may, or to do so at once. The possibility of its successful repudiation will depend, not only on the German, but also on the international successes of the Soviet movement. The Scheidemanns and the Kautskyites have hampered this movement; we are helping it. That is the gist of the matter; therein lies the fundamental difference. And if our class enemies, the exploiters and their Scheidemann and Kautskyite lackeys, have missed many an opportunity of strengthening both the German and the international Soviet movement, of strengthening both the German and the international Soviet revolution, the blame lies with them. The Soviet revolution in Germany will strengthen the international

Soviet movement, which is the strongest bulwark (and the only reliable, invincible and world-wide bulwark) against the Treaty of Versailles and against international imperialism in general. To give absolute, categorical and immediate precedence to liberation from the Treaty of Versailles and to give it *precedence over the question* of liberating *other* countries oppressed by imperialism, from the yoke of imperialism, is philistine nationalism (worthy of the Kautskys, the Hilferdings, the Otto Bauers and Co.), not revolutionary internationalism. The overthrow of the bourgeoisie in any of the large European countries, including Germany, would be such a gain for the international revolution that, for its sake, one can, and if necessary should, tolerate a *more prolonged existence of the Treaty of Versailles*. If Russia, standing alone, could endure the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk for several months, to the advantage of the revolution, there is nothing impossible in a Soviet Germany, allied with Soviet Russia, enduring the existence of the Treaty of Versailles for a longer period, to the advantage of the revolution.

The imperialists of France, Britain, etc., are trying to provoke and ensnare the German Communists: "Say that you will not sign the Treaty of Versailles!" they urge. Like babes, the Left Communists fall into the trap laid for them, instead of skilfully manoeuvring against the crafty and, *at present*, stronger enemy, and instead of telling him, "We shall sign the Treaty of Versailles now." It is folly, not revolutionism, to deprive ourselves in advance of any freedom of action, openly to inform an enemy who is at present better armed than we are whether we shall fight him, and when. To accept battle at a time when it is obviously advantageous to the enemy, but not to us, is criminal; political leaders of the revolutionary class are absolutely useless if they are incapable of "changing tack, or offering conciliation and compromise" in order to take evasive action in a patently disadvantageous battle.

Notes

30. See Marx/Engels, *Werke*, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1962, Bd. 18, S. 533.
31. The *League of Nations* was an international body which existed between the First and the Second World Wars. It was founded in 1919 at the Paris Peace Conference of the victor powers of the First World War. The Covenant of the League of Nations formed part of the Treaty of Versailles of 1919, and was signed by 44 nations. The Covenant was designed to produce the impression that this organisation's aim was to combat aggression, reduce armaments, and consolidate peace and security. In practice, however its leaders shielded the aggressors, fostered the arms race and preparations for the Second World War. Between 1920 and 1934, the League's activities were hostile towards the Soviet Union. It was one of the centres for the organising of armed intervention against the Soviet state in 1920–21.

On September 15, 1934, on French initiative, 34 member states invited the Soviet Union to join the League of Nations, which the U.S.S.R. did, with the aim of strengthening peace. However, the Soviet Union's attempts to form a peace front met with resistance from reactionary circles in the Western powers. With the outbreak of the Second World War the League's activities came to an end, the formal dissolution taking place in April 1946, according to a decision by the specially summoned Assembly.

32. Lenin is referring to a passage from Frederick Engels's letter to F. A. Sorge of November 29, 1886, in which, criticising German Social-Democrat political exiles living in America, Engels wrote that for them the theory was "a credo, not a guide to action" (see Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, 1965, p. 395).
33. The reference is to the international socialist conferences in Zimmerwald and Kienthal (Switzerland).

The *Zimmerwald Conference*, the first international socialist conference, was held on September 5–8, 1915. The *Kienthal Conference*, the second international socialist conference, was held in the small town of Kienthal on April 24–30, 1916.

The Zimmerwald and Kienthal conferences contributed to the ideological unity, on the basis of Marxism-Leninism, of the Left-wing elements in West-European Social-Democracy, who later played an active part in the formation of Communist parties in their countries and the establishment of the Third, Communist International.

34. "*Revolutionary Communists*"—a Narodnik group which broke away from the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries after the latter's mutiny in July 1918. In September 1918, they formed the "Party of Revolutionary Communism," which favoured co-operation with the R.C.P.(B.), and pledged support for Soviet power. Their programme which remained on the platform of Narodnik utopianism was muddled and eclectic. While recognising that Soviet rule created preconditions for the establishment of a socialist system, the "revolutionary communists" denied the necessity of the proletarian dictatorship during the transitional period from capitalism to socialism. Throughout the lifetime of the "Party of Revolutionary Communism," certain of its groups broke away from it, some of them joining the R.C.P.(B.) (A. Kolegayev, A. Bitsenko, M. Dobrokhotov and others), and others, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries. Two representatives of the "Party of Revolutionary Communism" were allowed to attend the Second Congress of the Comintern, in a deliberative capacity, but with no votes. In September 1920, following the Congress decision that there must be a single Communist Party in each country, the "Party of Revolutionary Communism" decided to join the R.C.P.(B.). In October of the same year, the R.C.P.(B.) Central Committee permitted Party organisations to enrol members of the former "Party of Revolutionary Communism" in the R.C.P.(B.).

*6 Within every class, even in the conditions prevailing in the most enlightened countries, even within the most advanced class, and even when the circumstances of the moment have aroused all its spiritual forces to an exceptional degree, there always are—and inevitably *will be* as long as classes exist, as long as a classless society has not fully consolidated itself, and has not developed on

its own foundations— representatives of the class who do not think, and are incapable of thinking, for themselves. Capitalism would not be the Oppressor of the masses that it actually is, if things were otherwise.

“Left-Wing” Communism in Great Britain

There is no Communist Party in Great Britain as yet, but there is a fresh, broad, powerful and rapidly growing communist movement among the workers, which justifies the best hopes. There are several political parties and organisations (the British Socialist Party,³⁵ the Socialist Labour Party, the South Wales Socialist Society, the Workers’ Socialist Federation³⁶), which desire to form a Communist Party and are already negotiating among themselves to this end. In its issue of February 21, 1920, Vol. VI, No. 48, *The Workers’ Dreadnought*, weekly organ of the last of the organisations mentioned, carried an article by the editor, Comrade Sylvia Pankhurst, entitled “Towards a Communist Party.” The article outlines the progress of the negotiations between the four organisations mentioned, for the formation of a united Communist Party, on the basis of affiliation to the Third International, the recognition of the Soviet system instead of parliamentarianism, and the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It appears that one of the greatest obstacles to the immediate formation of a united Communist Party is presented by the disagreement on the questions of participation in Parliament and on whether the new Communist Party should affiliate to the old, trade-unionist, opportunist and social-chauvinist Labour Party, which is mostly made up of trade unions. The Workers’ Socialist Federation and the Socialist Labour Party³⁷ are opposed to taking part in parliamentary elections and in Parliament, and they are opposed to affiliation to the Labour Party; in this they disagree with all or with most of the members of the British Socialist Party, which they regard as the “Right wing of the Communist parties” in Great Britain. (Page 5, Sylvia Pankhurst’s article.)

Thus, the main division is the same as in Germany, notwithstanding the enormous difference in the forms in which the disagreements manifest themselves (in Germany the form is far closer to the “Russian” than it is in Great Britain), and in a number of other things. Let us examine the arguments of the “Lefts.”

On the question of participation in Parliament, Comrade Sylvia Pankhurst refers to an article in the same issue, by Comrade Gallacher, who writes in the name of the Scottish Workers’ Council in Glasgow.

“The above council,” he writes, “is definitely anti-parliamentarian, and has behind it the Left wing of the various political bodies. We represent the revolutionary movement in Scotland, striving continually to build up a revolutionary organisation within the industries [in various branches of production], and a Communist Party, based on social committees, throughout the country. For a considerable time we have been sparring with the official parliamentarians. We have not considered it necessary to declare open warfare on them, and they are *afraid* to open an attack on us.

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

“The rank and file of the I.L.P. in Scotland is becoming more and more disgusted with the thought of Parliament, and the Soviets [the Russian word transliterated into English is used] or Workers’ Councils are being supported by almost every branch. This is very serious, of course, for the gentlemen who look to politics for a profession, and they are using any and every means to persuade their members to come back into the parliamentary fold. Revolutionary comrades *must not* [all italics are the author’s] give any support to this gang. Our fight here is going to be a difficult one. One of the worst features of it will be the treachery of those whose personal ambition is a more impelling force than their regard for the revolution. Any support given to parliamentarism is simply assisting to put power into the hands of our British Scheidemanns and Noskes. Henderson, Clynes and Co. are hopelessly reactionary. The official I.L.P. is more and more coming under the control of middle-class Liberals, who . . . have found their ‘spiritual home’ in the camp of Messrs. MacDonald, Snowden and Co. The official I.L.P. is bitterly hostile to the Third International, the rank and file is for it. Any support to the parliamentary opportunists is simply playing into the hands of the former. The B.S.P. doesn’t count at all here What is wanted here is a sound revolutionary industrial organisation, and a Communist Party working along clear, well-defined, scientific lines. If our comrades can assist us in building these, we will take their help gladly; if they cannot, for God’s sake let them keep out altogether, lest they betray the revolution by lending their support to the reactionaries, who are so eagerly clamouring for parliamentary ‘honours’ (?) [the query mark is the author’s] and who are so anxious to prove that they *can rule* as effectively as the ‘boss’ class politicians themselves.”

In my opinion, this letter to the editor expresses excellently the temper and point of view of the young Communists, or of rank-and-file workers who are only just beginning to accept communism. This temper is highly gratifying and valuable; we must learn to appreciate and support it for, in its absence, it would be hopeless to expect the victory of the proletarian revolution in Great Britain, or in any other country for that matter. People who can give expression to this temper of the masses, and are able to evoke such a temper (which is very often dormant, unconscious and latent) among

the masses, should be appreciated and given every assistance. At the same time, we must tell them openly and frankly that a state of mind is *by itself* insufficient for leadership of the masses in a great revolutionary struggle, and that the cause of the revolution may well be harmed by certain errors that people who are most devoted to the cause of the revolution are about to commit, or are committing. Comrade Gallacher’s letter undoubtedly reveals the rudiments of *all* the mistakes that are being made by the German “Left” Communists and were made by the Russian “Left” Bolsheviks in 1908 and 1918.

The writer of the letter is full of a noble and working-class hatred for the bourgeois “class politicians” (a hatred understood and shared, however, not only by proletarians but by all working people, by all *Kleinen Leuten* to use the German expression). In a representative of the oppressed and exploited masses, this hatred is truly the “beginning of all wisdom,” the basis of any socialist and communist movement and of its success. The writer, however, has apparently lost sight of the fact that politics is a science and an art that does not fall from the skies or come gratis, and that, if it wants to overcome the bourgeoisie, the proletariat must train its *own* proletarian “class politicians,” of a kind in no way inferior to bourgeois politicians.

The writer of the letter fully realises that only workers’ Soviets, not parliament, can be the instrument enabling the proletariat to achieve its aims; those who have failed to understand this are, of course, out-and-out reactionaries, even if they are most highly educated people, most experienced politicians, most sincere socialists, most erudite Marxists, and most honest citizens and fathers of families. But the writer of the letter does not even ask—it does not occur to him to ask—whether it is possible to bring about the Soviets’ victory over parliament without getting pro-Soviet politicians *into* parliament, without disintegrating parliamentarianism from *within*, without working within parliament for the success of the Soviets in their forthcoming task of dispersing parliament. Yet the writer of the letter expresses the absolutely correct idea that the Communist Party in Great Britain must act on *scientific* principles. Science demands, first, that the experience of other countries be taken into account, especially if these other countries, which are also capitalist, are undergoing, or have recently undergone, a very similar experience; second, it demands that account be taken of *all* the forces, groups, parties, classes and masses operating in a given country, and also that policy should not be determined only by the desires and views, by the degree of class-consciousness and the militancy of one group or party alone.

It is true that the Hendersons, the Clyneses, the MacDonalds and the Snowdens are hopelessly reactionary. It is equally true that they want to

assume power (though they would prefer a coalition with the bourgeoisie), that they want to “rule” along the old bourgeois lines, and that when they are in power they will certainly behave like the Scheidemanns and Noskes. All that is true. But it does not at all follow that to support them means treachery to the revolution; what does follow is that, in the interests of the revolution, working-class revolutionaries should give these gentlemen a certain amount of parliamentary support. To explain this idea, I shall take two contemporary British political documents: (1) the speech delivered by Prime Minister Lloyd George on March 18, 1920 (as reported in *The Manchester Guardian* of March 19, 1920), and (2) the arguments of a “Left” Communist, Comrade Sylvia Pankhurst, in the article mentioned above.

In his speech Lloyd George entered into a polemic with Asquith (who had been especially invited to this meeting but declined to attend) and with those Liberals who want, not a coalition with the Conservatives, but closer relations with the Labour Party. (In the above-quoted letter, Comrade Gallacher also points to the fact that Liberals are joining the Independent Labour Party.) Lloyd George argued that a coalition—and a *close* coalition at that—between the Liberals and the Conservatives was essential, otherwise there might be a victory for the Labour Party, which Lloyd George prefers to call “Socialist” and which is working for the “common ownership” of the means of production. “It is . . . known as communism in France,” the leader of the British bourgeoisie said, putting it popularly for his audience, Liberal M.P.s who probably never knew it before. In Germany it was called socialism, and in Russia it is called Bolshevism, he went on to say. To Liberals this is unacceptable on principle, Lloyd George explained, because they stand in principle for private property. “Civilisation is in jeopardy,” the speaker declared, and consequently Liberals and Conservatives must unite . . .

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

From this the reader will see that Mr. Lloyd George is not only a very intelligent man, but one who has also learned a great deal from the Marxists. We too have something to learn from Lloyd George.

Of definite interest is the following episode, which occurred in the course of the discussion after Lloyd George’s speech:

“*Mr. Wallace, M.P.*: I should like to ask what the Prime Minister considers the effect might be in the industrial constituencies upon the industrial workers, so many of whom are Liberals at the present time and from whom we get so much support. Would not a possible result be to cause an immediate overwhelming accession of strength to the Labour Party from men who at present are our cordial supporters?”

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

It may be said, in passing, that this argument shows in particular how muddled even the most intelligent members of the bourgeoisie have become and how they cannot help committing irreparable blunders. That, in fact, is what will bring about the downfall of the bourgeoisie. Our people, however, may commit blunders (provided, of course, that they are not too serious and are rectified in time) and yet in the long run, will prove the victors.

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

“... Comrade Inkpin [the General Secretary of the British Socialist Party] refers to the Labour Party as ‘the main body of the working-class movement’. Another comrade of the British Socialist Party, at the Third International, just held, put the British Socialist Party position more strongly. He said: ‘We regard the Labour Party as the organised working class.’

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

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

“The British Labour Party, like the social-patriotic organisations of other countries, will, in the natural development of society, inevitably come into

power. It is for the Communists to build up the forces that will overthrow the social patriots, and in this country we must not delay or falter in that work.

“We must not dissipate our energy in adding to the strength of the Labour Party; its rise to power is inevitable. We must concentrate on making a communist movement that will vanquish it. The Labour Party will soon be forming a government, the revolutionary opposition must make ready to attack it”

Thus the liberal bourgeoisie are abandoning the historical system of “two parties” (of exploiters), which has been hallowed by centuries of experience and has been extremely advantageous to the exploiters, and consider it necessary for these two parties to join forces against the Labour Party. A number of Liberals are deserting to the Labour Party like rats from a sinking ship. The Left Communists believe that the transfer of power to the Labour Party is inevitable and admit that it now has the backing of most workers. From this they draw the strange conclusion which Comrade Sylvia Pankhurst formulates as follows:

“The Communist Party must not compromise. . . . The Communist Party must keep its doctrine pure, and its independence of reformism inviolate, its mission is to lead the way, without stopping or turning, by the direct road to the communist revolution.”

On the contrary, the fact that most British workers still follow the lead of the British Kerenskys or Scheidemanns and have not yet had experience of a government composed of these people—an experience which was necessary in Russia and Germany so as to secure the mass transition of the workers to communism—undoubtedly indicates that the British Communists *should* participate in parliamentary action, that they should, from *within* parliament, help the masses of the workers see the results of a Henderson and Snowden government in practice, and that they should help the Hendersons and Snowdens defeat the united forces of Lloyd George and Churchill. To act otherwise would mean hampering the cause of the revolution, since revolution is impossible without a change in the views of the majority of the working class, a change brought about by the political experience of the masses, never by propaganda alone. “To lead the way without compromises, without turning”—this slogan is obviously wrong if it comes from a patently impotent minority of the workers who know (or at all events should know) that given a Henderson and Snowden victory over Lloyd George and Churchill, the majority will soon become disappointed in their leaders and will begin to support communism (or at all events will adopt an attitude of neutrality, and, in the main, of sympathetic neutrality,

towards the Communists). It is as though 10,000 soldiers were to hurl themselves into battle against an enemy force of 50,000, when it would be proper to “halt,” “take evasive action,” or even effect a “compromise” so as to gain time until the arrival of the 100,000 reinforcements that are on their way but cannot go into action immediately. That is intellectualist childishness, not the serious tactics of a revolutionary class.

The fundamental law of revolution, which has been confirmed by all revolutions and especially by all three Russian revolutions in the twentieth century, is as follows: for a revolution to take place it is not enough for the exploited and oppressed masses to realise the impossibility of living in the old way, and demand changes; for a revolution to take place it is essential that the exploiters should not be able to live and rule in the old way. It is only when the “*lower classes*” *do not want* to live in the old way and the “*upper classes*” *cannot carry on in the old way* that the revolution can triumph. This truth can be expressed in other words: revolution is impossible without a nation-wide crisis (affecting both the exploited and the exploiters). It follows that, for a revolution to take place, it is essential, first, that a majority of the workers (or at least a majority of the class-conscious, thinking, and politically active workers) should fully realise that revolution is necessary, and that they should be prepared to die for it; second, that the ruling classes should be going through a governmental crisis, which draws even the most backward masses into politics (symptomatic of any genuine revolution is a rapid, tenfold and even hundredfold increase in the size of the working and oppressed masses—hitherto apathetic—who are capable of waging the political struggle), weakens the government, and makes it possible for the revolutionaries to rapidly overthrow it.

Incidentally, as can also be seen from Lloyd George’s speech, both conditions for a successful proletarian revolution are clearly maturing in Great Britain. The errors of the Left Communists are particularly dangerous at present, because certain revolutionaries are not displaying a sufficiently thoughtful, sufficiently attentive, sufficiently intelligent and sufficiently shrewd attitude toward each of these conditions. If we are the party of the revolutionary *class*, and not merely a revolutionary group, and if we want the *masses* to follow us (and unless we achieve that, we stand the risk of remaining mere windbags), we must, first, help Henderson or Snowden to beat Lloyd George and Churchill (or, rather, compel the former to beat the latter, because the former *are afraid of their victory!*); second, we must help the majority of the working class to be convinced by their own experience that we are right, i.e., that the Hendersons and Snowdens are absolutely good for nothing, that they are petty-bourgeois and treacherous by nature, and that their bankruptcy is inevitable; third, we must bring nearer the moment

when, *on the basis* of the disappointment of most of the workers in the Hendersons, it will be possible, with serious chances of success, to overthrow the government of the Hendersons at once; because if the most astute and solid Lloyd George, that big, not petty, bourgeois, is displaying consternation and is more and more weakening himself (and the bourgeoisie as a whole) by his “friction” with Churchill today and with Asquith tomorrow, how much greater will be the consternation of a Henderson government!

I will put it more concretely. In my opinion, the British Communists should unite their four parties and groups (all very weak, and some of them very, very weak) into a single Communist Party on the basis of the principles of the Third International and of *obligatory* participation in parliament. The Communist Party should propose the following “compromise” election agreement to the Hendersons and Snowdens: let us jointly fight against the alliance between Lloyd George and the Conservatives; let us share parliamentary seats in proportion to the number of workers’ votes polled for the Labour Party and for the Communist Party (not in elections, but in a special ballot), and let us retain *complete freedom* of agitation, propaganda and political activity. Of course, without this latter condition, we cannot agree to a bloc, for that would be treachery; the British Communists must demand and get complete freedom to expose the Hendersons and the Snowdens in the same way as (*for fifteen years—1903–17*) the Russian Bolsheviks demanded and got it in respect of the Russian Hendersons and Snowdens, i.e., the Mensheviks.

If the Hendersons and the Snowdens accept a bloc on these terms, we shall be the gainers, because the number of parliamentary seats is of no importance to us; we are not out for seats. We shall yield on this point (whilst the Hendersons and especially their new friends—or new masters—the Liberals who have joined the Independent Labour Party are most eager to get seats). We shall be the gainers, because we shall carry *our* agitation among the *masses* at a time when Lloyd George *himself* has “incensed” them, and we shall not only be helping the Labour Party to establish its government sooner, but shall also be helping the masses sooner to understand the communist propaganda that we shall carry on against the Hendersons, without any reticence or omission.

If the Hendersons and the Snowdens reject a bloc with us on these terms, we shall gain still more, for we shall at once have shown the *masses* (note that, even in the purely Menshevik and completely opportunist Independent Labour Party, the *rank and file* are in favour of Soviets) that the Hendersons prefer *their* close relations with the capitalists to the unity of all the workers. We shall immediately gain in the eyes of the *masses*, who, particularly after the brilliant, highly correct and highly useful (to communism)

explanations given by Lloyd George, will be sympathetic to the idea of uniting all the workers against the Lloyd George-Conservative alliance. We shall gain immediately, because we shall have demonstrated to the masses that the Hendersons and the Snowdens are afraid to beat Lloyd George, afraid to assume power alone, and are striving to secure the *secret* support of Lloyd George, who is *openly* extending a hand to the Conservatives, against the Labour Party. It should be noted that in Russia, after the revolution of February 27, 1917 (old style), the Bolsheviki’s propaganda against the Mensheviki and Socialist-Revolutionaries (i.e., the Russian Hendersons and Snowdens) derived benefit precisely from a circumstance of this kind. We said to the Mensheviki and the Socialist-Revolutionaries: assume full power without the bourgeoisie, because you have a majority in the Soviets (at the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets, in June 1917, the Bolsheviki had only 13 per cent of the votes). But the Russian Hendersons and Snowdens were afraid to assume power without the bourgeoisie, and when the bourgeoisie held up the elections to the Constituent Assembly, knowing full well that the elections would give a majority to the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviki*⁸ (who formed a close political bloc and in fact represented *only* petty-bourgeois democracy), the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviki were unable energetically and consistently to oppose these delays.

If the Hendersons and the Snowdens reject a bloc with the Communists, the latter will immediately gain by winning the sympathy of the masses and discrediting the Hendersons and Snowdens; if, as a result, we do lose a few parliamentary seats, it is a matter of no significance to us. We would put up our candidates in a very few but absolutely safe constituencies, namely, constituencies where our candidatures would not give any seats to the Liberals at the expense of the Labour candidates. We would take part in the election campaign, distribute leaflets agitating for communism, and, in *all* constituencies where we have no candidates, we would urge the electors *to vote for the Labour candidate and against the bourgeois candidate*. Comrades Sylvia Pankhurst and Gallacher are mistaken in thinking that this is a betrayal of communism, or a renunciation of the struggle against the social-traitors. On the contrary, the cause of communist revolution would undoubtedly gain thereby.

At present, British Communists very often find it hard even to approach the masses, and even to get a hearing from them. If I come out as a Communist and call upon them to vote for Henderson and against Lloyd George, they will certainly give me a hearing. And I shall be able to explain in a popular manner, not only why the Soviets are better than a parliament and why the dictatorship of the proletariat is better than the dictatorship of Churchill (disguised with the signboard of bourgeois “democracy”), but also that, with

my vote, I want to support Henderson in the same way as the rope supports a hanged man—that the impending establishment of a government of the Hendersons will prove that I am right, will bring the masses over to my side, and will hasten the political death of the Hendersons and the Snowdens just as was the case with their kindred spirits in Russia and Germany.

If the objection is raised that these tactics are too “subtle” or too complex for the masses to understand, that these tactics will split and scatter our forces, will prevent us from concentrating them on Soviet revolution, etc., I will reply to the “Left” objectors: don’t ascribe your doctrinairism to the masses! The masses in Russia are no doubt no better educated than the masses in Britain; if anything, they are less so. Yet the masses understood the Bolsheviks, and the fact that, in September 1917, *on the eve* of the Soviet revolution, the Bolsheviks put up their candidates for a bourgeois parliament (the Constituent Assembly) and *on the day after* the Soviet revolution, in November 1917, took part in the elections to this Constituent Assembly, which they got rid of on January 5, 1918—this did not hamper the Bolsheviks, but, on the contrary, helped them.

I cannot deal here with the second point of disagreement among the British Communists—the question of affiliation or non-affiliation to the Labour Party. I have too little material at my disposal on this question, which is highly complex because of the unique character of the British Labour Party, whose very structure is so unlike that of the political parties usual in the European continent. It is beyond doubt, however, first, that in this question, too, those who try to deduce the tactics of the revolutionary proletariat from principles such as: “The Communist Party must keep its doctrine pure, and its independence of reformism inviolate; its mission is to lead the way, without stopping or turning, by the direct road to the communist revolution”—will inevitably fall into error. Such principles are merely a repetition of the mistake made by the French Blanquist Communards, who, in 1874, “repudiated” all compromises and all intermediate stages. Second, it is beyond doubt that, in this question too, as always, the task consists in learning to apply the general and basic principles of communism to the *specific relations* between classes and parties, to the *specific features* in the objective development towards communism, which are different in each country and which we must be able to discover, study, and predict.

This, however, should be discussed, not in connection with British communism alone, but in connection with the general conclusions concerning the development of communism in all capitalist countries. We shall now proceed to deal with this subject.

Notes

35. The *British Socialist Party* was founded in 1911, in Manchester, as a result of a merger of the Social-Democratic Party and other socialist groups. The B.S.P. conducted agitation in the spirit of Marxism, it was "not opportunist and was *really* independent of the Liberals." However, its small membership and its poor links with the masses gave the B.S.P. a somewhat sectarian character. During the First World War, a bitter struggle developed within the British Socialist Party between the internationalists (William Gallacher, Albert Inkpin, John Maclean, Theodore Rothstein and others), and the social-chauvinists, headed by Hyndman. Within the internationalist trend were inconsistent elements that took a Centrist stand on a number of issues. In February 1916, a group of B.S.P. leaders founded the newspaper *The Call*, which played an important role in uniting the internationalists. The B.S.P.'s annual conference, held in Salford in April 1916, condemned the social-chauvinist stand of Hyndman and his supporters, who, after the conference, left the party.

The British Socialist Party welcomed the Great October Socialist Revolution, its members playing an important part in the "Hands Off Russia" movement. In 1919, the overwhelming majority of its organisations (98 against 4) declared for affiliation to the Communist International. The British Socialist Party, together with the Communist Unity Group formed the core of the Communist Party of Great Britain. At the First (Unity) Congress, held in 1920, the vast majority of B.S.P. local organisations entered the Communist Party.

36. The *Socialist Labour Party* was organised in 1903 by a group of the Left-wing Social-Democrats who had broken away from the Social-Democratic Federation. The *South Wales Socialist Society* was a small group consisting mostly of Welsh coal miners. The *Workers' Socialist Federation* was a small organisation which emerged from the Women's Suffrage League and consisted mostly of women.

The Leftist organisations did not join the Communist Party of Great Britain when it was formed (its Inaugural Congress was held on July 31–August 1, 1920) since the Party's programme contained a clause on the Party participation in parliamentary elections and on affiliation to the Labour Party. At the Communist Party's Congress in January 1921, the South Wales Socialist Society and the Workers' Socialist Federation, which had assumed the names of the Communist Workers' Party and the Communist Party respectively, united with the Communist Party of Great Britain under the name of the United Communist Party of Great Britain. The leaders of the Socialist Labour Party refused to join.

*7 I believe this party is opposed to affiliation to the Labour Party but not all its members are opposed to participation in Parliament.

*8 The results of the November 1917 elections to the Constituent Assembly in Russia, based on returns embracing over 36,000,000 voters, were as follows: the Bolsheviks obtained 25 per cent of the votes; the various parties of the landowners and the bourgeoisie obtained 13 per cent, and the petty-bourgeois-democratic parties, i.e., the Socialist-Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and a number of similar small groups obtained 62 per cent.

Several Conclusions

The Russian bourgeois revolution of 1905 revealed a highly original turn in world history: in one of the most backward capitalist countries, the strike movement attained a scope and power unprecedented anywhere in the world. In the *first month* of 1905 *alone*, the number of strikers was ten times the *annual* average for the previous decade (1895–1904); from January to October 1905, strikes grew all the time and reached enormous proportions. Under the influence of a number of unique historical conditions, backward Russia was the first to show the world, not only the growth, by leaps and bounds, of the independent activity of the oppressed masses in time of revolution (this had occurred in all great revolutions), but also that the significance of the proletariat is infinitely greater than its proportion in the total population; it showed a combination of the economic strike and the political strike, with the latter developing into an armed uprising, and the birth of the Soviets, a new form of mass struggle and mass organisation of the classes oppressed by capitalism.

The revolutions of February and October 1917 led to the all-round development of the Soviets on a nation-wide scale and to their victory in the proletarian socialist revolution. In less than two years, the international character of the Soviets, the spread of this form of struggle and organisation to the world working-class movement and the historical mission of the Soviets as the grave-digger, heir and successor of bourgeois parliamentarianism and of bourgeois democracy in general, all became clear.

But that is not all. The history of the working-class movement now shows that, in all countries, it is about to go through (and is already going through) a struggle waged by communism—emergent, gaining strength and advancing towards victory—against, primarily, Menshevism, i.e., opportunism and social-chauvinism (the home brand in each particular country), and then as a complement, so to say, Left-wing communism. The former struggle has developed in all countries, apparently without any exception, as a duel between the Second International (already virtually dead) and the Third International. The latter struggle is to be seen in Germany, Great Britain, Italy, America (at any rate, a certain *section* of the Industrial Workers of the World and of the anarcho-syndicalist trends uphold the errors of Left-wing communism alongside of an almost universal and almost unreserved acceptance of the Soviet system), and in France (the attitude of a section of the former syndicalists towards the political party and parliamentarianism, also alongside of the acceptance of the Soviet system); in other words, the struggle is undoubtedly being waged, not only on an international, but even on a worldwide scale.

But while the working-class movement is everywhere going through what is actually the same kind of preparatory school for victory over the bourgeoisie, it is achieving that development in its *own way* in each country. The big and advanced capitalist countries are travelling this road *far more rapidly* than did Bolshevism, to which history granted fifteen years to prepare itself for victory, as an organised political trend. In the brief space of a year, the Third International has already scored a decisive victory; it has defeated the yellow, social-chauvinist Second International, which only a few months ago was incomparably stronger than the Third International, seemed stable and powerful, and enjoyed every possible support—direct and indirect, material (Cabinet posts, passports, the press) and ideological—from the world bourgeoisie.

It is now essential that Communists of every country should quite consciously take into account both the fundamental objectives of the struggle against opportunism and “Left” doctrinairism, and the *concrete features* which this struggle assumes and must inevitably assume in each country, in conformity with the specific character of its economics, politics, culture, and national composition (Ireland, etc.), its colonies, religious divisions, and so on and so forth. Dissatisfaction with the Second International is felt everywhere and is spreading and growing, both because of its opportunism and because of its inability or incapacity to create a really centralised and really leading centre capable of directing the international tactics of the revolutionary proletariat in its struggle for a world Soviet republic. It should be clearly realised that such a leading centre can never be built up on stereotyped, mechanically equated, and identical tactical rules of struggle. As long as national and state distinctions exist among peoples and countries—and these will continue to exist for a very long time to come, even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a world-wide scale—the unity of the international tactics of the communist working-class movement in all countries demands, not the elimination of variety or the suppression of national distinctions (which is a pipe dream at present), but an application of the *fundamental* principles of communism (Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat), which will *correctly modify* these principles in certain *particulars*, correctly adapt and apply them to national and national-state distinctions. To seek out, investigate, predict, and grasp that which is nationally specific and nationally distinctive, in the *concrete manner* in which each country should tackle a *single* international task: victory over opportunism and Left doctrinairism within the working-class movement; the overthrow of the bourgeoisie; the establishment of a Soviet republic and a proletarian dictatorship—such is the basic task in the historical period that all the advanced countries (and not they alone) are going through.

The chief thing—though, of course, far from everything—the chief thing, has already been achieved: the vanguard of the working class has been won over, has ranged itself on the side of Soviet government and against parliamentarianism, on the side of the dictatorship of the proletariat and against bourgeois democracy. All efforts and all attention should now be concentrated on the *next* step, which may seem—and from a certain viewpoint actually is—less fundamental, but, on the other hand, is actually closer to a practical accomplishment of the task. That step is: the search after forms of the *transition* or the *approach* to the proletarian revolution.

The proletarian vanguard has been won over ideologically. That is the main thing. Without this, not even the first step towards victory can be made. But that is still quite a long way from victory. Victory cannot be won with a vanguard alone. To throw only the vanguard into the decisive battle, before the entire class, the broad masses, have taken up a position either of direct support for the vanguard, or at least of sympathetic neutrality towards it and of precluded support for the enemy, would be, not merely foolish but criminal. Propaganda and agitation alone are not enough for an entire class, the broad masses of the working people, those oppressed by capital, to take up such a stand. For that, the masses must have their own political experience. Such is the fundamental law of all great revolutions, which has been confirmed with compelling force and vividness, not only in Russia but in Germany as well. To turn resolutely towards communism, it was necessary, not only for the ignorant and often illiterate masses of Russia, but also for the literate and well-educated masses of Germany, to realise from their own bitter experience the absolute impotence and spinelessness, the absolute helplessness and servility to the bourgeoisie, and the utter vile-ness of the government of the paladins of the Second International; they had to realise that a dictatorship of the extreme reactionaries (Kornilov³⁷ in Russia; Kapp³⁸ and Co. in Germany) is inevitably the only alternative to a dictatorship of the proletariat.

The immediate objective of the class-conscious vanguard of the international working-class movement, i.e., the Communist parties, groups and trends, is to be able to *lead* the broad masses (who are still, for the most part, apathetic, inert, dormant and convention-ridden) to their new position, or, rather, to be able to lead, *not only* their own party but also these masses in their advance and transition to the new position. While the first historical objective (that of winning over the class-conscious vanguard of the proletariat to the side of Soviet power and the dictatorship of the working class) could not have been reached without a complete ideological and political victory over opportunism and social-chauvinism, the second and immediate objective, which consists in being able to lead the *masses* to a

new position ensuring the victory of the vanguard in the revolution, cannot be reached without the liquidation of Left doctrinairism, and without a full elimination of its errors.

As long as it was (and inasmuch as it still is) a question of winning the proletariat’s vanguard over to the side of communism, priority went and still goes to propaganda work; even propaganda circles, with all their parochial limitations, are useful under these conditions, and produce good results. But when it is a question of practical action by the masses, of the disposition, if one may so put it, of vast armies, of the alignment of *all* the class forces in a given society *for the final and decisive battle*, then propagandist methods alone, the mere repetition of the truths of “pure” communism, are of no avail. In these circumstances, one must not count in thousands, like the propagandist belonging to a small group that has not yet given leadership to the masses; in these circumstances one must count in millions and tens of millions. In these circumstances, we must ask ourselves, not only whether we have convinced the vanguard of the revolutionary class, but also whether the historically effective forces of *all* classes—positively of all the classes in a given society, without exception—are arrayed in such a way that the decisive battle is at hand—in such a way that: (1) all the class forces hostile to us have become sufficiently entangled, are sufficiently at loggerheads with each other, have sufficiently weakened themselves in a struggle which is beyond their strength; (2) all the vacillating and unstable, intermediate elements—the petty bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeois democrats, as distinct from the bourgeoisie—have sufficiently exposed themselves in the eyes of the people, have sufficiently disgraced themselves through their practical bankruptcy, and (3) among the proletariat, a mass sentiment favouring the most determined, bold and dedicated revolutionary action against the bourgeoisie has emerged and begun to grow vigorously. Then revolution is indeed ripe; then, indeed, if we have correctly gauged all the conditions indicated and summarised above, and if we have chosen the right moment, our victory is assured.

The differences between the Churchills and the Lloyd Georges with insignificant national distinctions, these political types exist in *all* countries—on the one hand, and between the Hendersons and the Lloyd Georges on the other, are quite minor and unimportant from the standpoint of pure (i.e., abstract) communism, i.e., communism that has not yet matured to the stage of practical political action by the masses. However, from the standpoint of this practical action by the masses, these differences are most important. To take due account of these differences, and to determine the moment when the inevitable conflicts between these “friends,” which weaken and enfeeble *all the “friends” taken together*, will have come

to a head—that is the concern, the task, of a Communist who wants to be, not merely a class-conscious and convinced propagandist of ideas, but a practical leader of the *masses* in the revolution. It is necessary to link the strictest devotion to the ideas of communism with the ability to effect all the necessary practical compromises, tacks, conciliatory manoeuvres, zigzags, retreats and so on, in order to speed up the achievement and then loss of political power by the Hendersons (the heroes of the Second International, if we are not to name individual representatives of petty-bourgeois democracy who call themselves socialists); to accelerate their inevitable bankruptcy in practice, which will enlighten the masses in the spirit of our ideas, in the direction of communism; to accelerate the inevitable friction, quarrels, conflicts and complete disintegration among the Hendersons, the Lloyd Georges and the Churchills (the Mensheviks, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the Constitutional-Democrats, the monarchists; the Scheidemanns, the bourgeoisie and the Kappists, etc.); to select the proper moment when the discord among these “pillars of sacrosanct private property” is at its height, so that, through a decisive offensive, the proletariat will defeat them all and capture political power.

History as a whole, and the history of revolutions in particular, is always richer in content, more varied, more multiform, more lively and ingenious than is imagined by even the best parties, the most class-conscious vanguards of the most advanced classes. This can readily be understood, because even the finest of vanguards express the class-consciousness, will, passion and imagination of tens of thousands, whereas at moments of great upsurge and the exertion of all human capacities, revolutions are made by the class-consciousness, will, passion and imagination of tens of millions, spurred on by a most acute struggle of classes. Two very important practical conclusions follow from this: first, that in order to accomplish its task the revolutionary class must be able to master *all* forms or aspects of social activity without exception (completing after the capture of political power—sometimes at great risk and with very great danger—what it did not complete before the capture of power); second, that the revolutionary class must be prepared for the most rapid and brusque replacement of one form by another.

One will readily agree that any army which does not train to use all the weapons, all the means and methods of warfare that the enemy possesses, or may possess, is behaving in an unwise or even criminal manner. This applies to politics even more than it does to the art of war. In politics it is even harder to know in advance which methods of struggle will be applicable and to our advantage in certain future conditions. Unless we learn to apply all the methods of struggle, we may suffer grave and sometimes even

decisive defeat, if changes beyond our control in the position of the other classes bring to the forefront a form of activity in which we are especially weak. If, however, we learn to use all the methods of struggle, victory will be certain, because we represent the interests of the really foremost and really revolutionary class, even if circumstances do not permit us to make use of weapons that are most dangerous to the enemy, weapons that deal the swiftest mortal blows. Inexperienced revolutionaries often think that legal methods of struggle are opportunist because, in this field, the bourgeoisie has most frequently deceived and duped the workers (particularly in “peaceful” and non-revolutionary times), while illegal methods of struggle are revolutionary. That, however, is wrong. The truth is that those parties and leaders are opportunists and traitors to the working class that are unable or unwilling (do not say, “I can’t”; say, “I shan’t”) to use illegal methods of struggle in conditions such as those which prevailed, for example, during the imperialist war of 1914–18, when the bourgeoisie of the freest democratic countries most brazenly and brutally deceived the workers, and smothered the truth about the predatory character of the war. But revolutionaries who are incapable of combining illegal forms of struggle with *every* form of legal struggle are poor revolutionaries indeed. It is not difficult to be a revolutionary when revolution has already broken out and is in spate, when all people are joining the revolution just because they are carried away, because it is the vogue, and sometimes even from careerist motives. After its victory, the proletariat has to make most strenuous efforts, even the most painful, so as to “liberate” itself from such pseudo-revolutionaries. It is far more difficult—and far more precious—to be a revolutionary when the conditions for direct, open, really mass and really revolutionary struggle *do not yet exist*, to be able to champion the interests of the revolution (by propaganda, agitation and organisation) in non-revolutionary bodies, and quite often in downright reactionary bodies, in a non-revolutionary situation, among the masses who are incapable of immediately appreciating the need for revolutionary methods of action. To be able to seek, find and correctly determine the specific path or the particular turn of events that will *lead* the masses to the real, decisive and final revolutionary struggle—such is the main objective of communism in Western Europe and in America today.

Britain is an example. We cannot tell—no one can tell in advance—how soon a real proletarian revolution will flare up there, and *what immediate cause* will most serve to rouse, kindle, and impel into the struggle the very wide masses, who are still dormant. Hence, it is our duty to carry on all our preparatory work in such a way as to be “well shod on all four feet” (as the late Plekhanov, when he was a Marxist and revolutionary, was fond of saying). It is possible that the breach will be forced, the ice broken, by a

parliamentary crisis, or by a crisis arising from colonial and imperialist contradictions, which are hopelessly entangled and are becoming increasingly painful and acute, or perhaps by some third cause, etc. We are not discussing the kind of struggle that will *determine* the fate of the proletarian revolution in Great Britain (no Communist has any doubt on that score; for all of us this is a foregone conclusion): what we are discussing is the *immediate cause* that will bring into motion the now dormant proletarian masses, and lead them right up to revolution. Let us not forget that in the French bourgeois republic, for example, in a situation which, from both the international and the national viewpoints, was a hundred times less revolutionary than it is today, such an “unexpected” and “petty” cause as one of the many thousands of fraudulent machinations of the reactionary military caste (the Dreyfus case³⁹) was enough to bring the people to the brink of civil war!

In Great Britain the Communists should constantly, unremittingly and unswervingly utilise parliamentary elections and all the vicissitudes of the Irish, colonial and world-imperialist policy of the British Government, and all other fields, spheres and aspects of public life, and work in all of them in a new way, in a communist way, in the spirit of the Third, not the Second, International. I have neither the time nor the space here to describe the “Russian” “Bolshevik” methods of participation in parliamentary elections and in the parliamentary struggle; I can, however, assure foreign Communists that they were quite unlike the usual West-European parliamentary campaigns. From this the conclusion is often drawn: “Well, that was in Russia, in our country parliamentarianism is different.” This is a false conclusion. Communists, adherents of the Third International in all countries, exist for the purpose of *changing*—all along the line, in all spheres of life—the old socialist, trade unionist, syndicalist, and parliamentary type of work into a *new* type of work, the communist. In Russia, too, there was always an abundance of opportunism, purely bourgeois sharp practices and capitalist rigging in the elections. In Western Europe and in America, the Communist must learn to create a new, uncustomary, non-opportunist, and non-careerist parliamentarianism; the Communist parties must issue their slogans; true proletarians, with the help of the unorganised and downtrodden poor, should distribute leaflets, canvass workers’ houses and cottages of the rural proletarians and peasants in the remote villages (fortunately there are many times fewer remote villages in Europe than in Russia, and in Britain the number is very small); they should go into the public houses, penetrate into unions, societies and chance gatherings of the common people, and speak to the people, not in learned (or very parliamentary) language, they should not at all strive to “get seats” in parliament, but should everywhere try to get people to think, and draw the masses into the struggle, to take the

bourgeoisie at its word and utilise the machinery it has set up, the elections it has appointed, and the appeals it has made to the people; they should try to explain to the people what Bolshevism is, in a way that was never possible (under bourgeois rule) outside of election times (exclusive, of course, of times of big strikes, when in Russia a *similar* apparatus for widespread popular agitation worked even more intensively). It is very difficult to do this in Western Europe and extremely difficult in America, but it can and must be done, for the objectives of communism cannot be achieved without effort. We must work to accomplish *practical* tasks, ever more varied and ever more closely connected with all branches of social life, winning branch after branch, and sphere after sphere *from the bourgeoisie*.

In Great Britain, further, the work of propaganda, agitation and organisation among the armed forces and among the oppressed and underprivileged nationalities in their “own” state (Ireland, the colonies) must also be tackled in a new fashion (one that is not socialist, but communist; not reformist, but revolutionary). That is because, in the era of imperialism in general and especially today after a war that was a sore trial to the peoples and has quickly opened their eyes to the truth (i.e., the fact that tens of millions were killed and maimed for the sole purpose of deciding whether the British or the German robbers should plunder the largest number of countries), all these spheres of social life are heavily charged with inflammable material and are creating numerous causes of conflicts, crises and an intensification of the class struggle. We do not and cannot know which spark—of the innumerable sparks that are flying about in all countries as a result of the world economic and political crisis—will kindle the conflagration, in the sense of raising up the masses; we must, therefore, with our new and communist principles, set to work to stir up all and sundry, even the oldest, mustiest and seemingly hopeless spheres, for otherwise we shall not be able to cope with our tasks, shall not be comprehensively prepared, shall not be in possession of all the weapons and shall not prepare ourselves either to gain victory over the bourgeoisie (which arranged all aspects of social life—and has now disarranged them—in its bourgeois fashion), or to bring about the impending communist reorganisation of every sphere of life, following that victory.

Since the proletarian revolution in Russia and its victories on an international scale, expected neither by the bourgeoisie nor the philistines, the entire world has become different, and the bourgeoisie everywhere has become different too. It is terrified of “Bolshevism,” exasperated by it almost to the point of frenzy, and for that very reason it is, on the one hand, precipitating the progress of events and, on the other, concentrating on the forcible suppression of Bolshevism, thereby weakening its own position in a

number of other fields. In their tactics the Communists in all the advanced countries must take both these circumstances into account.

When the Russian Cadets and Kerensky began furiously to hound the Bolsheviks—especially since April 1917, and more particularly in June and July 1917—they overdid things. Millions of copies of bourgeois papers, clamouring in every key against the Bolsheviks, helped the masses to make an appraisal of Bolshevism; apart from the newspapers, all public life was full of discussions about Bolshevism, as a result of the bourgeoisie’s “zeal.” Today the millionaires of all countries are behaving on an international scale in a way that deserves our heartiest thanks. They are hounding Bolshevism with the same zeal as Kerensky and Co. did; they, too, are overdoing things and *helping* us just as Kerensky did. When the French bourgeoisie makes Bolshevism the central issue in the elections, and accuses the comparatively moderate or vacillating socialists of being Bolsheviks; when the American bourgeoisie, which has completely lost its head, seizes thousands and thousands of people on suspicion of Bolshevism, creates an atmosphere of panic, and broadcasts stories of Bolshevik plots; when, despite all its wisdom and experience, the British bourgeoisie—the most “solid” in the world—makes incredible blunders, founds richly endowed “anti-Bolshevik societies,” creates a special literature on Bolshevism, and recruits an extra number of scientists, agitators and clergymen to combat it, we must salute and thank the capitalists. They are working for us. They are helping us to get the masses interested in the essence and significance of Bolshevism, and they cannot do otherwise, for they have *already* failed to ignore Bolshevism and stifle it.

But at the same time, the bourgeoisie sees practically only one aspect of Bolshevism—insurrection, violence, and terror; it therefore strives to prepare itself for resistance and opposition primarily in *this* field. It is possible that, in certain instances, in certain countries, and for certain brief periods, it will succeed in this. We must reckon with such an eventuality, and we have absolutely nothing to fear if it does succeed. Communism is emerging in positively every sphere of public life; its beginnings are to be seen literally on all sides. The “contagion” (to use the favourite metaphor of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois police, the one mostly to their liking) has very thoroughly penetrated the organism and has completely permeated it. If special efforts are made to block one of the channels, the “contagion” will find another one, sometimes very unexpectedly. Life will assert itself. Let the bourgeoisie rave, work itself into a frenzy, go to extremes, commit follies, take vengeance on the Bolsheviks in advance, and endeavour to kill off (as in India, Hungary, Germany, etc.) more hundreds, thousands, and hundreds of thousands of yesterday’s and tomorrow’s Bolsheviks. In acting thus, the bourgeoisie is acting as all historically doomed classes have done.

Communists should know that, in any case, the future belongs to them; therefore, we can (and must) combine the most intense passion in the great revolutionary struggle, with the coolest and most sober appraisal of the frenzied ravings of the bourgeoisie. The Russian revolution was cruelly defeated in 1905; the Russian Bolsheviks were defeated in July 1917; over 15,000 German Communists were killed as a result of the wily provocation and cunning manoeuvres of Scheidemann and Noske, who were working hand in glove with the bourgeoisie and the monarchist generals; White terror is raging in Finland and Hungary. But in all cases in all countries, communism is becoming steeled and is growing; its roots are so deep that persecution does not weaken or debilitate it but only strengthens it. Only one thing is lacking to enable us to march forward more confidently and firmly to victory, namely, the universal and thorough awareness of all Communists in all countries of the necessity to display the utmost *flexibility* in their tactics. The communist movement, which is developing magnificently, now lacks, especially in the advanced countries, this awareness and the ability to apply it in practice.

That which happened to such leaders of the Second International, such highly erudite Marxists devoted to socialism as Kautsky, Otto Bauer and others, could (and should) provide a useful lesson. They fully appreciated the need for flexible tactics; they themselves learned Marxist dialectic and taught it to others (and much of what they have done in this field will always remain a valuable contribution to socialist literature); however, *in the application* of this dialectic they committed such an error, or proved to be so *undialectical* in practice, so incapable of taking into account the rapid change of forms and the rapid acquisition of new content by the old forms, that their fate is not much more enviable than that of Hyndman, Guesde and Plekhanov. The principal reason for their bankruptcy was that they were hypnotised by a definite form of growth of the working-class movement and socialism, forgot all about the one-sidedness of that form, were afraid to see the break-up which objective conditions made inevitable, and continued to repeat simple and, at first glance, incontestable axioms that had been learned by rote, like: “three is more than two.” But politics is more like algebra than like arithmetic, and still more like higher than elementary mathematics. In reality, all the old forms of the socialist movement have acquired a new content, and, consequently, a new symbol, the “minus” sign, has appeared in front of all the figures; our wiseacres, however, have stubbornly continued (and still continue) to persuade themselves and others that “minus three” is more than “minus two.”

We must see to it that Communists do not make a similar mistake, only in the opposite sense, or rather, we must see to it that a *similar mistake*, only

made in the opposite sense by the “Left” Communists, is corrected as soon as possible and eliminated as rapidly and painlessly as possible. It is not only Right doctrinairism that is erroneous; Left doctrinairism is erroneous too. Of course, the mistake of Left doctrinairism in communism is at present a thousand times less dangerous and less significant than that of Right doctrinairism (i.e., social-chauvinism and Kautskyism); but, after all, that is only due to the fact that Left communism is a very young trend, is only just coming into being. It is only for this reason that, under certain conditions, the disease can be easily eradicated, and we must set to work with the utmost energy to eradicate it.

The old forms burst asunder, for it turned out that their new content—anti-proletarian and reactionary—had attained an inordinate development. From the standpoint of the development of international communism, our work today has such a durable and powerful content (for Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat) that it can *and must* manifest itself in any form, both new and old; it can and must regenerate, conquer and subjugate all forms, not only the new, but also the old—not for the purpose of reconciling itself with the old, but for the purpose of making all and every form—new and old—a weapon for the complete and irrevocable victory of communism.

The Communists must exert every effort to direct the working-class movement and social development in general along the straightest and shortest road to the victory of Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world-wide scale. That is an incontestable truth. But it is enough to take one little step farther—a step that might seem to be in the same direction—and truth turns into error. We have only to say, as the German and British Left Communists do, that we recognise only one road, only the direct road, and that we will not permit tacking, conciliatory manoeuvres, or compromising—and it will be a mistake which may cause, and in part has already caused and is causing, very grave prejudices to communism. Right doctrinairism persisted in recognising only the old forms, and became utterly bankrupt, for it did not notice the new content. Left doctrinairism persists in the unconditional repudiation of certain old forms, failing to see that the new content is forcing its way through all and sundry forms, that it is our duty as Communists to master all forms, to learn how, with the maximum rapidity, to supplement one form with another, to substitute one for another, and to adapt our tactics to any such change that does not come from our class or from our efforts.

World revolution has been so powerfully stimulated and accelerated by the horrors, vileness and abominations of the world imperialist war and by the hopelessness of the situation created by it, this revolution is developing in scope and depth with such splendid rapidity, with such a wonderful

variety of changing forms, with such an instructive practical refutation of all doctrinairism, that there is every reason to hope for a rapid and complete recovery of the international communist movement from the infantile disorder of “Left-wing” communism.

April 27, 1920

Notes

37. This refers to the counter-revolutionary mutiny organised in August 1917 by the bourgeoisie and the landowners, under the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, the tsarist general Kornilov. The conspirators hoped to seize Petrograd, smash the Bolshevik Party, break up the Soviets, establish a military dictatorship in the country, and prepare the restoration of the monarchy.
The mutiny began on August 25 (September 7), Kornilov sending the 3rd Cavalry Corps against Petrograd, where Kornilov counter-revolutionary organisations were ready to act.
The Kornilov mutiny was crushed by the workers and peasants led by the Bolshevik Party. Under pressure from the masses, the Provisional Government was forced to order that Kornilov and his accomplices be arrested and brought to trial.
38. The reference is to the military-monarchist coup d'état, the so-called Kapp *putsch* organised by the German reactionary militarists. It was headed by the monarchist landowner Kapp and Generals Ludendorff, Seeckt and Lüttwitz. The conspirators prepared the coup with the connivance of the Social-Democratic government. On March 13, 1920, the mutinous generals moved troops against Berlin and, meeting with no resistance from the government, proclaimed a military dictatorship. The German workers replied with a general strike. Under pressure from the proletariat the Kapp government was overthrown on March 17, and the Social-Democrats again took power.
39. The *Dreyfus case*—a provocative trial organised in 1894 by the reactionary-monarchist circles of the French militarists. On trial was Dreyfus, a Jewish officer of the French General Staff, falsely accused of espionage and high treason. Dreyfus's conviction—he was condemned to life imprisonment—was used by the French reactionaries to rouse anti-Semitism and to attack the republican regime and democratic liberties. When, in 1898, socialists and progressive bourgeois democrats such as Emile Zola, Jean Jaurès, and Anatole France launched a campaign for Dreyfus's re-trial, the case became a major political issue and split the country into two camps—the republicans and democrats on the one hand, and a bloc of monarchists, clericals, anti-Semites and nationalists, on the other. Under the pressure of public opinion, Dreyfus was released in 1899, and in 1906 was acquitted by the Court of Cassation and reinstated in the Army.

Appendix

Before publishing houses in our country—which has been plundered by the imperialists of the whole world in revenge for the proletarian revolution, and which is still being plundered and blockaded by them regardless of all promises they made to their workers—were able to bring out my pamphlet, additional material arrived from abroad. Without claiming to present in my pamphlet anything more than the cursory notes of a publicist, I shall dwell briefly upon a few points.

I. The Split Among the German Communists

The split among the Communists in Germany is an accomplished fact. The “Lefts,” or the “opposition on principle,” have formed a separate Communist Workers’ Party, as distinct from the Communist Party. A split also seems imminent in Italy—I say “seems,” as I have only two additional issues (Nos. 7 and 8) of the Left newspaper, *Il Soviet*, in which the possibility of and necessity for a split is openly discussed, and mention is also made of a congress of the “Abstentionist” group (or the boycottists, i.e., opponents of participation in parliament), which group is still part of the Italian Socialist Party.

There is reason to fear that the split with the “Lefts,” the anti-parliamentarians (in part anti-politicals too, who are opposed to any political party and to work in the trade unions), will become an international phenomenon, like the split with the “Centrists” (i.e., Kautskyites, Longuetists, Independents, etc.). Let that be so. At all events, a split is better than confusion, which hampers the ideological, theoretical and revolutionary growth and maturing of the party, and its harmonious, really organised practical work which actually paves the way for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Let the “Lefts” put themselves to a practical test on a national and international scale. Let them try to prepare for (and then implement) the dictatorship of the proletariat, without a rigorously centralised party with iron discipline, without the ability to become masters of every sphere, every branch, and every variety of political and cultural work. Practical experience will soon teach them.

Only, every effort should be made to prevent the split with the “Lefts” from impeding—or to see that it impedes as little as possible—the necessary amalgamation into a single party, inevitable in the near future, of all participants in the working-class movement who sincerely and conscientiously stand for Soviet government and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was the exceptional good fortune of the Bolsheviks in Russia to have had

fifteen years for a systematic and consummated struggle both against the Mensheviks (i.e., the opportunists and "Centrists") and against the "Lefts," long before the masses began direct action for the dictatorship of the proletariat. In Europe and America the same work has now to be done by forced marches, so to say. Certain individuals, especially among unsuccessful aspirants to leadership, may (if they lack proletarian discipline and are not honest towards themselves) persist in their mistakes for a long time; however, when the time is ripe, the masses of the workers will themselves unite easily and rapidly and unite all sincere Communists to form a single party capable of establishing the Soviet system and the dictatorship of the proletariat.⁴⁹

II. *The Communists and the Independents in Germany*

In this pamphlet I have expressed the opinion that a compromise between the Communists and the Left wing of the Independents is necessary and useful to communism, but will not be easy to bring about. Newspapers which I have subsequently received have confirmed this opinion on both points. No. 32 of *The Red Flag*, organ of the Central Committee, the Communist Party of Germany (*Die Rote Fahne*, Zentralorgan der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands, Spartakusbund, of March 26, 1920) published a "statement" by this Central Committee regarding the Kapp-Lüttwitz military *putsch* and on the "socialist government." This statement is quite correct both in its basic premise and its practical conclusions. The basic premise is that at present there is no "objective basis" for the dictatorship of the proletariat because the "majority of the urban workers" support the Independents. The conclusion is: a promise to be a "loyal opposition" (i.e., renunciation of preparations for a "forcible overthrow") to a "socialist government if it excludes bourgeois-capitalist parties."

In the main, this tactic is undoubtedly correct. Yet, even if minor inaccuracies of formulation should not be dwelt on, it is impossible to pass over in silence the fact that a government consisting of social-traitors should not (in an official statement by the Communist Party) be called "socialist"; that one should not speak of the exclusion of "bourgeois-capitalist parties," when the parties both of the Scheidemanns and of the Kautskys and Crispiens are petty-bourgeois-democratic parties; that things should never be written that are contained in §4 of the statement, which reads:

"...A state of affairs in which political freedom can be enjoyed without restriction, and bourgeois democracy cannot operate as the dictatorship of capital is, from the viewpoint of the development of the proletarian dictatorship, of the utmost importance in further winning the proletarian masses over to the side of communism."

Such a state of affairs is impossible. Petty-bourgeois leaders, the German Hendersons (Scheidemanns) and Snowdens (Crispiens), do not and cannot go beyond the bounds of bourgeois democracy, which, in its turn, cannot but be a dictatorship of capital. To achieve the practical results that the Central Committee of the Communist Party had been quite rightly working for, there was no need to write such things, which are wrong in principle and politically harmful. It would have been sufficient to say (if one wished to observe parliamentary amenities): “As long as the majority of the urban workers follow the Independents, we Communists must do nothing to prevent those workers from getting rid of their last philistine-democratic (i.e., ‘bourgeois-capitalist’) illusions by going through the experience of having a government of their ‘own.’” That is sufficient ground for a compromise, which is really necessary and should consist in renouncing, for a certain period, all attempts at the forcible overthrow of a government which enjoys the confidence of a majority of the urban workers. But in everyday mass agitation, in which one is not bound by official parliamentary amenities, one might, of course, add: “Let scoundrels like the Scheidemanns, and philistines like the Kautskys and Crispiens reveal by their deeds how they have been fooled themselves and how they are fooling the workers; their ‘clean’ government will itself do the ‘cleanest’ job of all in ‘cleansing’ the Augean stables of socialism, Social-Democracy and other forms of social treachery.”

The real nature of the present leaders of the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany (leaders of whom it has been wrongly said that they have already lost all influence, whereas in reality they are even more dangerous to the proletariat than the Hungarian Social-Democrats who styled themselves Communists and promised to “support” the dictatorship of the proletariat) was once again revealed during the German equivalent of the Kornilov revolt, i.e., the Kapp-Lüttwitzputsch.^{*10} A small but striking illustration is provided by two brief articles—one by Karl Kautsky entitled “Decisive Hours” (“Entscheidende Stunden”) in *Freiheit* (*Freedom*), organ of the Independents, of March 30, 1920, and the other by Arthur Crispien entitled “On the Political Situation” (in the same newspaper, issue of April 14, 1920). These gentlemen are absolutely incapable of thinking and reasoning like revolutionaries. They are snivelling philistine democrats, who become a thousand times more dangerous to the proletariat when they claim to be supporters of Soviet government and of the dictatorship of the proletariat because, in fact, whenever a difficult and dangerous situation arises they are sure to commit treachery... while “sincerely” believing that they are helping the proletariat! Did not the Hungarian Social-Democrats, after rechristening themselves Communists, also want to “help” the proletariat

when, because of their cowardice and spinelessness, they considered the position of Soviet power in Hungary hopeless and went snivelling to the agents of the Entente capitalists and the Entente hangmen?

III. Turati and Co. in Italy

The issues of the Italian newspaper *Il Soviet* referred to above fully confirm what I have said in the pamphlet about the Italian Socialist Party's error in tolerating such members and even such a group of parliamentarians in their ranks. It is still further confirmed by an outside observer like the Rome correspondent of *The Manchester Guardian*, organ of the British liberal bourgeoisie, whose interview with Turati is published in its issue of March 12, 1920. The correspondent writes:

"...Signor Turati's opinion is that the revolutionary peril is not such as to cause undue anxiety in Italy. The Maximalists are fanning the fire of Soviet theories only to keep the masses awake and excited. These theories are, however, merely legendary notions, unripe programmes, incapable of being put to practical use. They are likely only to maintain the working classes in a state of expectation. The very men who use them as a lure to dazzle proletarian eyes find themselves compelled to fight a daily battle for the extortion of some often trifling economic advantages so as to delay the moment when the working classes will lose their illusions and faith in their cherished myths. Hence a long string of strikes of all sizes and with all pretexts up to the very latest ones in the mail and railway services—strikes which make the already hard conditions of the country still worse. The country is irritated owing to the difficulties connected with its Adriatic problem, is weighed down by its foreign debt and by its inflated paper circulation, and yet it is still far from realising the necessity of adopting that discipline of work which alone can restore order and prosperity."

It is clear as daylight that this British correspondent has blurted out the truth, which is probably being concealed and glossed over both by Turati himself, and his bourgeois defenders, accomplices and inspirers in Italy. That truth is that the ideas and political activities of Turati, Trèves, Modigliani, Dugoni and Co. are really and precisely of the kind that the British correspondent has described. It is downright social treachery. Just look at this advocacy of order and discipline among the workers, who are wage-slaves toiling to enrich the capitalists! And how familiar to us Russians are all these Menshevik speeches! What a valuable admission it is that the masses are *in favour of* Soviet government! How stupid and vulgarly bourgeois is the failure to understand the revolutionary role of strikes which are spreading spontaneously! Indeed, the correspondent of the British bourgeois-liberal

newspaper has rendered Turati and Co. a disservice and has excellently confirmed the correctness of the demand by Comrade Bordiga and his friends on *Il Soviet*, who are insisting that the Italian Socialist Party, if it really wants to be *for* the Third International, should drum Turati and Co. out of its ranks and become a Communist Party both in name and in deed.

IV. False Conclusions from Correct Premises

However, Comrade Bordiga and his “Left” friends draw from their correct criticism of Turati and Co. the wrong conclusion that any participation in parliament is harmful in principle. The Italian “Lefts” cannot advance even a shadow of serious argument in support of this view. They simply do not know (or try to forget) the international examples of really revolutionary and communist utilisation of bourgeois parliaments, which has been of unquestionable value in preparing for the proletarian revolution. They simply cannot conceive of any “new” ways of that utilisation, and keep on repeatedly and endlessly vociferating about the “old” non-Bolshevik way.

Herein lies their fundamental error. In *all* fields of activity, and not in the parliamentary sphere alone, communism must *introduce* (and without long and persistent effort it will be *unable* to introduce) something new in principle that will represent a radical break with the traditions of the Second International (while retaining and developing what was good in the latter).

Let us take, say, journalistic work. Newspapers, pamphlets and leaflets perform the indispensable work of propaganda, agitation and organisation. No mass movement in any country at all civilised can get along without a journalistic apparatus. No outcries against “leaders” or solemn vows to keep the masses uncontaminated by the influence of leaders will relieve us of the necessity of using, for this work, people from a bourgeois-intellectual environment or will rid us of the bourgeois-democratic, “private property” atmosphere and environment in which this work is carried out under capitalism. Even two and a half years after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, after the conquest of political power by the proletariat, we still have this atmosphere around us, this environment of mass (peasant, artisan) bourgeois-democratic private property relations.

Parliamentarianism is one form of activity; journalism is another. The content of both can and should be communist if those engaged in these two spheres are genuine Communists, really members of a proletarian mass party. Yet, in neither sphere—and *in no other sphere of activity* under capitalism and during the period of transition from capitalism to socialism—is it possible to avoid those difficulties which the proletariat must overcome,

those special problems which the proletariat must solve so as to use, for its own purposes, the services of people from the ranks of the bourgeoisie, eradicate bourgeois-intellectualist prejudices and influences, and weaken the resistance of (and, ultimately, completely transform) the petty-bourgeois environment.

Did we not, before the war of 1914–18, witness in all countries innumerable cases of extreme “Left” anarchists, syndicalists and others fulminating against parliamentarianism, deriding bourgeois-vulgarised parliamentary socialists, castigating their careerism, and so on and so forth, and yet themselves pursuing the *same kind* of bourgeois career *through* journalism and *through* work in the syndicates (trade unions)? Is not the example of Jouhaux and Merrheim, to limit oneself to France, typical in this respect?

The childishness of those who “repudiate” participation in parliament consists in their thinking it possible to “*solve*” the difficult problem of combating bourgeois-democratic influences *within* the working-class movement in such a “simple,” “easy,” allegedly revolutionary manner, whereas they are actually merely running away from their own shadows, only closing their eyes to difficulties and trying to shrug them off with mere words. The most shameless careerism, the bourgeois utilisation of parliamentary seats, glaringly reformist perversion of parliamentary activity, and vulgar petty-bourgeois conservatism are all unquestionably common and prevalent features engendered everywhere by capitalism, not only outside but also within the working-class movement. But the selfsame capitalism and the bourgeois environment it creates (which disappears very slowly even after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, since the peasantry constantly regenerates the bourgeoisie) give rise to what is essentially the same bourgeois careerism, national chauvinism, petty-bourgeois vulgarity, etc.—merely varying insignificantly in form—in positively every sphere of activity and life.

You think, my dear boycottists and anti-parliamentarians, that you are “terribly revolutionary,” but in reality *you are frightened* by the comparatively minor difficulties of the struggle against bourgeois influences within the working-class movement, whereas your victory—i.e., the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the conquest of political power by the proletariat—will create *these very same* difficulties on a still larger, an infinitely larger scale. Like children, you are frightened by a minor difficulty which confronts you today, but you do not understand that tomorrow, and the day after, you will still have to learn, and learn thoroughly, to overcome the selfsame difficulties, only on an immeasurably greater scale.

Under Soviet rule, your proletarian party and ours will be invaded by a still larger number of bourgeois intellectuals. They will worm their way into

the Soviets, the courts, and the administration, since communism cannot be built otherwise than with the aid of the human material created by capitalism, and the bourgeois intellectuals cannot be expelled and destroyed, but must be won over, remoulded, assimilated and re-educated, just as we must—in a protracted struggle waged on the basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat—re-educate the proletarians themselves, who do not abandon their petty-bourgeois prejudices at one stroke, by a miracle, at the behest of the Virgin Mary, at the behest of a slogan, resolution or decree, but only in the course of a long and difficult mass struggle against mass petty-bourgeois influences. Under Soviet rule, these same problems, which the anti-parliamentarians now so proudly, so haughtily, so lightly and so childishly brush aside with a wave of the hand—*these selfsame* problems are arising anew *within* the Soviets, within the Soviet administration among the Soviet “pleaders” (in Russia we have abolished, and have rightly abolished, the bourgeois legal bar, but it is reviving again under the cover of the “Soviet pleaders”⁴⁰). Among Soviet engineers, Soviet school-teachers and the privileged, i.e., the most highly skilled and best situated, *workers* at Soviet factories, we observe a constant revival of absolutely *all* the negative traits peculiar to bourgeois parliamentarianism, and we are conquering this evil—gradually—only by a tireless, prolonged and persistent struggle based on proletarian organisation and discipline.

Of course, under the rule of the bourgeoisie it is very “difficult” to eradicate bourgeois habits from our own, i.e., the workers’, party; it is “difficult” to expel from the party the familiar parliamentary leaders who have been hopelessly corrupted by bourgeois prejudices; it is “difficult” to subject to proletarian discipline the absolutely essential (even if very limited) number of people coming from the ranks of the bourgeoisie; it is “difficult” to form, in a bourgeois parliament, a communist group fully worthy of the working class; it is “difficult” to ensure that the communist parliamentarians do not engage in bourgeois parliamentary inanities, but concern themselves with the very urgent work of propaganda, agitation and organisation among the masses. All this is “difficult,” to be sure; it was difficult in Russia, and it is vastly more difficult in Western Europe and in America, where the bourgeoisie is far stronger, where bourgeois-democratic traditions are stronger, and so on.

Yet all these “difficulties” are mere child’s play compared with the *same sort* of problems which, in any event, the proletariat will have most certainly to solve in order to achieve victory, both during the proletarian revolution and after the seizure of power by the proletariat. Compared with *these* truly gigantic problems of re-educating, under the proletarian dictatorship,

millions of peasants and small proprietors, hundreds of thousands of office employees, officials and bourgeois intellectuals, of subordinating them all to the proletarian state and to proletarian leadership, of eradicating their bourgeois habits and traditions—compared with these gigantic problems it is childishly easy to create, under the rule of the bourgeoisie, and in a bourgeois parliament, a really communist group of a real proletarian party.

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

Until the bourgeoisie has been overthrown and, after that, until small-scale economy and small commodity production have entirely disappeared, the bourgeois atmosphere, proprietary habits and petty-bourgeois traditions will hamper proletarian work both outside and within the working-class movement, not only in a single field of activity—the parliamentary—but, inevitably, in every field of social activity, in all cultural and political spheres without exception. The attempt to brush aside, to fence oneself off from *one* of the “unpleasant” problems or difficulties in some one sphere of activity is a profound mistake, which will later most certainly have to be paid for. We must learn how to master every sphere of work and activity without exception, to overcome all difficulties and eradicate all bourgeois habits, customs and traditions everywhere. Any other way of presenting the question is just trifling, mere childishness.

May 12, 1920

V

In the Russian edition of this book I somewhat incorrectly described the conduct of the Communist Party of Holland as a whole, in the sphere of international revolutionary policy. I therefore avail myself of the present opportunity to publish a letter from our Dutch comrades on this question and to correct the expression “Dutch Tribunists,” which I used in the Russian text, and for which I now substitute the words “certain members of the Communist Party of Holland.”⁴¹

N. Lenin

Letter From Wijnkoop

Moscow, June 30, 1920

Dear Comrade Lenin,

Thanks to your kindness, we members of the Dutch delegation to the Second Congress of the Communist International were able to read your “*Left-Wing*” *Communism—An Infantile Disorder* prior to its publication in the European languages. In several places in the book you emphasise your disapproval of the part played by some members of the Communist Party of Holland in international politics.

We feel, nevertheless, that we must protest against your laying the responsibility for their actions on the Communist Party. This is highly inaccurate. Moreover, it is unjust, because these members of the Communist Party of Holland take little or no part in the Party’s current activities and are endeavouring, directly or indirectly, to give effect, in the Communist Party of Holland, to opposition slogans against which the Party and all its organs have waged, and continue to wage to this day, a most energetic struggle.

Fraternally yours,

D. J. Wijnkoop

(on behalf of the Dutch delegation)

Notes

40. “*Soviet pleaders*”—collegiums of advocates established in February 1918, under the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’, Peasants’ and Cossacks’ Deputies. In October 1920, these collegiums were abolished.
41. On the basis of this directive from Lenin the words “certain members of the Communist Party of Holland” have been substituted everywhere in this volume, in the text of “*Left-Wing*” *Communism—an Infantile Disorder* for the expression “Dutch Tribunists.”
- *9 With regard to the question of future amalgamation of the “Left” Communists, the anti-parliamentarians, with the Communists in general, I would make the following additional remarks. In the measure in which I have been able to familiarise myself with the newspapers of the “Left” Communists and the Communists in general in Germany, I find that the former have the advantage of being better able than the latter to carry on agitation among the masses. I have repeatedly observed something similar to this in the history of the Bolshevik Party, though on a smaller scale, in individual local organisations, and not on a national scale. For instance, in 1907–08 the “Left” Bolsheviks, on certain occasions and in certain places, carried on more successful agitation among the masses than we did. This may partly have been due to the fact that a revolutionary moment, or at a time when revolutionary recollections are still fresh, it is

easier to approach the masses with tactics of sheer negation. This, however, is not an argument to prove the correctness of such tactics. At all events, there is not the least doubt that a Communist *party* that wishes to be the real vanguard, the advanced detachment, of the revolutionary *class*, of the proletariat—and which, in addition wishes to learn to lead the *masses*, not only the proletariat, but also the *non*-proletarian masses of working and exploited people—must know how to conduct propaganda, how to organise, and how to carry on agitation in a manner most simple and comprehensible, most clear and vivid, both to the urban, factory masses and to the rural masses.

- *10 Incidentally, this has been dealt with in an exceptionally clear, concise, precise and Marxist way in the excellent organ of the Austrian Communist Party, *The Red Banner*, of March 28 and 30, 1920. (*Die Rote Fahne*, Wien, 1920, Nos. 266 and 267; L.L.: "*Ein neuer Abschnitt der deutschen Revolution*" ["A New Stage of the German Revolution"—Ed.]).

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A P P E N D I X

The Socialist Alteration of Man

Lev Vygotsky 1930

Source: *Vygotsky Reader*, edited by René van der Veer and Jaan Valsiner, Blackwell, 1994

First Published: as Vygotsky, L. 1930: *Socialisticheskaja peredelka cheloveka*. VARNITSO, the journal of the All-Union Association of Workers in Science and Technics for the Furthering of the Socialist Edification in the USSR

Transcribed: by Andy Blunden.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/vygotsky/works/1930/socialism.htm>

Scientific psychology has established as its basic thesis the fact that the modern psychological human type is a product of two evolutionary lines. On the one hand, this modern type of human being developed in a lengthy process of biological evolution from which the biological species *homo sapiens* has arisen, with all its inherent characteristics from the point of view of body structure, the functions of various organs and certain types of

Learning with Lenin, pages 641–651

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reflexes and instinctive activity, which have become hereditarily fixed and which are passed on from generation to generation.

But together with the beginning of social and historical human life and the fundamental changes in the conditions to which he had to adapt himself, the very character of the subsequent course of human evolution also changed very radically. As far as one is able to judge on the basis of the available factual material, which has been obtained mainly by comparing biological types of primitive peoples at the most primitive stages of their cultural development with representatives of the most culturally advanced races, as far as this question can be resolved by contemporary psychological theory, there are strong reasons to suppose that the biological human type has changed remarkably little during the course of the historical development of man. It is not, of course, that biological evolution has come to a stop and that the species 'man' is a stable, unchangeable, constant quantity, but rather that the basic laws and the essential factors which direct the process of biological evolution have receded to the background and have either completely fallen away or have become a reduced or sub-dominant part of new and more complex laws governing human social development.

Indeed, the struggle for existence and natural selection, the two driving forces of biological evolution within the animal world, lose their decisive importance as soon as we pass on to the historical development of man. New laws, which regulate the course of human history and which cover the entire process of the material and mental development of human society, now take their place.

As an individual only exists as a social being, as a member of some social group within whose context he follows the road of his historical development, the composition of his personality and the structure of his behaviour turn out to be a quantity which is dependent on social evolution and whose main aspects are determined by the latter. Already in primitive societies, which are only just taking their first steps along the road of their historical development, the entire psychological makeup of individuals can be seen to depend directly on the development of technology, the degree of development of the production forces and on the structure of that social group to which the individual belongs. Research in the field of ethnic psychology has provided incontrovertible proof that both of these factors, whose intrinsic interdependence has been established by the theory of historical materialism, are the decisive factors of the whole psychology of primitive man.

Nowhere else, according to Plekhanov,¹ does that dependence of consciousness on the way of life manifest itself in a more obvious and direct manner as it does in the life of primitive man. This is due to the fact that the

factors which mediate between technological and psychological progress are very meagre and primitive and this is the reason why this dependence can be observed almost in the raw. But a much more complicated relationship between these two factors can be observed in a highly developed society which has acquired a complex class structure. Here the influence of the basis on the psychological superstructure of man turns out to be not direct, but mediated by a large number of very complex material and spiritual factors. But even here, the basic law of historical human development, which proclaims that human beings are created by the society in which they live and that it represents the determining factor in the formation of their personalities, remains in force.

In the same way as the life of a society does not represent a single and uniform whole, and society is subdivided into different classes, so, during any given historical period, the composition of human personalities cannot be said to represent something homogeneous and uniform, and psychology must take into account the basic fact that the general thesis which has been formulated just now, can have only one direct conclusion, to confirm the class character, class nature and class distinctions which are responsible for the formation of human types. The various internal contradictions which are to be found in different social systems find their expression both in the type of personality and in the structure of human psychology in that historical period.

In his classic descriptions of the early period of capitalism, Marx frequently dwells on the subject of the corruption of the human personality which is brought about by the growth of capitalist industrial society. On one extreme end of society, the division between intellectual and physical labour, the separation between town and country, the ruthless exploitation of child and female labour, poverty and the impossibility of a free and full development of full human potential, and on the other extreme, idleness and luxury; not only does all this result in the single human type becoming differentiated and fragmented into several separate social class types which stand in sharp contrast to one another, but also in the corruption and distortion of the human personality and its subjection to unsuitable, one-sided development *within all these different variants of the human type*.

“Along with the division of labour,” says Engels, “man himself became subdivided.”² According to Ryazanov, “every form of material production specifies some social division of labour, and this is responsible for the spiritual division of labour. Beginning already with the corruption of primitive society, we can observe selection of a number of spiritual and organizational functions into special species and subspecies within the scheme of the social division of labour.”³ Engels further says:

“Already the very first major division of labour, the division of town from country, sentenced the rural population to millennia of mental torpor, and the city dwellers to enslavement, each by his particular work. It destroyed the basis for spiritual development for the former, or physical development for the latter. If a peasant is master of his land and the craftsman of his craft, then in no lesser degree the land rules over the peasant and the craft over the craftsman. The division of labour has caused man himself to become subdivided. All remaining physical and spiritual faculties are sacrificed for the sake of developing just one type of activity.

“This degeneration of man increases at the same rate as the division of labour, which reaches its highest level in manufacture. Manufacture breaks up craftsmanship into fractional operations and assigns each of them to a separate worker as his life vocation and chains him down to a specific fractional operation, to a specific tool of labour for the rest of his life . . .

“And it is not only workers, but also the classes who exploit them directly or indirectly, who become enslaved by the instruments of their activities, as a result of the division of labour: the petty bourgeois, by his capital and desire for profit; the lawyer by his ossified juridical ideas which rule over him like an independent force; ‘the educated classes’ in general, by their particular local limitations and one-sidedness, their physical shortcomings and spiritual myopia. They are crippled by their education which trains them for a certain speciality, by their lifelong enslavement to this speciality, even if this speciality is doing nothing at all.”⁴

This is what Engels wrote in “*Anti-Dühring*.” We have to proceed from the basic assumption that intellectual production is determined by the form of material production.

“So, for example, a different form of spiritual production than the type which was prevalent during the Middle Ages fits in with capitalism. Each historically defined form of material production has its corresponding form of spiritual production, and this, in its turn, signifies that human psychology, which is the direct instrument of this intellectual production, assumes its specific form at a certain stage of development.”⁵

This crippling of human beings, this one-sided and distorted development of his various capabilities which Engels describes, and which appeared together with the division of town and country, is growing at an enormous rate due to the influence of the technological division of labour. Engels writes:

“All the knowledge, the insight and the will which both the independent peasant and craftsman develop albeit on a small scale, like the savage who makes the whole art of war consist of the exercise of his personal cunning—these faculties are now required only for the workshop as a whole. The intellectual

potencies of production make them expand in one direction, because they vanish in many others. What is lost by the detail labourers [*'teilarbeiter'*] is concentrated in the capital that employs them. It is as a result of the division of labour in manufacture that the labourer is brought face to face with the intellectual potencies of the material process of production, as the property of another, and as a ruling power. This process of separation begins in simple co-operation, where the capitalist represents to the single workman the oneness and the will of the social labour [*'Arbeitskörpers'*]. It is developed in manufacture which cripples the labourer into a detail labourer. It is completed in large scale industry, which separates science as a productive potential from labour and presses it into the service of capital."⁶

As a result of the advance of capitalism, the development of material production simultaneously brought with it the progressive division of labour and the constantly growing distorted development of the human potential. If "in manufacture and manual labour the worker makes use of his tools, then in a factory he becomes the servant of the machine." Marx says that in the former case he initiates the movement of his tool, but here he is forced to follow its movement. The workers turn into "living extensions of machines." and what results is a "dismal monotony of the endless torment of labour," which Marx [1890/1962, p. 445] says is the characteristic feature of that period in the development of capitalism which he is describing. He is tethered to a specific function, and according to Marx [*ibid.*, p. 381], this turns him "from a worker into an abnormality and artificially [*'treibhausmässig'*] fosters him in just one special skill whilst suppressing all the remaining wealth of his productive inclinations and talents."

In our times, child labour represents a particularly horrifying example of the disfigurement of human psychological development. In the pursuit of cheap labour and due to the extreme simplification of the separate functions which the workers have to carry out, large scale recruitment of children becomes possible and this results in a retarded, or a wholly one-sided and distorted development occurring at the most impressionable age when the personality of the person is being formed. Marx's classic research is full of examples of "intellectual barrenness," "physical and intellectual degeneration," "transformation of immature human beings into machines for the production of surplus value" [*ibid.*, pp. 421–2], and he presents [*ibid.*, p. 514] a vivid picture of the whole process which results in a situation where "the worker exists for the sake of the production process, and not the production process for the sake of the worker."

However, all these negative factors do not give a full picture of how the process of human development is influenced by the speedy growth of industry. All these adverse influences are not inherent in large scale industry

as such, but in its capitalist organization, which is based on the exploitation of enormous masses of the population and which has resulted in a situation where, instead of every new step toward the conquest of nature by human beings, every new level in the development of the production forces of the society, has not just failed to raise humanity as a whole and each individual human personality to a higher level, but has led to an ever deeper degradation of the human personality and its growth potential.

Whilst observing the crippling effects of the process of progressing civilization upon human beings, philosophers like Rousseau and Tolstoy could not see any other solution than a return to the integral and pure human nature. According to Tolstoy, our ideal is not ahead of us but behind us. In this sense, from the point of view of this reactionary romanticism, the primitive periods of the development of human society appear as that ideal toward which humanity should be striving. And really, a deeper analysis of the economic and historical tendencies which regulate the development of capitalism, shows that this crippling process of human nature which was discussed above, is inherent not only in the very fact of the growth of large scale industry, but in the society's specific capitalist form of organization.

The most fundamental and important contradiction in this whole social structure consists of the fact that within it, under relentless pressure, forces are evolving and preconditions are being created for its destruction and replacement with a new order, which is based on the absence of man's exploitation of man. More than once, Marx demonstrates how labour by itself or large scale industry by itself does not necessarily have to cripple human nature, as a follower of Rousseau or Tolstoy would assume, but, on the contrary, *it contains within itself endless possibilities for the development of the human personality.*

He says, "As can be ascertained from the particulars given by Robert Owen, a seed of a future educational system has grown, which will combine productive labour with schooling and physical education for all children above a certain age, not only as a method of increasing social production, but as the only method of producing well rounded educated human beings" [*ibid.*, pp. 507–508]. So the participation of children in manufacturing, which under the capitalist system, particularly during the period of growth of capitalism described, is the source of physical and intellectual degradation, contains seeds for a future educational system *in itself* and may well turn out to be a higher form of creation of a new type of human being. The growth of large scale industry *in itself* makes it necessary to work out a new type of human labour and a new type of human being who would be capable of carrying out these new forms of work. "The nature of large scale industry stipulates a changing work; a continual changing of functions

and an all-round mobility for the worker,” says Marx. “The individual who has been turned into a fraction, the simple bearer of a fractional social function, would be replaced by a fully developed individual for whom the various social functions represent alternating forms of his activities” [*ibid.*, pp. 511–512].

So it appears that not only will the combination of manufacturing labour with education prove to be a means of creating all-round developed people, but that it will also mean that the type of person who will be required to work in this highly developed manufacturing process, will differ substantially from the type of person used to be the product of production work during the early period of capitalist development. In this respect the end of the capitalist period presents a striking antithesis to its beginning. If in the beginning the individual was transformed into a fraction, into the executor of a fractional function, into a live extension of the machine, then at the end of it, the very requirements of manufacturing require an all-round developed, flexible person, who would be capable of changing the forms of work, and of organizing the production process and controlling it.

No matter which one of the individual features which characterize the human psychological type during either the early or the late periods of the development of capitalism we select, everywhere we will encounter a double meaning and a double character of each critical feature. The source of the degradation of the personality in the capitalist form of manufacturing, also contains within itself the potential for an infinite growth of personality.

To provide an example, let us conclude by examining labour situations where both sexes and all ages have to work together. “The composition of the whole staff of employees from persons of both sexes and all ages . . .,” says Marx, “must, on the contrary, under appropriate circumstances, turn into a source of humane development” [*ibid.*, p. 514].

From this it can be seen that the growth of large scale industry contains within itself hidden potential for the development of the human personality and that it is only the capitalist form of organization of the industrial process which is responsible for the fact that all these forces exert a one-sided and crippling influence, which retards personal development.

In one of his early works, Marx says that if psychology wishes to become a really meaningful science, it will have to learn to read the history book of material industry which embodies “the essential powers of man,” and which itself is a concrete embodiment of human psychology.⁷ As it happens, the whole internal tragedy of capitalism consists in the fact that at the time when this objective, i.e., thing-orientated, psychology of man, which contained within itself infinite potential for mastery over nature and development of

his own nature, was growing at a fast pace, his actual spiritual life was degrading and went through the process which Engels so graphically depicts as the crippling of man.

But the essence of this whole matter consists of the fact that this double influence of factors inherent in large scale industry on human personal development, this internal contradiction of the capitalist system, cannot be resolved without the destruction of the capitalist system of organization of industry. In this sense, the partial contradiction which we have already mentioned, between the growing power of man and his degradation which is growing in parallel, between his increasing mastery over nature and freedom on the one hand, and his slavery and the growing dependence on things produced by him, on the other—we wish to reiterate that this contradiction represents only one part of a much more general and all-encompassing contradiction which lies at the base of the whole capitalist system. This general contradiction between the development of the production forces and the social order which was in correspondence with the level of development of these production forces, is being resolved by the socialist revolution and a transition to a new social order and a new form of organization of social relationships.

Alongside this process, a change in the human personality and an alteration of man himself must inevitably take place. This alteration has three basic roots. The first of these consists of the very fact of the destruction of the capitalist forms of organization and production and the forms of human social and spiritual life which will rise on their foundation. Along with the withering away of the capitalist order, all the forces which oppress man and which cause him to become enslaved by machines and which interfere with his free development will also fall away, disappear and be destroyed. Along with the liberation of the many millions of human beings from suppression, will come the liberation of the human personality from its fetters which curb its development. This is the first source—the liberation of man.

The second source from which springs the alteration of man resides in fact that at the same time as the old fetters disappear, an enormous positive potential present in large scale industry, the ever growing power of humans over nature, will be liberated and become operative. All the features discussed above, the most shining example being the entirely new form of creating a future based on the combination of physical and intellectual work, will lose their dual character and will change the course of their influence in a fundamental way. Whereas earlier, their actions were directed *against* people, now they begin to work *for their sake*. From their previous role as obstacles, they now turn into powerful moving forces of the development of human personality.

Finally, the third source which initiates the alteration of man is change in the very social relationships between persons. If the relationships between people undergo a change, then along with them the ideas, standards of behaviour, requirements and tastes are also bound to change. As has been ascertained by psychological research, the human personality is formed basically under the influence of social relations, i.e., the system which it is a part of, from the earliest childhood onward. "My relationship to my environment," says Marx, "is my consciousness."⁸ A fundamental change of the whole system of these relationships which man is a part of, will also inevitably lead to a change in consciousness, a change in man's whole behaviour.

It is education which should play the central role in the transformation of man this road of conscious social formation of new generations, the basic form to alter the historical human type. *New generations and new forms of their education represent the main route which history will follow whilst creating the new type of man.* In this sense, the role of social and polytechnical education is extraordinarily important. As it happens, the basic ideas which underpin polytechnical education, consist of an attempt to overcome the division between physical and intellectual work and to reunite thinking and work which have been torn asunder during the process of capitalist development.

According to Marx, polytechnical education provides familiarity with the general scientific principles of all the production processes and, at the same time, it teaches children and adolescents practical skills which makes it possible for them to operate basic tools used in all industries. Krupskaja formulates this idea in the following way:

A polytechnical school can be distinguished from a trade school by the fact that it focuses on the interpretation of work processes, on the development of the ability to unify theory and practice and in the ability to understand the interdependence of certain phenomena, whereas the centre of gravity in a trade school is directed toward providing the pupils with labour skills.⁹

Collectivism, the unification of intellectual and physical labour, a change in the relationships between the sexes, the abolition of the gap between physical and intellectual development, these are the key aspects of that alteration of man which is the subject of our discussion. And the result of achieving this, the crowning glory of this whole process of transforming human nature, should be the appearance of this higher form of human freedom which Marx describes in the following way: "Only in community [with others has each] individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions: only in community therefore, is personal freedom possible."¹⁰ Just like all human society, the individual personality must make this leap

forward from the realm of necessity to the sphere of freedom, as described by Engels.

Whenever the alteration of man and the creation of a new, higher level of human personality and conduct is under discussion, it is inevitable that ideas about a new type of human being connected with Nietzsche's theory of the superman are mentioned. Proceeding from the perfectly true assumption that evolution did not stop with man and that the modern type of human being represents nothing more than a bridge, a transitional form leading to a higher type, that evolution did not exhaust its possibilities when it created man and that the modern type of personality is not the highest achievement and the last word in the process of development, Nietzsche concluded that a new creature can arise during the process of evolution, a superman, who will have the same relation to contemporary man, as contemporary man has to the ape.

However, Nietzsche imagined that the development of this higher type of man was subject to the same law of biological evolution, the struggle for life and selection based on the survival of the fittest, which prevails in the animal world. It is for this reason that the ideal of power, the self assertion of the human personality in all the fullness of its instinctive power and ambition, rugged individualism and outstanding men and women, formed, according to Nietzsche, the road to the creation of a superman.

This theory is erroneous, because it ignores the fact that the laws of historical evolution of man differ fundamentally from the laws of biological evolution and that the basic difference between these two processes consists of the fact that a human being evolves and develops as a historical, social being. Only a raising of all of humanity to a higher level in social life, the liberation of all of humanity, can lead to the formation of a new type of man.

However, this change in human behaviour, this change of the human personality, must inevitably lead to further evolution of man and to the alteration of the *biological type of man*. Having mastered the processes which determine his own nature, man who is struggling with old age and diseases, undoubtedly will rise to a higher level and transform the very biological organization of human beings. But this is the source of the greatest historical paradox of human development, that this biological transformation of the human type which is mainly achieved through science, social education and the rationalization of the entire way of life, *does not represent a prerequisite but instead is a result of the social liberation of man*.

In this sense Engels, who had examined the process of evolution from the ape to man, said that it is labour which created man.¹¹ Proceeding from this, one could say that new forms of labour will create the new man and

that this new man will resemble the old kind of man, “the old Adam,” in name only, in the same way as, according to Spinoza’s great statement, a dog, the barking animal, resembles the heavenly constellation Dog.¹²

Notes

1. Probably refers to Plekhanov, G. V. 1922: *Ocherki po istorii materializma*. Moscow.
2. Refers to p. 272 of Engels, F. 1894/1978: *Herrn Eugen Duhring’s Umwälzung der Wissenschaft* [*Anti-Duhring*]. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
3. It is unclear to which book Vygotsky is referring.
4. Refers to pp. 271–272 of Engels 1894/1978. See also pp. 381 and 445 of Marx, K. 1890/1962: *Das Kapital* [*Capital*] (4th edn). Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
5. Theories of Surplus Value, Chapter IV §16.
6. A curious mistake. The text attributed to Engels can be found on p. 382 of Marx, K. 1890/1962: *Das Kapital* [*Capital*] (4th edn). Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
7. “We see how the history of *industry* and the established *objective* existence of industry are the *open* book of *man’s essential powers*, the perceptibly existing human *psychology* . . . a *psychology* for which this book, the part of history existing in the most perceptible and accessible form, remains a closed book, cannot become a genuine, comprehensive and real science.” See pp. 302–303 of *Marx–Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 3: *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. New York: International Publishers (1975).
8. Refers to p. 30 of Marx, K. and Engels, F. 1846/1978: *Die deutsche Ideologie* [*The German Ideology*], Berlin: Dietz Verlag. See *The German Ideology*.
9. Lenin’s wife, N. K. Krupskaja, devoted much attention to educational matters. In her book *Vospitanie molodezhi v Leninskom dukhe* [*Education of the Youth in the Spirit of Lenin*] she discussed contemporary international experiments with labour schools (*Arbeitsschule*) in the light of Marx’s ideal of the polytechnic education. See Krupskaja, N. K. 1925/1989: *Vospitanie molodezhi v Leninskom dukhe*. Moscow: Pedagogika. We haven’t been able to establish the exact source of the present citation.
10. See p. 74 of Marx and Engels (1846/1978).
11. See pp. 444–55 of Engels, F. 1925/1978: *Dialektik der Natur* [*Dialectics of Nature*]. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
12. One of Vygotsky’s favourite quotations from Spinoza’s *The Ethics*. See p. 61 of Spinoza, B. de 1677/1955: *On the improvement of the understanding. The ethics. Correspondence*. New York: Dover. “The old Adam” may be an implicit reference to Marx’s (1890/1962, p. 118) use of this expression.