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KLARA ZETKIN

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by

Klara Zetkin

Dealing with Lenin's views on the position of women and other questions.

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IN this hour of grief, when all of us realise with the deepest personal sorrow that we have suffered an irreparable loss, there arises the luminous, living memory of one who revealed, in the great leader, the great man. The harmony of greatness, as leader and as man, was impressed on Lenin's features, and "enshrined him for ever in the great heart of the world proletariat," that glorious destiny assigned by Marx to the fighters of the Commune. For the workers, those sacrificed to wealth who, like the Canadians in Seume's poem, are unaware of "the surface civility of the old world"—we may add, the conventional lies and hypocrisies of the bourgeois world—distinguish with a fine and instinctive sensibility between the genuine and the false, between real greatness and overbearing conceit, between unselfish, fruitful love and the desire for popularity reflecting nothing but vanity.

I find it difficult to carry personal matters into public notice. But I feel it my duty to publish some extracts from the treasury of my personal recollections of our unforgettable leader and friend. Duty to him, who taught us, by theory and action, that the revolutionary will could consciously mould what was historically necessary and developed. Duty to those whom he loved and for whom he worked: the proletariat, the creators, the exploited, the oppressed of the world, for whose sufferings his heart was full of sympathy, and in whom he proudly recognised the revolutionary fighters, the builders of a higher order of society.

K.Z.

January, 1924.

REMINISCENCES OF LENIN

IT was in the early autumn of 1920 that I first saw Lenin again after the outbreak of the Russian revolution "that shook the world." Immediately after my arrival in Moscow, at a Party meeting in the Sverdlov Hall of the Kremlin, if I remember rightly. Lenin seemed to me unchanged, scarcely to have aged. I would have taken my oath that he wore the same neat, well-brushed coat in which I first saw him. It was in 1907 at the World Congress of the Second International at Stuttgart when Rosa Luxemburg, who possessed an artist's eye for the characteristic, pointed Lenin out to me with the remark: "Take a good look at him. That is Lenin. Look at the self-willed, stubborn head. A real Russian peasant's head with a few faintly Asiatic lines. That man will try to overturn mountains. Perhaps he will be crushed by them. But he will never yield."

In attitude and appearance Lenin was just as before. The debate was at times lively, even stormy. Aspreviously at the Second International Congresses, Lenin excelled in his attentive observation and following of the proceedings, in the great self-confident calm, his concentrated, as it were internal participation, energy and flexibility.

That was shown by his occasional interruptions and remarks, and by his longer speeches when he addressed the meeting. His sharp glance, his clear mind, seemed to miss nothing that was worthy of notice. During the meeting—and ever after—I realised that the principal feature of Lenin's nature was his simplicity and sincerity, the complete naturalness of his dealings with all comrades. I say "naturalness" for I had the strong impression that this

man cannot give himself otherwise than as he is giving himself. The way he behaves to the comrades is the natural expression of his very nature.

Lenin was the undisputed leader of a Party which, clear as to its objective and the way to it, had led the Russian workers and peasants in the struggle for power ; and which now, supported by their trust, was ruling by the dictatorship of the proletariat. So far as an individual can fill such a position, Lenin was the creator and leader of the great Empire that had become the first Workers' and Peasants' State of the world. His thoughts and his will lived in millions, even outside Soviet Russia. For every important decision his views were authoritative, his name a symbol of hope and freedom wherever the exploited and oppressed dwell. "Comrade Lenin is leading us to Communism, we shall hold on, however difficult it may be," declared the Russian workers who, with the vision of an ideal commonwealth for humanity before their eyes, starving and freezing, hurried to the fronts, or, under unspeakable difficulties, worked to re-establish industry. "Why should we fear that the masters will return and take away our fields ? Little father Lenin will save us, and Trotsky with his Red Army." So thought the peasants. "Evviva Lenin ! " was inscribed on the walls of more than one church in Italy, expressing the enthusiastic admiration of some worker who, in the Russian revolution, welcomed the blow struck for his freedom. In America, in Japan, and India, rebels against the enslaving power of the possessors gathered together under Lenin's name.

How simple, how modest Lenin appeared, Lenin who could already look back upon a great historical work, and on whom lay a heavy burden of trusting faith, gravest responsibility and never-ending work ! He lost himself in the

rank and file of the comrades, was one with them, was one of many. By no gesture, no action, did he attempt to act as a "personality." Such behaviour was foreign to him, for he really was a personality. Couriers were continually coming in with reports from the various chancellories, from the civil and military bodies, reports which were often answered by a few hurriedly scribbled lines. Lenin had a friendly smile or nod for all, reflected always in a face beaming with joy. During the proceedings inconspicuous consultations with leading comrades frequently took place. During the intervals there was a veritable attack on Lenin. Men and women comrades from Moscow, Petersburg, from the most far-flung centres of the movement, and young people, many young people, surrounded him. "Vladimir Ilyitch, please . . ." "Comrade Lenin, don't refuse . . ." "We know, Ilyitch, that you . . . but . . ." So requests, questions, proposals, buzzed around him.

In listening and answering Lenin showed inexhaustible and calm patience. He had a ready ear and good advice for every Party question, as well as for personal sorrows. The manner in which he dealt with young people was particularly fine. In comradely fashion, free from any pedantic grown-uppishness, from any suggestion that age alone was an incomparable virtue, Lenin moved as an equal among equals, to whom he was bound by every fibre of his heart. There was not the faintest trace of a "master man" about him ; his authority in the Party was that of an ideal father to whose superiority one submits in the consciousness that he understands and wishes to be understood. In this atmosphere surrounding Lenin I remembered, not without bitterness, the stiff, affected grandeur of the "Party father" of German Social democracy. And particularly the vulgar servility with which the social democrat Ebert, as president of the bourgeois republic,

sedulously studied the manner in which the upper ten "cough and spit," a servility which had lost all pride in the historical importance of the proletariat and all human dignity. Admitted that these gentlemen were never so "foolish and daring as to wish to make a revolution" like Lenin. And under their care the capitalists in the one-time "nursery of the Roman Empire" can for the present sleep even more securely than in the time of Heinrich Heine under its three-and-thirty monarchs. Until finally the revolution shall rise out of the torrent of historical development and necessity, and society here, too, thunders with the cry : "Quos ego ! "

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My first visit to Lenin's family strengthened the impression I had received at the Party conference, and which in frequent conversations with him since then, has been deepened. It is true that Lenin lived in the Kremlin, the former Tsarist fortress, and that one had to pass many guards before reaching him—a regulation justified by the counter-revolutionary attempts on the leaders of the revolution which were still being made at that time. Lenin also received visitors, when it was necessary, in the State apartment. But his private dwelling was of the utmost simplicity and unpretentiousness. I have been in more than one worker's home furnished much more richly than that of the "all-powerful Muscovite dictator." I found Lenin's wife and sister at supper, which I was immediately and heartily asked to share. It was a simple meal, as the hard times demanded : tea, black bread, butter, cheese. Later the sister tried to find something "sweet" for the "guest of honour" and discovered a small jar of preserves. It was well known that the peasants

provided "their Ilyitch" with gifts of white flour, bacon, eggs, fruit, etc. ; but it was also well known that nothing remained in Lenin's household. Everything found its way to the hospitals and children's homes ; Lenin's family held strictly to the principle of not living better than the others, that is, than the working masses.

I had not seen Comrade Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, since the International Socialist Women's Conference at Berne in March, 1915. Her kind face with its warm, friendly eyes, bore ineradicable signs of the malignant disease which was eating her away. But apart from that, she, too, had remained the same, the embodiment of sincerity and modesty, of an almost Puritan simplicity. With her hair smoothly combed back and tied in an inartistic knot at the back, in her ill-fitting dress, one could have taken her for a flurried housewife whose only worry is to save time, to gain time. The "first lady of the Great Russian Empire"—according to bourgeois ideas and phraseology—is undoubtedly the first in willing forgetfulness of self, in sacrifices for the cause of the toilers and the oppressed. The closest community of ideas and work in life bound her to Lenin. Impossible to speak of him, without thinking of her. She was "Lenin's right hand," his first and best secretary, his most convinced comrade in thought, the most experienced exponent and agent of his views, as untiring in gaining friends and adherents for the master of genius with strength and wisdom, as in carrying on propaganda among the working-class. Apart from that she had her own personal sphere of activity to which she devoted herself with her whole soul : the system of popular education and instruction.

It would be ridiculous, insulting to suppose that Comrade Krupskaya was in the Kremlin as "deputy for Lenin."

She worked and worried with him, for him, as she had done her whole life, even when exile and the bitterest persecution separated them. Her profoundly motherly nature made Lenin's dwelling a "home" in the finest sense of the word, and in this she was lovingly supported by his sister. A home not in the sense of the German Philistines, but in the spiritual atmosphere with which it was filled and which was the result of the relationships uniting the living and moving human beings there. It was clear that in those relationships everything was determined by sincerity, by truth, understanding and nobility. Although at that time I was not well acquainted with Comrade Krupskaya personally, in her "kingdom" and under her friendly care I immediately felt at home. When Lenin came, and, somewhat later, a large cat appeared, gladly welcomed by the family, and sprang on the shoulder of the "terrorist leader," finally settling itself comfortably on his lap, I could truly have wept to be at home or with Rosa Luxemburg and her cat "Mimi," a historic personality among her friends.

Lenin found us three women discussing art and questions of education and instruction. I expressed my enthusiastic admiration of the titanic cultured work of the Bolsheviks, at the energy and activity of creative forces, which were opening up new channels for art and education. But I did not conceal my impression that there was a great deal that was uncertain, unclear, hesitating and experimental in evidence, and together with the passionate desire for a new content, new forms, new ways of cultural life there were many artificial, cultural fashions after the western model. Lenin immediately entered with great liveliness into the discussion.

"The awakening, the activity of forces which will create a new art and culture in Soviet Russia," he said, "is good, very good. The stormy rate of this development is understandable and useful. We must and shall make up for what has been neglected for centuries. The chaotic ferment, the feverish search for new solutions and new watchwords. the ' Hosanna ' for certain artistic and spiritual tendencies to-day, the 'crucify them ' to-morrow !—all that is unavoidable.

"The revolution is liberating all the forces which have been held back, and is driving them up from the depths to the surface. Let us take an example. Think of the pressure exercised on the development of our painting, sculpture and architecture by the fashions and moods of the Tsarist court, as well as by the taste, the fancies of the aristocrats and bourgeoisie. In a society based on private property the artist produces goods for the market, he needs buyers. Our revolution has lifted the pressure of this most prosaic state of affairs from the artists. It has made the Soviet State their protector and patron. Every artist, and everybody who wishes to, can claim the right to create freely according to his ideal, whether it turn out good or not. And so you have the ferment, the experiment, the chaos.

"But of course we are Communists. We must not put our hands in our pockets and let chaos ferment as it pleases. We must consciously try to guide this development, to form and determine its results. In that we are still lacking, greatly lacking. It seems to me that we too, have our Dr. Karlstadt. We are much too much 'Iconoclasts.' We must retain the beautiful, take it as an example, hold on to it, even though it is 'old.' Why turn away from real beauty, and discard it for good and all as a starting point for further development, just because it is 'old' ? Why worship the new as the god to be obeyed, just because it is 'the new' ? That is nonsense, sheer nonsense. There is a great deal of conventional art hypocrisy in it, too, and respect for the art fashions of the west. Of course, unconscious ! We

are good revolutionaries, but we feel obliged to point out that we stand at the 'height of contemporary culture.' I have the courage to show myself a ' barbarian.' I cannot value the works of expressionism, futurism, cubism, and other isms as the highest expressions of artistic genius. I don't understand them. They give me no pleasure."

I could not but admit that I, too, lacked the faculty of understanding that, to an enthusiastic soul, the artistic form of a nose should be a triangle, and that the revolutionary pressure of facts should change the human body into a formless sack placed on two stilts and with two five-pronged forks. Lenin laughed heartily. "Yes, dear Klara, we two are old. We must be satisfied with remaining young for a little longer in the revolution. We don't understand the new art any more, we just limp behind it."

"But," Lenin continued, "our opinion on art is not important. Nor is it important what art gives to a few hundreds or even thousands of a population as great as ours. Art belongs to the people. It must have its deepest roots in the broad mass of workers. It must be understood and loved by them. It must be rooted in and grow with their feelings, thoughts and desires. It must arouse and develop the artist in them. Are we to give cake and sugar to a minority when the mass of workers and peasants still lack black bread ? I mean that, not, as you might think, only in the literal sense of the word, but also figuratively. We must keep the workers and peasants always before our eyes. We must learn to reckon and to manage for them. Even in the sphere of art and culture.

"So that art may come to the people, and the people to art, we must first of all raise the general level of education and culture. And how is our country in that respect ? You are amazed at the tremendous cultural work we have accomplished since the seizure of power. Without being

boastful we can say that we have done much in this respect, very much. We have not only cut off heads, as the Mensheviks and their Kautskys in all countries accuse us of doing, we have also enlightened heads. Many heads. But 'many' only in comparison with the past and the sins of the ruling classes and cliques of those times. We are confronted with the gigantic needs of the workers and peasants for education and culture, needs awakened and stimulated by us. Not only in Petrograd and Moscow, in the industrial centres, but outside them, in the villages. And we are a poor nation, a mendicant nation, whether we like it or not, the majority of the old people remain culturally the victims, the disinherited. Of course we are carrying on a vigorous campaign against illiteracy. We are setting up libraries and 'reading huts' in the small towns and villages. We are organising educational courses of the most varied nature. We arrange good theatrical productions and concerts, we send 'educational tableaux ' and ' travelling exhibitions ' over the country. But I repeat, what is all that to the many millions who lack the most elementary knowledge, the most primitive culture ! While in Moscow to-day ten thousand—and perhaps to-morrow another ten thousand—are charmed by brilliant theatrical performances, millions are crying out to learn the art of spelling, of writing their names, of counting, are crying for culture, are anxious to learn, for they are beginning to understand that the universe is ruled by natural laws, and not by the ' Heavenly Father ' and his witches and wizards."

"Don't complain so bitterly of the illiteracy, Comrade Lenin," I interjected. "To a certain extent it really helped forward the revolution. It prevented the mind of the workers and peasants from being stopped up and corrupted with bourgeois ideas and conceptions. Your

propaganda and agitation is falling on virgin soil. It is easier to sow and to reap where you have not first of all to uproot a whole forest."

"Yes, that is true," Lenin replied. "But only within certain limits, or, more correctly, for a certain period of our struggle. Illiteracy was compatible with the struggle for the seizure of power, with the necessity to destroy the old State apparatus. But do we destroy merely for destruction's sake? We destroy in order to build better. Illiteracy is incompatible with the tasks of construction. As Marx said, it must be the task of the worker himself, and, I will add, of the peasant, to set himself free. Our Soviet society makes that possible. Thanks to it thousands of the working population, in the most varied Soviets and Soviet bodies, are now learning to work constructively. They are men and women 'in the prime of life' as they used to say in your circles. That means that most of them grew up under the old régime, that is, without education or culture. And now they are striving after them passionately. We are doing our very utmost to draw in new men and women into Soviet work and in this way to instruct them practically and theoretically. The need for administrative and constructive forces cannot be disguised. We are compelled to employ bureaucrats of the old style, and we are getting a future bureaucracy. I hate it heartily. Not the individual bureaucrat, he may be a capable rascal. But I hate the system. It paralyses and corrupts from above and below. And the most important weapon in overcoming and uprooting bureaucracy is the widest possible popular education and instruction.

"And what are our prospects for the future? We have established splendid institutions and taken really good steps to enable the proletarian and peasant youths to learn, to study, to gain culture. But here again the tormenting

question arises: What is that among so many? Still worse! We have far too few kindergartens, children's homes and elementary schools. Millions of children are growing up without instruction, without education. They are growing up in the ignorance and lack of culture of their fathers and grandfathers. How much talent will be wasted, how many aspirations crushed! That is a cruel crime against the happiness of the growing generation and a robbery of the wealth of the Soviet State which is to develop into a Communist society. It is a grave danger for the future."

In Lenin's voice, usually calm, there was a growl of suppressed indignation. How deeply this matter must affect him, must obsess him, I thought, for him to make a speech to us three. Somebody—I cannot recollect who—made some remarks pleading "extenuating circumstances" for many of the characteristics present in art and cultural life, explaining them by the situation at the time. Lenin replied:

"I know! Many people are honestly convinced that the difficulties and dangers of the moment can be overcome by 'bread and cheese.' Bread—certainly! Circuses—all right! But we must not forget that the circus is not a great, true art, but a more or less pretty entertainment. Do not let us forget that our workers and peasants are no Roman mob. They are not maintained by the State, they maintain the State by their work. They 'made' the revolution and defended their work with unexampled sacrifices, with streams of blood. Our workers and peasants truly deserve more than circuses. They have the right to true, great art. So, before everything else, wide popular education and instruction. They are the cultural soil—assuming the bread assured, on which a truly new, great art will grow up, a Communist art, arranging its

forms in accordance with its content. Our ' intellectuals ' are faced with stupendous and most worthy tasks. To understand and fulfil those tasks would be tribute to the proletarian revolution for opening wide to them, too, the door that leads to freedom, away from the wretched plight of their old conditions of life, characterised so incomparably in the ' Communist Manifesto '."

That night—it had grown late—we spoke of many things. But everything else has faded from my memory except Lenin's remarks on art, culture, popular education and instruction. As, in the cool night, I walked to my home, I thought how sincerely, how warmly he loved the working people. And there are people who think this man a cold intellectual machine, a rigid fanatic, recognising human beings only in their ' historical categories," counting them and playing with them, unfeelingly, as though they were skittles.

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Another conversation with Lenin is engraved indelibly on my memory. Like so many who at that time came to Moscow from the west, I had to pay tribute to the change in my manner of life, and had to take to my bed. Lenin visited me. Anxiously, like the best of mothers, he enquired whether I was receiving proper care and nourishment, good medical attention, etc., and if I wanted anything. Behind him I saw Comrade Krupskaya's kind face. Lenin doubted me when I said that everything was going well. He was particularly excited about the fact that I was living on the fourth floor of a Soviet house, which, it is true, has a lift theoretically, but one which does not, in practice, function. "Just like the desire and the will of the Kautskians for revolution," he remarked sarcastically.

Soon the little vessel of conversation drifted into political channels.

The early frost of the Red Army's retreat from Poland had blighted the growth of the revolutionary flower fostered in our thoughts when the Soviet troops, by a bold and rapid advance, had reached Warsaw. I described to Lenin how it had affected the revolutionary vanguard of the German working-class, and the Scheidemanns and Dittmanns, the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, when the "comrades," with the Soviet star on their caps, in impossibly old scraps of uniform and civilian clothes, in bast shoes or torn boots, spurred their small, brisk horses right up to the German frontier. "Will they or won't they maintain the occupation of Poland and come over the border, and what then ? " That was the question which at that time troubled all minds in Germany, and in answering which the tap-room tacticians debated fiercely and unceasingly. It was evident that in all classes, in all social strata, there was a much stronger Chauvinist hatred of white-guard, imperialist Poland, than of France, the "hereditary enemy." But still stronger than the Chauvinist hatred of Poland and more compelling than the reverence for the sanctity of the Versailles Treaty was the fear of the prospect of revolution. In face of that danger voluble patriotism and gentle pacifism crept out of sight. Bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, with their reformist followers from the working-class, observed the later developments of affairs in Poland, half pleased, half afraid.

Lenin listened attentively to what I said on the matter and to my remarks on the position of the Communist Party and of the reformist party and trade union leaders individually. He sat silently for a few minutes, sunk in reflection. "Yes," he said at last, "so it has happened in Poland, as perhaps it had to happen. You know of course

all the circumstances which were at work; that our recklessly brave, confident vanguard had no reserves of troops or munitions, and never once got even enough dry bread to eat. They had to requisition bread and other essentials from the Polish peasants and middle classes. And in the Red Army the Poles saw enemies, not brothers and liberators. They felt, thought and acted not in a social, revolutionary way, but as nationalists, as imperialists, The revolution in Poland on which we counted did not take place. The workers and peasants, deceived by the adherents of Pilsudsky and Daszynsky, defended their class enemy, let our brave Red soldiers starve, ambushed them and beat them to death.

"Our Budyonny is the most brilliant cavalry leader of the world. A young peasant—you know that? Like the soldiers in the French Revolutionary Army, he carried the marshal's staff in his knapsack, only in his case it was the saddle pocket. He has no great knowledge of military science, but an excellent strategic instinct. He is courageous to foolhardiness, to an almost madly imprudent degree. He shares the greatest privations and the gravest dangers with his men, and they would allow themselves to be cut to pieces for him. He himself is as good as many squadrons. But all the excellencies of Budyonny and of other revolutionary army leaders could not make up for our deficiencies in military and technical affairs, still less for our political miscalculations—the hope of a revolution in Poland. Radek predicted how it would turn out. He warned us. I was very angry with him, and accused him of 'defeatism.' But he was right in his main contention. He knows affairs outside Russia, and particularly in the West, better than we do, and he is talented. He is very useful to us We were reconciled a short while ago. By

a long political conversation over the telephone in the middle of the night, or rather towards morning.

"You know, that the conclusion of peace with Poland at first encountered strong resistance in the Party. Like the Brest-Litovsk peace. I was strongly attacked because I was in favour of accepting the peace terms, which are certainly favourable to the Poles and hard on us. Almost all our experts maintain that in view of the Polish situation, and particularly of the wretched financial position there, we could have got far more favourable terms had we held out a little longer. Even the possibility of complete victory for us was not excluded. Had the war continued, the national hostilities and conflicts in East Galicia and other parts of the country, would have considerably weakened the forces of official, imperialist Poland. In spite of subsidies and credits from France, the growing burdens of war and the financial difficulties would finally have rallied the workers and peasants. Further circumstances were cited to show that we should have stood a better chance by continuing the war."

"I myself believe"—Lenin after a short pause resumed the thread of his thoughts—"that our position did not force us to make peace at any price. We could have held out over the winter. But I thought it wiser, from a political standpoint, to come to terms with the enemy; and the temporary sacrifice of a hard peace appeared to me preferable to a continuation of the war. The pacifist catchwords of the Poles and their friends—all imperialists—are, of course, tricks, nothing but tricks. They are looking to Wrangel. But we shall use the peace with Poland to throw all our forces against Wrangel and to defeat him so completely that he will for ever leave us in peace. In the present situation Soviet Russia can only win if it shows by its attitude that it carries on war only to defend itself, to

protect the revolution : that it is the only great country of peace in the world ; that it has no intention whatever to seize land, suppress nations, or enter upon an imperialist adventure. But, above all, ought we, unless absolutely and literally compelled, to have exposed the Russian people to the terror and suffering of another winter of war ? Our heroic Red soldiers at the fronts, our workers and peasants, who have suffered and endured so much ! Another winter of war, after the years of the imperialist war and of the civil war, when millions would starve, would freeze, and die, desperately silent. Food and clothes are already scarce. The workers are complaining, the peasants murmuring that we are only taking away from them and giving them nothing . . . No ; the thought of the agonies of another winter of war was unbearable. We had to make peace."

While Lenin was speaking, his face shrunk before my eyes. Furrows, great and small, innumerable, engraved themselves deeply on it. And every furrow was drawn by a grave trouble or a gnawing pain. An expression of unspoken and unspeakable suffering was on his face. I was moved, shaken. In my mind I saw the picture of a crucified Christ of the mediaeval master Gruenwald. I believe that the painting is known by the title "The Man of Sorrows." Gruenwald's crucifixion bears no trace of resemblance to that of Guido Reni's famous, sweet, forgiving martyr, the "soul's bridegroom" of so many adoring old maids and unfortunately married women. Gruenwald's Christ is the martyr, the tortured man, cruelly done to death, who "carries the sins of the world." And as such a "man of sorrows" Lenin appeared to me, burdened, pierced, oppressed with all the pain and all the suffering of the Russian working people. He left soon after. Among other things he told me that ten thousand

leather coats, buttoning up closely, had been ordered for the Red soldiers who were to attack Perekop from the sea. Even before these coats were ready we rejoiced at the report that the guardians of Soviet Russia, tired to death, had, under Comrade Piatakov's brilliant and bold leadership, won the isthmus. It was an unparalleled accomplishment on the part of leaders and led. On the southern front, too, there was no winter of war.

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The Third World Congress of our International and the Second International Conference of Communist Women was the occasion of my making a second and longer stay in Moscow. It was hot. Not so much because the congresses fell in the second half of June and the first half of July, when the sun blazes hotly down on the golden and beautifully coloured domes of the town, as because of the atmosphere in the Parties of the Communist International. And in the German Communist Party particularly the air was charged with electricity ; storms, thunder and lightning were daily occurrences at the meetings. Pessimists among us, who are only enthusiastic when they believe they can scent mischief, prophesied the disintegration, the end of the Party. The Communists organised in the Third International would have been bad internationalists indeed, if the passionate disagreements concerning theory and practice in the German Party had not also inflamed the minds of comrades in other countries. "The German question" was in reality a question and at that time the question of the Communist International itself.

The "March action*" and the so-called "theory of the offensive" which was at the bottom and could not be

*Rising of the German Workers after the Kapp affair in March, 1920

separated from it, although it was only first clearly and sharply formulated subsequently, in justification of the March action, compelled the whole Communist International to examine the world economic and political situation. It was necessary to establish a firm basis for their programme and tactics, that is, for their immediate tasks, for the revolutionary mobilisation and activisation of the working masses.

I was among the sharpest critics of the "March action" in so far as it was not a struggle of the workers, but falsely conceived, badly prepared, badly organised, and badly conducted Party action. I contested the theory of the offensive, produced with sighs and groans, most energetically. And in addition, I had a personal account to settle. The vacillating attitude of the German Party leaders towards the Italian Social Democratic Congress at Livorno and to the tactics of the Executive, had induced me to resign from the centre as a demonstration of protest. It worried me greatly that by this "breach of discipline" I would meet with strong opposition from those who were, politically and personally, the nearest to me, from my Russian friends.

In the Executive and in the Russian Party, as well as in many other sections of the Communist International, the "March action" had not less fanatical defenders, who celebrated it as a revolutionary mass struggle of hundreds of thousands actively resolute workers. The "theory of the offensive" was hailed as a new evangel of the revolution. I knew that great struggles awaited me and I was firmly decided to take them up and carry them through on the principles of Communist policy, whether they would bring victory or defeat.

What was Lenin's opinion on all these problems ? He who was capable as no other was, of putting Marxist revolutionary principles into action, and who knew how to conceive of men and affairs in their historical connections and to gauge the relation of forces ? Did he adhere to the "left" or to the "right" ?—all who did not unconditionally welcome the "March action" and the "offensive theory" were labelled "right" and "opportunist." I awaited an unambiguous answer to this question in trembling impatience. It would be decisive for the objects, the power of action, the very existence of the Communist International. Since I had left the Central Committee of the German Party the threads of my correspondence with Russian friends had been torn, and so I had only heard rumours and conjectures as to Lenin's conception of the "March action" and the "offensive theory," some doubtful, some emphatic. A long conversation with him a few days after my arrival gave me an unmistakable answer.

Lenin wanted first of all a report on the situation in Germany, in general and within the Party. I tried to give it to him with the greatest possible clarity and objectivity, citing facts and figures. Lenin now and again interjected questions to illuminate certain points, and made brief notes. I did not hide my opinion as to the dangers which threatened the German Party and the Communist International if the World Congress were to accept the basis of the "theory of the offensive." Lenin smiled, his kind, self-confident smile.

"Since when have you joined the pessimists ? " he asked. "Don't worry, the plant of the theory of the offensive will not take root at the Congress. We are still here. Do you think that we could have ' made ' the revolution without learning from it ? And we want you to learn from it too. Is it a theory anyway ? Not at all, it is an illusion, it is romanticism, sheer romanticism. That is why it was

manufactured in the ' land of poets and thinkers,' with the help of my dear Bela,* who also belongs to a poetically gifted nation and feels himself obliged to be always more left than the left. We must not versify and dream. We must observe the world economic and political situation soberly, quite soberly, if we wish to take up the struggle against the bourgeoisie and to triumph. And we shall triumph, we must triumph. The Congress decision on the tactics of the Communist International and on all the disputed points connected with it must be consistent with, and considered in conjunction with, our theses on the international economic situation. They must form a whole together. At the moment we still pay more attention to Marx than to Thalheimer and Bela, although Thalheimer is a good and well-informed theoretician and Bela an excellent and true revolutionary. More can be learnt from the Russian revolution than from the German ' March action.' As I said, I am not afraid about the attitude that will be taken at the Congress."

I interrupted Lenin : "The Congress has still to give its judgment of the ' March action ' which is the fruit, the putting into practice, of the 'theory of the offensive,' its historical example. Can theory and practice be separated ? And yet I know many comrades who reject the theory of the offensive and passionately defend the 'March action.' That seems to me illogical. Of course, we shall all turn in sincere sympathy to the workers who fought because they were provoked by Hörsing's barbarous crew, and wanted to defend their rights. We shall all declare ourselves solidly with them, whether they were hundreds of thousands as the imaginative would have us believe, or only a few thousand. But the attitude of our Centre, on the principles and tactics

*Bela Kun, the Hungarian Communist leader.

of the affair, was and is quite another matter. It was and is a 'putsch '-ist fall from grace and no theoretical, historical, or political soap will wash away the reality of that fact."

"Of course the defensive action of militant workers and the attack of the not well-advised Party, or rather of its leadership, will be diversely criticised," Lenin said quickly and decisively, "You opponents of the ' March action ' are yourselves to blame for not having done that. You only saw the distorted policy of the Centre and its bad effects, and not the militant workers of Central Germany. Moreover, Paul Levi's entirely negative criticism, which lacked that ' feeling of oneness ' with the Party, and embittered the comrades rather more by its tone than by its content, diverted attention from most important aspects of the problem. As far as the probable attitude of the Congress to the ' March action ' is concerned, you must realise that it is essential to have a basis for compromise. Don't look at me with such amazement, and reproach ; you and your friends will have to swallow a compromise. You will have to be content with the lion's share of the Congress spoils. The principles of your policy will triumph, triumph brilliantly. And that will prevent a repetition of the ' March action.' The decisions of the Congress must be strictly carried out. The Executive will see to that. I have no doubts on the matter.

"The Congress will utterly destroy the famous ' theory of the offensive,' will adopt the tactics which correspond to your ideas. But for that very reason it must also distribute some crumbs of consolation to the adherents of that theory. If, in criticising the ' March action ' we emphasise the fact that the workers fought under provocation from the lackeys of the bourgeoisie, and if, in general, we show a somewhat fatherly ' historical ' leniency, that will be possible. You, Klara, will condemn that as hushing it up and so on.

But that won't help you. If the tactics to be decided upon by the Congress are agreed upon as quickly as possible, and with no great friction, becoming the guiding principle for the activity of the Communist Parties, our dear leftists will go back not too mortified and not too embittered. We must also—and indeed first and before all—consider the feelings of the real revolutionary workers both within and outside the Party. You once wrote to me that we Russians should learn to understand western psychology a little and not thrust our hard, rugged methods upon people all at once. I took notice of that." Lenin smiled contentedly.

"Well, we shan't deal roughly with the leftists, we shall put some balm on their wounds instead. Then they will soon be working happily and energetically with you in carrying out the policy of the Third Congress of our International. For that means rallying large sections of workers to your policy, mobilising them under Communist leadership and bringing them into the struggle against the bourgeoisie and for the seizure of power.

"The basis of the tactics to be followed was clearly stated in the resolution which you placed before the Central Committee. The resolution was not in the least negative, like Paul Levi's pamphlet, its criticism was positive throughout. How could it have been rejected, and after what discussion and on what grounds? And what an unpolitical attitude! Instead of using the difference between positive and negative to separate you from Levi, you were forced on to his side."

I interrupted him: "Perhaps, dear Comrade Lenin, you think that you must give me, too, a few crumbs of consolation, because I've got to swallow the compromise. I can do it without consolation or balm."

"No," Lenin parried, "I don't mean it so. And to prove that, I am going to give you a well-deserved thrashing.

Tell me, how could you commit such a capital stupidity, yes, indeed, a capital stupidity, as to leave the Central Committee? Where was your understanding? I was angry about it, terribly angry. To act so senselessly, without regard to the effects of such a step and without letting us know anything at all about the matter or asking our opinion. Why didn't you write to Zinoviev? Why not to me? You could at least have sent a telegram."

I gave Lenin the reasons which had determined my decision, a decision formed suddenly in the situation obtaining at that time. He would not admit their validity.

"What?" he cried sharply, "you did not receive your mandate from the comrades at the Centre, but from the Party as a whole? You should not have thrown away the trust reposed in you." Since I was still impenitent, he continued to criticise sharply my exit from the Centre and immediately added: "Can it be considered a well-earned punishment, that at the Women's Conference yesterday there was a regularly organised attack upon you, as the embodiment of the worst sort of opportunism? Under the personal leadership of the good Reuten (Friesland) who, in doing that, participated for the first time, I think, in Communist work among women. That was simply stupid, quite stupid. To think that the 'theory of the offensive' could be saved by attacking you at the Women's Conference! Of course there were other speculations and hopes at stake. I hope that you will take that episode, from the political point of view, quite cheerfully, although it leaves an unpleasant taste otherwise. But always look to the workers, to the masses, dear Klara. Think always of them and of the goal which we shall achieve, and such trivialities fade away into nothing. Which of us has been spared them? I have had to choke down my share of them, you can believe that. Do you think that the Bolshevik Party

which you so admire, was ready and finished in one blow ? Even friends have sometimes done most unwise things. But back to your sins. You must promise me never to take such unconsidered steps again, otherwise our friendship is at an end."

After this interlude our conversation turned again to the principal question. Lenin explained the outlines of his ideas on the tactics of the Communist International, put forward by him later at the Congress in a comprehensive illuminating speech and which he defended in the earlier discussions at the Commission with a keen polemical brevity :—

"The first war of the world revolution has subsided. The second has not yet arisen," he declared. "It would be dangerous for us to have any illusions about that. We are not Xerxes, who had the sea scourged with chains. But to determine and pay attention to the facts does not mean to be inactive, to give up the struggle. Not at all ! Learn, learn, learn ! Act, act, act ! Be prepared, well and completely prepared, in order to be able to make full use, consciously and with all our forces, of the next revolutionary wave. That is our job. Untiring Party agitation and Party propaganda, culminating in Party action, but Party action free from the illusion that it can take the place of mass action. How did we Bolsheviks work among the masses, until we could say to ourselves : ' We have come so far ! Forward ! " ' Therefore—to the masses ! Win the masses as a preliminary to winning power. Such an attitude on the party of the Congress will surely satisfy you ' antis '. "

"And Paul Levi ! What about him ? what is the position of you and your friends ? what will be the position

of the Congress with regard to him ? " This question had been on the tip of my tongue for a long time.

"Paul Levi," Lenin answered. "Unfortunately that has become a case in itself. The reason for that lies principally in Paul himself. He has isolated himself from us and run obstinately into a blind alley. You must have become aware of that in your work of propaganda among the delegations. There is no need to try and convince me. You know how highly I value Paul Levi and his capacity. I got to know him in Switzerland and placed great hopes in him. He proved true in the times of worse persecution, was, brave, clever, unselfish. I believed that he was firmly bound to the proletariat, although I was aware of a certain coolness in his attitude to the workers. Something of a "please keep your distance.' Since the appearance of his pamphlet I have had doubts of him. I am afraid that there is a strong inclination towards solitariness and self-sufficiency in him, and something of literary vanity. Ruthless criticism of the ' March action ' was necessary. But what did Paul Levi give ? He tore the Party to pieces. He did not criticise, but was one-sided, exaggerated, even malicious ; he gave nothing to which the Party could usefully turn. He lacks the spirit of solidarity with the Party. And it is that which has made the rank and file comrades so angry, and made them deaf and blind to the great deal of truth in Levi's criticism, particularly to his correct political principles. And so a feeling arose—it also extended to non-German comrades—in which the dispute concerning the pamphlet, and concerning Levi himself, became the sole subject of this contention, instead of the false theory and bad practice of the ' offensive theory ' and the ' leftists.' They have to thank Paul Levi that up to the present they have come out so well, much too well. Paul Levi is his own worst enemy."

I had to admit the truth of the last remark, but I hotly contested Lenin's other remarks. "Paul Levi is not a vain, complacent literateur," I said. "He isn't an ambitious political climber. It was his fate and not his desire to become the leader of the Party so young. After the murder of Rosa, Karl and Leo* he had to take over the leadership; he has regretted it often enough. That is a fact. Even if he is not very warm in his dealings with our comrades, but rather a recluse, I am still convinced that every fibre of his being is at one with the Party, with the workers. The unfortunate 'March action' shook him to the depths. He firmly believed that the very existence of the Party was frivolously laid at stake and everything for which Karl, Rosa, Leo, and so many others gave their lives, squandered away. He cried, literally cried with pain at the thought that the Party was lost. He thought that it could only be saved by using the sharpest methods. He wrote his pamphlet in the spirit of the legendary Roman. who willingly threw himself into the yawning abyss to save the Fatherland by the sacrifice of his life. Paul Levi's intentions were the purest, the most unselfish."

"I won't argue with you about that," Lenin replied. "You are a better advocate for Levi than he is for himself. But you surely know that in politics we are not concerned with intentions, but with effects. Haven't you a saying which runs 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions'? The Congress will condemn Paul Levi, will be hard on him. That is unavoidable. But his condemnation will be only on account of breach of discipline, not of his basic political principles. How could that be possible at the very moment when those principles will be recognised as correct? The way is open for Paul Levi to find his way back to us, if he

*Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and Leo Jogisches.

himself does not block up the road. His political future lies in his own hands. He must obey the decision of the Congress as a disciplined Communist, and disappear for a time from political life. That will be extremely bitter to him. I sympathise with him and am truly sorry about it. You may believe that. But I cannot save him this period of heavy trial.

"Paul must accept it as we Russians accepted exile and prison under Tsarism. It can be a period for diligent study and calm self-understanding. He is still young in years and young in the Party. His theoretical knowledge is full of gaps, he is still in the elementary stage of the study of Marxian economics. He will come back to us with deeper knowledge, firm in his principles and as a better, wiser Party leader. We must not lose Levi. For his own sake and for our cause. We are not over-blessed with talent and must keep as much of what we have as we can. And if your opinion of Paul is correct, a complete separation from the revolutionary vanguard of the workers would be an incurable wound for him. Speak to him in a friendly way; help him to see the matter as it appears from the general standpoint and not from his personal viewpoint of 'being right.' I will help you in this. If Levi submits to discipline, bears himself well—he can for example, write anonymously in the Party Press, or write some pamphlets—then in three or four months' time I shall demand his re-admission in an open letter. He has his trial by fire before him. Let us hope that he will survive it."

I sighed. The cold sensation crept over me that I was up against the inevitable, whose consequences would not be foreseen. "Dear Lenin," I said, "do what you can. You Russians are ready to fight. And you are always ready to be friends. I know from the history of your Party that among you curses and blessings come and go like the

transient winds over the steppes. We ' westerners ' are cold-blooded. We are burdened with that historical Alp of which Marx spoke. I beg you again, earnestly, do what you can to keep Paul Levi among us."

Lenin answered: "Don't worry. I shall keep the promise I made you. If only Paul himself stands firm."—Lenin seized his cap, that plain, well-worn peaked cap, and went away with calm, vigorous steps.

The "opportunists" in the German delegation—Comrades Malzahn, Neumann, Franken and Müller—were very anxious to meet Lenin, to discuss their opinions as to the character and the consequences of the "March action." Comrade Franken was from a Rhine district, the other three came as trade unionists. They attached great importance to giving the acknowledged leader of the Communist International an account of the attitude taken by large sections of class conscious, keenly revolutionary workers, and to expressing their own opinion on the "theory of the offensive" and the tactics which they considered necessary. They were also naturally anxious to hear Lenin's views on these questions. Lenin thought it "a matter of course" to accede to the request of the comrades. The day and hour was arranged when they should meet together at my place. The German comrades came some time before him, because we had to come to an agreement on how to take part in the Congress debates.

Lenin was always punctual. Almost to the minute he entered the room, simply, as was his habit, scarcely noticed by the other comrades who were deep in discussion. "Good day, comrades." He shook hands with them and took his place among them so as to take part in the discussion at once. I was quite at ease, and took it to be the most natural thing in the world that every comrade should

know Lenin. So it did not occur to me to introduce him to the comrades. After about ten minutes of general conversation, one of them drew me aside and asked softly: "Tell me, comrade Klara, who is that comrade ? " "What? didn't you recognise him ? " I replied. "That is Comrade Lenin." "You don't mean it ? " exclaimed my friend. "I thought that, like some great man, he would keep us waiting till we were stiff. The simplest comrade could not be more simple and genial. You should see how our ex-comrade Hermann Müller solemnly walks about the Reichstag in his tail-coat, since he has been a Chancellor."

It seemed to me that the "opposition" comrades and Lenin were undergoing mutual examination. Lenin was more concerned to listen, to compare, establish, and inform himself, than to "speak like a leading article," although he did not hide his own opinion. He asked questions continually, and followed the remarks of the comrades with the utmost interest, often asking for explanations or supplementary information. He strongly emphasised the significance of planned, organised work among the masses and the necessity for centralisation and strict discipline. Lenin told me afterwards that the meeting had given him great pleasure. "Splendid fellows, these German workers of the type of Malzahn and his friends. I admit that perhaps they would never carry off the prize at a talking competition. I don't know whether they would do as shock troops. But I am quite sure of this, that people like them are the steady, well-organised, fighting rank and file of the revolutionary proletariat, that they are the basis and mainstay in the factories and trade unions. We must rally such elements and make them active. They bind us to the masses."

An unpolitical parenthesis. When Lenin visited me everybody in the house made high holiday. From the Red

soldiers who kept watch at the door to the young kitchen girl, not to speak of the delegates from the near and far East who were being put up at the very spacious villa where I was living, once the property of a wealthy manufacturer, but since the revolution that of the Moscow Commune. "Vladimir Ilyitch has come ! " The news flew from person to person. Everybody was on the look-out, gathered into the large hall or by the house door, to greet Lenin and nod to him. Their faces expressed the keenest joy when he went over to them, greeted them with his warm smile, speaking a few words to one or the other. Not a trace of humility, let alone servility on the one side, not a taint of condescension or affectation on the other. Red soldiers and workers, employees and Congress delegates from Dagestan, Persia and the "Turkestaners," grown so famous because of Paul Levi, in costumes which seemed to have come out of fairy tales ; they all loved Lenin as one of themselves, and he felt himself as one of them. They were all one in the feeling of warmest brotherhood.

The theoreticians of the offensive had not won any success in the debates on Trotsky's incisive and brilliant report on "The Economic Situation and the new tasks of the Communist International," nor in the Commission discussions on the Plenum. But they still hope to win victory for their ideas by amendments and additions to the thesis on the "Tactics of the Communist International." The proposals were put forward by the German, Austrian and Italian delegations. Comrade Terracini defended them, there was passionate agitation for their acceptance. What would be the decision ? An atmosphere of the greatest tension filled the high, spacious Kremlin Hall where the flaming red of the Communist People's House outshines the sparkle of the coldly ostentatious gold in the

one-time Imperial Palace. Every nerve strained in attention, the hundreds of delegates, the closely packed listeners, follow the proceedings.

Lenin gets up to speak. The speech is a masterpiece of eloquence. No trace of rhetoric. Only the weight of clear thought working, the inexorable logic of argument, the consistent, firmly-held line. Like unhewn blocks of granite the sentences are thrown out and fused into a unified whole. Lenin does not want to dazzle, to enchant ; he wants to convince. He convinces and enchants. Not by beautiful, sonorous words which intoxicate, but by the luminous spirit which, without self-deception, comprehends the world of social phenomena in its reality and which "speaks out" with cruel truthfulness, what is. Like lashes of a whip, like blows of a club, Lenin's words fell on those "who make a sport of hunting the ' right,' " and do not understand what will lead us to victory. "Only if we get on our side in the struggle the majority of the working-class, and not the majority of the workers alone, but the majority of the exploited and oppressed, only then shall we really triumph." Everyone feels that the decisive blow has been struck. When I shook Lenin's hand in enthusiasm, I could not refrain from saying : "Do you know, Lenin, that a speaker at a meeting in the most out of the way place would be shy of speaking as simply, as plainly, as you do ? He would be afraid of not being ' educated ' enough. I know only one counterpart to your way of speaking. It is Tolstoy's great art. Like him, you have the broad, unified, firm line, the sense of inexorable truth. That is beauty. Perhaps it is a peculiarly Slav characteristic ? "

"I don't know," Lenin replied. "I only know that when I ' became a speaker ' I always thought of the workers and peasants rather than of my audience. Wherever a Com-

munist speaks he must think of the masses, must speak for them. But it's good that nobody heard your national psychological hypothesis, or they might say : ' Look, look, the old man lets himself get caught by compliments.' We must be careful so that nobody may suspect that the two old people are hatching a plot against the ' left.' Of course, there are no intrigues on the ' left,'"—and laughing heartily Lenin left the hall and went to his work.

On the day of my departure Lenin came to take leave of me, and to give me some "good lessons" which, in his opinion, I "sadly needed." "Of course, you're not completely satisfied with the result of the Congress," he said. "You don't make a secret of the fact that you find it illogical of the Congress to advocate the principles and tactics which Paul Levi followed and to exclude him in spite of that. There had to be correction. I am thinking not only of Levi's mistakes, which I spoke of before. I am thinking particularly of how difficult he has made it for us to carry through the tactics of winning the masses. He must recognise and admit his mistakes so as to learn from them ; then with his political ability he will soon lead the Party again."

"I believe," I answered, ' that there is some way by which Paul could submit to the discipline of the Communist International without in any way renouncing his personal opinion. He could resign his candidature for the Reichstag and begin the publication of a journal with a number in which he considers the work of our Third World Congress from a historical standpoint, quite objectively. That, of course, would not exclude, but include criticism of that work. Also a declaration that he certainly believes the decision of the Congress against him to be wrong and illogical, but, nevertheless, overlooking that, he will submit

to it for the sake of the movement. Paul Levi could not lose, but gain, as a politician and a man by such a brave act of self-mastery. He would disprove the dirty suspicions of his opponents, and show that Communism comes first with him."

"That is an excellent suggestion," Lenin said. "But will it be followed ? Anyhow, I hope that your warm-hearted optimism in judging Levi will prove right, and not the pessimism of many others. I promise you again to write an open letter for Levi's re-admittance into the Party if he himself does not make that impossible. But the main thing ! Taken as a whole, the decisions of our Third Congress are very satisfactory. They have far-reaching historical importance and really mark a 'turning point' in the Communist International. They indicate the end of the first period of its development towards revolutionary mass Parties. That is why the Congress had to make a clean sweep with the ' left' illusions that the world revolution will continue at its early stormy speed, that we shall be carried forward by a second revolutionary wave and that it depends solely on the Party and its actions to bring victory to our cause. Of course, it is easy to ' make ' the revolution the ' glorious act of the Party alone,' without the masses, on paper and in the Congress hall, in an atmosphere free from objective conditions. But that is not a revolutionary, but an entirely Philistine conception. 'Left stupidities' found their concrete and clear expression in the German ' March action ' and ' theory of the offensive.' And so they had to be liquidated at your expense, you were the victim. But in reality, the settlement was international.

"And now you in Germany must carry out the tactics decided upon as a united, strict Party. The so-called ' Treaty of Peace ' among you which we have put together is by itself alone no guarantee of that. It is nothing in

itself, if it is not supported by the good and honest will of 'right' and 'left' to act as a Party on a clear, definite political policy. And so in spite of your disinclination and your resistance you must return to the Centre. And you must not leave it again even though it may seem to you personally that it is your right, and even your duty to do so. You have no other right but to serve the Party, and so serve the workers, in grave times. Your duty now is to keep the Party together. I make you personally responsible for seeing that there is no split, or at the most, only a small splitting off. You must be strict with the young comrades who are still without any deep theoretical knowledge or practical experience, and at the same time you must be very patient with them And I ask you particularly to take care of Comrade Reuten (Friesland). He has worked very well and very eagerly with us for several years. As leader of the Berlin 'Radicals,' he must be at the Centre. That alone will ensure better relations between them and the Centre. If I know Reuten, he will feel himself obliged by the 'Treaty of Peace' to work together in comradely fashion even with the so-called right. During the Congress I noticed a certain obstinacy and narrowness in him, which does not do for leadership, and if it ever comes to slipping and shaking there is usually no stopping it."

Here I interrupted Lenin's "good lessons" with the astonished question: "Have you any suspicions about it?" My teacher smiled: "No, only experience." Then he continued: "It is particularly important for you to help in our ranks capable comrades who have already won their spurs in the working-class movement. I am thinking of comrades like Adolf Hofmann, Fritz Geyn, Däuming, Fries and others. You must have patience with them, too, and not imagine that the 'purity of Communism' is endangered and lost if occasionally they lack the clear, sharp

formulation of Communist thought. These comrades are really anxious to be good Communists, and you must help them to become Communists. Of course, you must not make any concessions to survivals of reformist thought. Reformism must not be smuggled in under any false colours whatsoever. But you must put comrades of this kind in positions where they cannot speak and act otherwise than as Communists. Perhaps, and indeed in all probability, you will be disappointed in spite of that. If you lose a comrade who has a 'relapse' you can still, with firm and wise management, keep two, three, ten comrades who have gone along with you and become real Communists. Comrades like Adolf Hofmann, Däuming, etc., bring experience and great knowledge to the Party, and they are above all, living ties between you and the working masses whose confidence they possess. It is the masses who must be considered. We must not frighten them either by 'left' stupidities or by 'right' timidities. And we shall win the masses, if, in small things and great things, we act always as consistent Communists. You in Germany must now take your examination in the tactics of winning the masses. Don't disappoint us by making a beginning with —splitting the Party. Think always of the masses. Clara, and you will come to the revolution as we came to it: with the masses, through the masses."

§

I was twice in Moscow after this farewell conversation, when my stay there was darkly overshadowed by the fact that I could not speak to, could not see Lenin. Heavy suffering had shattered his great strength, his power of resistance. But in spite of the gloomiest rumours and prophecies, he grew better. When, at the end of October,

1922, I came to the Fourth World Congress of the Communist International, I knew that I should see Lenin again. He was so much better that he was to give a report on "Five years of the Russian Revolution and the prospects of World Revolution." Could there be a finer celebration of the Russian revolution than that its leader of genius, restored to health, should speak of it before the representatives of the revolutionary proletariat vanguard? The second day after my arrival the comrade who attended to the house and who had openly gone over from the old to the new "régime" came to me in great excitement: "Comrade, Vladimir Ilyitch is coming to visit you. That is, of course, Lord Lenin. He will soon be here." The news agitated me so greatly that for the moment the humour of "Lord Lenin" completely escaped me. He was already there, Vladimir Ilyitch, in a gray pilot jacket, looking fresh and strong as he did before the evil days of illness. "Don't worry,' he replied to my enquiries after his health, "I feel quite well, quite strong. I have even become 'reasonable,' or what the doctors call such. I work, but spare myself, and strictly follow the advice of the doctors. Many thanks, but I don't want to be ill again! It's a dreadful thing. There is so much to do, and Nadezhda Konstantinova and Maria Ilyinishna must not have all the worry and trouble again . . And world affairs have gone on without me, in Russia and elsewhere. The leading comrades in our Party have worked well, very well together, and that is the chief thing. But they all had too much to do, and I am glad to be able to lighten their burden."

Comrade Lenin, as he always did when he met me, asked warmly after my sons and asked me for a report on Germany and the German Party. I gave it shortly, so as not to tire him. It seemed to carry on from our conversation during the Third Congress of the International. He

rallied me on my "psychology of kindness" in "the Levi case!" "Less psychology, and more politics," he said. "And you showed in the disputes with Levi concerning Rosa's attitude to the Russian revolution that you know that too. Due correction at your hands was well deserved. Levi has finished himself for us more quickly and more decisively, than his worst enemy could have done for him. He can no longer be dangerous to us. For us he is only one of the Social democracy, nothing more. And he can be nothing more for us. Even if he were to obtain a certain standing there. That is not difficult in the decaying state of that Party. But for a close comrade and friend of Karl and Rosa, it is the most disgraceful end that can be imagined, yes, the most disgraceful end. That is why his desertion and treachery could not and did not seriously shake or endanger the Communist Party. A few convulsions in small sections and a few persons breaking away. The Party is sound, sound at its roots. It is on the right road to becoming a mass Party, the leading revolutionary mass party of the German proletariat." . . . After a short pause Lenin asked: "And what about your opposition? Have they learned at last to deal with politics, Communist politics?"

I gave an account of the state of affairs, finishing it with the statement that the "Berlin Opposition" had assigned to the Fourth International Congress the task of revising the position of its predecessor and annulling it. Their slogan was "Back to the Second Congress."

Lenin was amused at this "unexampled naïveté," as he called it. "The 'left' comrades really think that the Communist International is a faithful Penelope," he laughed. "But our International does not weave during the day in order to undo its work during the night. It cannot afford the luxury of taking a step forward and then taking

one back. Can't those comrades see what is happening? What has changed in the world situation to make the winning of the masses no longer our foremost task? Such 'leftists' are like the Bourbons. They have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. As far as I can see, there is behind the 'left' criticism of the mistakes in carrying out the united front tactics, the desire to do away with those tactics altogether. This Congress must not rescind, but confirm and emphasise, strongly emphasise, the decisions of the Third Congress. They are an advance on the work of the Second Congress. We must build further upon them, otherwise we shall not become mass Parties, leading revolutionary class Parties of the proletariat. Do we want the seizure of power, the dictatorship of the workers, the revolution,—yes, or no? If yes, then now as before, there is no other way than that indicated by the third Congress.'

At a later meeting during the Congress Lenin returned to his remarks on the "left opposition" in Germany. He had in the meantime taken part in a meeting of the German delegation, at which Comrades König and Fischer has put forward their ideas, as exponents and leaders of the "left" in opposition to those of the Centre and to the Party majority. These ideas were extraordinarily feeble politically, and were, moreover, put forward in a surprisingly gentle and mild manner; while the behaviour of the "left opposition," even at the Congress Plenum, was overwhelmingly "moderate" compared with their wild and overbearing behaviour in Germany. His head slightly bent and resting on his hand, Lenin listened to the proceedings. He did not take part in the discussion, but once or twice murmured remarks on the statements of the opposition, which expressed nothing but sympathy and agreement. What impression had the meeting made on him? En-

countering him by chance, I asked him about it.

Lenin replied, shaking his head: "H'm! H'm! I can well understand that in such a situation there should be a "left opposition." There are, of course, still some C.L.P.* elements left, discontented, suffering workers who feel revolutionary, but are politically raw and confused. Things move forward so slowly. World history does not seem to hurry, but the discontented workers think that your Party leaders don't want it to hurry. They make them responsible for the rate of the world revolution, cavil and curse. I understand all that. But what I don't understand is a leadership of the 'left opposition' such as I listened to." With biting sarcasm Lenin gave his views as to the "better half" of the "left" delegation. He considered her a "personal accident," politically unstable and uncertain, concluding animatedly: "No, such opposition, such leadership, does not impress me. But I tell you frankly that I am just as little impressed by your 'centre' which does not understand, which hasn't the energy to have done with such petty demagogues. Surely it is an easy thing to replace such people, to withdraw the revolutionary-minded workers from them and educate them politically. Just because they are revolutionary-minded workers, while Radicals of the type in question are at bottom the worst sort of opportunists." But to return to Lenin's visit.

Lenin expressed his satisfaction with the sure, though still slow revival of economic life in Soviet Russia. He cited facts and figures which indicated progress. "But I shall speak about that in my report" he interrupted his train of thought. "The time allowed me for visiting by my medical tyrants is up. You see how disciplined I am.

*Communist Labour Party. A small ultra-left Party.

But I must tell you something which will please you greatly, I know. I got a letter a short while ago from the remote little village of —— (Unfortunately I have forgotten the difficult name.—K.Z.). There are a few hundred children in a home there and they write to me : ' Dear little grandfather Lenin, We want to tell you that we have become very good. We study diligently. We already read and write well. We make lots of pretty things. We wash ourselves carefully every morning and wash our hands every time we eat. We want to make our teacher happy. He does not love us when we are dirty'—and so on. Do you see, dear Klara, we are making progress in every sphere, serious progress. We are learning culture, we wash ourselves—and every day, too ! The little children in the villages are already helping us to build up Soviet Russia. And then can we fear that we shall not triumph ? " Lenin smiled, his old, happy smile, which expressed such goodness and certainty of victory.

I heard Lenin's speech on the Russian revolution, the speech of one restored to health who has the iron will to live in order to mould creative social life, the words of one to whom death was already stretching out its bony arms, pitilessly. But together with these last historical actions, there remains the indelible memory of the end of the last personal conversation I had with Lenin—apart from quite short remarks at occasional encounters. Together they form a complete and perfect whole. Here, as everywhere, Lenin was the same. Lenin, who saw the great in the small, who comprehended and appreciated the small in its inherent connections with the great. Lenin, who in Marx's spirit recognised the close mutual reaction of popular education and revolution. Lenin, for whom popular education was the revolution. The revolution

popular education. Lenin, who loved the working people warmly, selflessly and loved, above all, the children, the future of this people. The future of Communism. Lenin, whose heart equalled in greatness his spirit and his will and who could therefore become the supremely great leader of the proletariat. Lenin, strong and courageous, a victor because he was ruled by one thing : love of the toiling masses, trust in the toiling masses, belief in the greatness and goodness of the cause for which he gave up his life, belief in its victory. So he could achieve that historical "miracle." He moved mountains.

§

Comrade Lenin frequently spoke to me about the women's question. He attached very great importance to the women's movement as an essential part, in certain circumstances as a decisive part of the mass movement. Social equality for women was, of course, a principle needing no discussion for Communists. It was in Lenin's large study in the Kremlin in the autumn of 1920 that we had our first long conversation on the subject. Lenin sat at his writing table which, covered with papers and books, spoke of study and work without displaying "the disorder of genius."

"We must create a powerful international women's movement, on a clear theoretical basis," Lenin began the conversation after having greeted me. "There is no good practice without Marxist theory, that is clear. The greatest clarity of principle is necessary for us Communists in this question. There must be a sharp distinction between ourselves and all other Parties. Unfortunately, our Second International Congress did not deal with this question. It was brought forward, but no decision

arrived at. The matter is still in commission, which should draw up a resolution, these, directions. Up to the present, however, they haven't got very far. You will have to help."

I was already acquainted with what Lenin said and expressed my astonishment at the state of affairs. I was filled with enthusiasm about the work done by Russian women in the revolution and still being done by them in its defence and further developnent. And as for the position and activities of women comrades in the Bolshevik Party, that seemed to me a model Party. It alone formed an International Communist Women's Movement of useful, trained and experienced forces and a historical example.

"That is right, that is all very true and fine," said Lenin, with a quiet smile. "In Petrograd, here in Moscow, in other towns and industrial centres the women workers acted splendidly during the revolution. Without them we should not have been victorious. Or scarcely so. That is my opinion. How brave they were, how brave they still are! Think of all the suffering and deprivations they bore. And they are carrying on because they want freedom, want Communism. Yes, our proletarian women are excellent class fighters. They deserve admiration and love. Besides you must remember that even the ladies of the 'constitutional democracy' in Petrograd proved more courageous against us than did the Junkers. That is true. We have in the Party reliable, capable and untiringly active women comrades. We can assign them to many important posts in the Soviet and Executive Committees, in the People's Commissariats and public services of every kind. Many of them work day and night in the Party or among the masses of the proletariat, the peasants, the Red Army. That is of very great value to us. It is also important for women all over the world. It shows the capacity of women, the great value their work has in society. The first proletarian

dictatorship is a real pioneer in establishing social equality for woman. It is clearing away more prejudices than could volumes of feminist literature. But even with all that we still have no international Communist Women's Movement, and that we must have. We must start at once to create it. Without that the work of our International and of its Parties is not complete work, can never be complete. But our work for the revolution must be complete. Tell me, how Communist work is going on abroad."

I told him, so far as I was then informed, the contact at that time between the Parties included in the Communist International being very loose and irregular. Lenin listened attentively, his body inclined forward slightly, following, without a trace of boredom, impatience or weariness even incidental matters. I have never known anybody who was a better listener and who so rapidly brought what he heard into order and realised its general connections. That was shown by the short, often very precise questions with which he now and again interrupted me, and by his return later to this or that detail of the conversation. He made a few short notes.

Of course, I spoke particularly thoroughly of affairs in Germany. I told Lenin what great importance Rosa Luxemburg had attached to bringing the women masses into the revolutionary struggle. After the foundation of the Communist Party she pressed for the publication of a woman's paper. In my last conversation with Leo Jogisches—two days before his assassination—we discussed the immediate tasks of the Party and he transferred various duties to me, including a plan for organised work among women workers. The Party dealt with this question at its first illegal conference. Almost without exception the trained and experienced women propagandists and leaders who had come into prominence before and during the war,

remained with the Social Democrats, and were followed by the awakening and active women workers. But still a small nucleus of very energetic and very willing women comrades had rallied together, who took part in all the work and struggles of the Party. They had already organised regular work among women workers. Of course, everything was still at the beginning, but it was a very good beginning.

"Not bad, not at all bad," said Lenin. "The energy, willingness and enthusiasm of women comrades, their courage and wisdom in times of illegality or semi-legality indicate good prospects for the development of our work. They are valuable factors in extending the Party and increasing its strength, in winning the masses and carrying on our activities. But what about the training and clarity of principle of these men and women comrades? It is of fundamental importance for work among the masses. It is of great influence on what closely concerns the masses, how they can be won, how made enthusiastic. I forget for the moment who said: 'One must be enthusiastic to accomplish great things.' We and the toilers of the whole world have really great things to accomplish. So what makes your comrades, the proletarian women of Germany, enthusiastic? What about their proletarian class consciousness; are their interests, their activities concentrated on immediate political demands? What is the mainspring of their ideas?

"I have heard some peculiar things on this matter from Russian and German comrades. I must tell you. I was told that a talented woman Communist in Hamburg, is publishing a paper for prostitutes and that she wants to organise them for the revolutionary fight. Rosa acted and felt as a Communist when in an article she championed the cause of the prostitutes who were imprisoned for any

transgression of police regulations in carrying on their dreary trade. They are, unfortunately, doubly sacrificed by bourgeois society. First by its accursed property system, and secondly by its accursed moral hypocrisy. That is obvious. Only he who is brutal or short-sighted can forget it. But still, that is not at all the same thing as considering prostitutes—how shall I put it?—to be a special revolutionary militant section, as organising them and publishing a factory paper for them. Aren't there really any other working women in Germany to organise, for whom a paper can be issued, who must be drawn into your struggles? The other is only a diseased excrescence. It reminds me of the literary fashion of painting every prostitute as a sweet Madonna. The origin of that was healthy, too: social sympathy, rebellion against the virtuous hypocrisy of the respectable bourgeois. But the healthy part became corrupted and degenerate. Besides, the question of prostitutes will give rise to many serious, problems here. Take them back to productive work, bring them into the social economy. That is what we must do. But it is a difficult and a complicated task to carry out in the present conditions of our economic life and in all the prevailing circumstances. There you have one aspect of the women's problem which after the seizure of power by the proletariat, looms large before us and demands a practical solution. It will give us a great deal of work here in Soviet Russia. But to go back to your position in Germany. The Party must not in any circumstances calmly stand by and watch such mischievous conduct on the part of its members. It creates confusion and divides the forces. And you yourself, what have you done against it?"

Before I could answer, Lenin continued: "Your list of sins, Klara, is still longer. I was told that questions of sex and marriage are the main subjects dealt with in the reading

and discussion evenings of women comrades. They are the chief subject of interest, of political instruction and education. I could scarcely believe my ears when I heard it. The first country of proletarian dictatorship surrounded by the counter-revolutionaries of the whole world. The situation in Germany itself requires the greatest possible concentration of all proletarian, revolutionary forces to defeat the ever-growing and ever-increasing counter-revolution. But working women comrades discuss sexual problems and the question of forms of marriage in the past, present and future. They think it their most important duty to enlighten proletarian women on these subjects. The most widely read writing is, I believe, the pamphlet of a young Viennese woman comrade on the sexual problem. What a waste ! What truth there is in it the workers have already read in Bebel, long ago. Only not so boringly, not so heavily written as in the pamphlet, but written strongly, bitterly, aggressively, against bourgeois society. The extension on Freudian hypotheses seems 'educated,' even scientific, but it is ignorant bungling. Freudian theory is the modern fashion. I mistrust the sexual theories of the articles, dissertations, pamphlets, etc., in short, of that particular kind of literature which flourishes luxuriantly in the dirty soil of bourgeois society. I mistrust those who are always contemplating the several questions, like the Indian saint his navel. It seems to me that these flourishing sexual theories which are mainly hypothetical, and often quite arbitrary hypotheses, arise from the personal need to justify personal abnormality or hypertrophy in sexual life before bourgeois morality, and to entreat its patience. This masked respect for bourgeois morality seems to me just as repulsive as poking about in sexual matters. However wild and revolutionary the behaviour may be, it is still really quite bourgeois. It is,

mainly, a hobby of the intellectuals and of the sections nearest them. There is no place for it in the Party, in the class conscious, fighting proletariat."

I interrupted here, saying that the questions of sex and marriage, in a bourgeois society of private property, involve many problems, conflicts and much suffering for women of all social classes and ranks. The war, and its consequences had greatly accentuated the conflicts and sufferings of women in sexual matters, had brought to light problems which were formerly hidden from them. To that were added the effects of the revolution. The old world of feeling and thought had begun to totter. Old social ties are entangling and breaking, there are the tendencies towards new idiological relationships between man and man. The interest shown in these questions is an expression of the need for enlightenment and reorientation. It also indicates a reaction against the falseness and hypocrisy of bourgeois society. Forms of marriage and of the family, in their historical development and dependence upon economic life, are calculated to destroy the superstition existing in the minds of working women concerning the eternal character of bourgeois society. A critical, historical attitude to those problems must lead to a ruthless examination of bourgeois society to a disclosure of its real nature and effects, including condemnation of its sexual morality and falseness. All roads lead to Rome. And every real Marxist analysis of any important section of the ideological superstructure of society of a predominating social phenomenon, must lead to an analysis of bourgeois society and of its property basis, must end in the realisation, "this must be destroyed."

Lenin nodded laughingly. "There we have it ! You are defending counsel for your women comrades and your Party. Of course, what you say is right. But it only

excuses the mistakes made in Germany; it does not justify them. They are, and remain, mistakes. Can you really seriously assure me that the questions of sex and marriage were discussed from the standpoint of a mature, living, historical materialism? Deep and many-sided knowledge is necessary for that, the clearest Marxist mastery of a great amount of material. Where can you get the forces for that now? If they existed, then pamphlets like the one I mentioned would not be used as material for study in the reading and discussion circles. They are distributed and recommended, instead of being criticised. And what is the result of this futile, un-Marxist dealing with the question? That questions of sex and marriage are understood not as part of the large social question? No, worse! The great social question appears as an adjunct, a part, of sexual problems. The main thing becomes a subsidiary matter. That does not only endanger clarity on that question itself, it muddles the thoughts, the class consciousness of proletarian women generally.

"Last and not least. Even the wise Solomon said that everything has its time. I ask you: Is now the time to amuse proletarian women with discussions on how one loves and is loved, how one marries and is married? Of course, in the past, present and future, and among different nations—what is proudly called historical materialism! Now all the thoughts of women comrades, of the women of the working people, must be directed towards the proletarian revolution. It creates the basis for a real renovation in marriage and sexual relations. At the moment other problems are more urgent than the marriage forms of Maoris or incest in olden times. The question of Soviets is still on the agenda for the German proletariat. The Versailles Treaty and its effect on the life of the working woman—unemployment, falling wages, taxes, and a great

deal more. In short, I maintain that this kind of political, social education for proletarian women is false, quite, quite false. How could you be silent about it? You must use your authority against it."

I have not failed to criticise and remonstrate with leading women comrades in the separate districts, I told my angry friend. He himself knew that a prophet is never recognised in his own country or family. By my criticism I had laid myself open to the charge of "strong survivals of social democratic ideology and old-fashioned Philistinism." But at last the criticism had begun to take effect. Questions of sex and marriage were no longer the central feature of discussion. But Lenin continued the thread of thought further.

"I know, I know," he said. "I have also been accused by many people of Philistinism in this matter, although that is repulsive to me. There is so much hypocrisy and narrow-mindedness in it. Well, I'm bearing it calmly! The little yellow-beaked birds who have just broken from the egg of bourgeois ideas are always frightfully clever. We shall have to let that go. The youth movement too, is attacked with the disease of modernity in its attitude towards sexual questions and in being exaggeratedly concerned with them." Lenin gave an ironic emphasis to the word modernity and grimaced as he did so. "I have been told that sexual questions are the favourite study of your youth organisations, too. There is supposed to be a lack of sufficient orators on the subject. Such misconceptions are particularly harmful, particularly dangerous in the youth movement. They can very easily contribute towards over-excitement and exaggeration in the sexual life of some of them, to a waste of youthful health and strength. You must fight against that too. There are not a few points of contact between the women's and youth

movements. Our women comrades must work together systematically with the youth. That is a continuation, an extension and exaltation of motherliness from the individual to the social sphere. And all the awakening social life and activity of women must be encouraged, so that they can discard the limitations of their Philistine individualist home and family psychology. But we'll come to that later.

"With us, too, a large part of the youth are keen on 'revising bourgeois conceptions and morality' concerning sexual questions. And, I must add, a large part of our best, our most promising young people. What you said before is true. In the conditions created by the war and the revolution the old ideological values disappeared or lost their binding force. The new values are crystallising slowly, in struggle. In the relations between man and man, between man and woman, feelings and thoughts are becoming revolutionised. New boundaries are being set up between the rights of the individual and the rights of the whole, in the duties of individuals. The matter is still in a completely chaotic ferment. The direction, the forces of development in the various contradictory tendencies are not yet clearly defined. It is a slow and often a very painful process of decay and growth. And particularly in the sphere of sexual relationships, of marriage and the family. The decay, the corruption, the filth of bourgeois marriage, with its difficult divorce, its freedom for the man, its enslavement for the woman, the repulsive hypocrisy of sexual morality and relations fill the most active minded and best people with deep disgust.

"The constraint of bourgeois marriage and the family laws of bourgeois states accentuate these evils and conflicts. It is the force of 'holy property.' It sanctifies venality, degradation, filth. And the conventional hypocrisy of honest bourgeois society does the rest. People are

beginning to protest against the prevailing rottenness and falseness, and the feelings of an individual change rapidly. The desire and urge to enjoyment easily attain unbridled force at a time when powerful empires are tottering, old forms of rule breaking down, when a whole social world is beginning to disappear. Sex and marriage forms, in their bourgeois sense, are unsatisfactory. A revolution in sex and marriage is approaching, corresponding to the proletarian revolution. It is easily comprehensible that the very involved complex of problems brought into existence should occupy the mind of the youth, as well as of women. They suffer particularly under present-day sexual grievances. They are rebelling with all the impetuosity of their years. We can understand that. Nothing could be more false than to preach monkish asceticism and the sanctity of dirty bourgeois morality to the youth. It is particularly serious if sex becomes the main mental concern during those years when it is physically most obvious. What fatal effects that has! Speak to Comrade Lilina about it. She has had much experience in her work in educational institutions of various kinds, and you know that she is a thorough Communist and entirely unprejudiced.

"The changed attitude of the young people to questions of sexual life is of course based on a 'principle' and a theory. Many of them call their attitude 'revolutionary' and 'Communistic.' And they honestly believe that it is so. That does not impress us old people. Although I am nothing but a gloomy ascetic, the so-called 'new sexual life' of the youth—and sometimes of the old—often seems to me to be purely bourgeois, an extension of bourgeois brothels. That has nothing whatever in common with freedom of love as we Communists understand it. You must be aware of the famous theory that in Communist society the satisfaction of sexual desires, of love, will be as

simple and unimportant as drinking a glass of water. This glass of water theory has made our young people mad, quite mad. It has proved fatal to many young boys and girls. Its adherents maintain that it is Marxist. But thanks for such Marxism which directly and immediately attributes all phenomena and changes in the ideological superstructure of society to its economic basis. Matters aren't quite so simple as that. A certain Frederick Engels pointed that out a long time ago with regard to historical materialism.

"I think this glass of water theory is completely un-Marxist, and moreover, anti-social. In sexual life there is not only simple nature to be considered, but also cultural characteristics, whether they are of a high or low order. In his 'Origin of the Family' Engels showed how significant is the development and refinement of the general sex urge into individual sex love. The relations of the sexes to each other are not simply an expression of the play of forces between the economics of society and a physical need, isolated in thought by study from the physiological aspect. It is rationalism, and not Marxism, to want to trace changes in these relations directly, and dissociated from their connections with ideology as a whole, to the economic foundations of society. Of course, thirst must be satisfied. But will the normal man in normal circumstances lie down in the gutter and drink out of a puddle, or out of a glass with a rim greasy from many lips ? But the social aspect is most important of all. Drinking water is of course an individual affair. But in love two lives are concerned, and a third, a new life, arises. It is that which gives it its social interest, which gives rise to a duty towards the community.

As a Communist I have not the least sympathy for the glass of water theory, although it bears the fine title ' satis-

faction of love.' In any case, this liberation of love is neither new, nor Communistic. You will remember that about the middle of the last century it was preached as the ' emancipation of the heart ' in romantic literature. In bourgeois practice it became the emancipation of the flesh. At that time the preaching was more talented than it is to-day, and as for the practice, I cannot judge. I don't mean to preach asceticism by my criticism. Not in the least. Communism will not bring asceticism, but joy of life, power of life, and a satisfied love life will help to do that. But in my opinion the present widespread hypertrophy in sexual matters does not give joy and force to life, but takes it away. In the age of revolution that is bad, very bad.

Young people, particularly, need the joy and force of life. Healthy sport, swimming, racing, walking, bodily exercises of every kind, and many-sided intellectual interests. Learning, studying, enquiry, as far as possible in common. That will give young people more than eternal theories and discussions about sexual problems and the so-called ' living to the full.' Healthy bodies, healthy minds ! Neither monk nor Don Juan, nor the intermediate attitude of the German Philistines. You know, young comrade ——? A splendid boy, and highly talented. And yet I fear that nothing good will come out of him. He reels and staggers from one love affair to the next. That won't do for the political struggle, for the revolution. And I wouldn't bet on the reliability, the endurance in struggle of those women who confuse their personal romances with politics. Nor on the men who run after every petticoat and get entrapped by every young woman. No, no ! that does not square with the revolution." Lenin sprang up, banged his hand on the table, and paced the room for a while.

"The revolution demands concentration, increase of forces. From the masses, from individuals. It cannot tolerate orgiastic conditions, such as are normal for the decadent heroes and heroines of D'Annunzio. Dissoluteness in sexual life is bourgeois, is a phenomenon of decay. The proletariat is a rising class. It doesn't need intoxication as a narcotic or a stimulus. Intoxication as little by sexual exaggeration as by alcohol. It must not and shall not forget, forget the shame, the filth, the savagery of capitalism. It receives the strongest urge to fight from a class situation, from the Communist ideal. It needs clarity, clarity and again clarity. And so I repeat, no weakening, no waste, no destruction of forces. Self-control, self-discipline is not slavery, not even in love. But forgive me, Klara, I have wandered far from the starting point of our conversation. Why didn't you call me to order? My tongue has run away with me. I am deeply concerned about the future of our youth. It is a part of the revolution. And if harmful tendencies are appearing, creeping over from bourgeois society into the world of revolution—as the roots of many weeds spread—it is better to combat them early. Such questions are part of the women question."

Lenin had spoken with great animation and fervour. I felt that every word came from his heart, and the expression of his features reinforced that feeling. Sometimes a vigorous movement of the hand emphasised an idea. I marvelled that Lenin, confronted by urgent and great political problems, devoted such attention to secondary matters and analysed them. And not only as they appeared in Soviet Russia, but in the still-capitalist States. Like the excellent Marxist that he was, he comprehended the particular in whatever form it manifested itself, in its

relation to the general, and in its significance for the whole. Undeviating, unshakable as an irresistible natural force, his life will, his life aim was directed to one thing: to hasten the work of the masses towards revolution. So he evaluated everything by its effects on the conscious driving forces of revolution. National as well as international, for, with a full regard for historically determined peculiarities in separate countries and the varied stages of development, there stood always before his eyes the one and indivisible world revolution.

"How I regret that there were not hundreds, thousands to hear your words, Comrade Lenin," I cried. "You know you have no need to convert me. But it would be good for friends and foes to hear your views." Lenin smiled. "Perhaps one day I shall speak or write on these questions—but not now. Now all our time and energy must be devoted to other matters. There are greater and more serious troubles. The struggle to maintain and strengthen the Soviet power is far from ended. We must get over the results of the war with Poland, and try to make the best of them. Wrangel is still in the south. But I am quite confident that we shall soon finish with him. That will give the British and French imperialists and their petty vassals something to think about. But the most difficult part of our work still lies before us—construction. In that, questions of sexual relationship, of marriage and the family will become current problems. Meanwhile, you must take up the fight wherever and whenever it is necessary. You must see that these questions are not dealt with in an un-Marxist fashion, and that they do not serve as a basis for deviations and intrigues. And so at last I come to your work."

Lenin glanced at the clock. "Half of the time I had set aside for you has already gone," he said. "I have been

chattering. You will draw up proposals for Communist work among women. I know your principles and practical experience in the matter. So there need not be much for us to discuss. Fire away. What sort of proposals have you in mind ? " I gave a concise account of them. Lenin nodded repeatedly in agreement without interrupting me. When I had finished, I looked at him questioningly.

"Agreed," said he, "discuss it further with Zinoviev. It would also be good if you could report on and discuss the matter at a meeting of leading women comrades. It's a pity, a great pity, that Comrade Inessa is not here. She, is ill, and has gone to the Caucasus. After discussion, write out the proposals. A Commission will examine them and finally the Executive will give its decision. I only want to speak on a few main points, in which I fully share your attitude. They seem to me to be important for our current agitation and propaganda work, if that work is to lead to action and successful struggles.

"The thesis must clearly point out that real freedom for women is possible only through Communism. The inseparable connection between the social and human position of the woman, and private property in the means of production, must be strongly brought out. That will draw a clear and ineradicable line of distinction between our policy and feminism. And it will also supply the basis for regarding the woman question as a part of the social question, of the workers' problem, and so bind it firmly to the proletarian class struggle and the revolution. The Communist Women's Movement must itself be a mass movement, a part of the general mass movement. Not only of the proletariat, but of all the exploited and oppressed, all the victims of capitalism or any other mastery. In that lies its significance for the class struggles of the proletariat and for its historical creation—Communist society. We can

rightly be proud of the fact that in the Party, in the Communist International, we have the flower of revolutionary womankind. But that is not enough. We must win over to our side the millions of toiling women in the towns and villages. Win them for our struggles and in particular for the Communist transformation of society. There can be no real mass movement without women.

"Our ideological conceptions give rise to principles of organisation. No special organisations for women. A woman Communist is a member of the Party just as a man Communist. With equal rights and duties. There can be no difference of opinion on that score. Nevertheless, we must not close our eyes to the fact that the Party must have bodies, working groups, commissions, committees, bureaux or whatever you like, whose particular duty it is to arouse the masses of women workers, to bring them into contact with the Party, and to keep them under its influence. That, of course, involves systematic work among them. We must train those whom we arouse and win, and equip them for the proletarian class struggle under the leadership of the Communist Party. I am thinking not only of proletarian women, whether they work in the factory or at home. The poor peasant women, the petty bourgeoise—they, too, are the prey of capitalism, and more so than ever since the war. The unpolitical, unsocial, backward psychology of these women, their isolated sphere of activity, the entire manner of their life—these are facts. It would be absurd to overlook them, absolutely absurd. We need appropriate bodies to carry on work amongst them. special methods of agitation and forms of organisation. That is not feminism, that is practical, revolutionary expediency."

I told Lenin that his words encouraged me greatly. Many comrades, and good comrades at that, strongly combated the idea that the Party should have special bodies for systematic work among women. They "taboo" it as feminism, and a return to social democratic traditions They contend that the Communist Parties, on principle affording equal rights to men and women, should work as a whole among the working masses as a whole, without differentiation. Women have to be included the same as men, and under the same conditions. Any attention, in agitation or organisation, paid to the circumstances adduced by Lenin were characterised as opportunist, as surrender and treachery by the upholders of the other point of view.

"That is neither new nor proof," said Lenin. 'You must not be misled by that. Why have we never had as many women as men in the Party—not at any time in Soviet Russia ? Why is the number of women workers organised in trade unions so small ? Facts give food for thought. The rejection of the necessity for separate bodies for our work among the women masses is a conception allied to those of our highly principled and most radical friends of the Communist Labour Party. According to them there must be only one form of organisation, workers' unions. I know them. Many revolutionary but confused minds appeal to principle ' whenever ideas are lacking.' That is, when the mind is closed to the sober facts, which must be considered. How do such guardians of ' pure principle ' square their ideas with the necessities of the revolutionary policy historically forced upon us ? All that sort of talk breaks down before inexorable necessity. Unless millions of women are with us we cannot exercise the proletarian dictatorship, cannot construct on Communist lines. We must find our way to them, we must study and try to find that way.

"That is why it is right for us to put forward demands favourable to women. That is not a minimum, a reform programme in the sense of the social democrats, of the Second International. It is not a recognition that we believe in the eternal character, or even in the long duration of the rule of the bourgeoisie and their State. It is not an attempt to appease women by reforms and to divert them from the path of revolutionary struggle. It is not that nor any other reformist swindle. Our demands are practical conclusions which we have drawn from the burning needs, the shameful humiliation of women, in bourgeois society, defenceless and without rights. We demonstrate thereby that we recognise these needs, and are sensible of the humiliation of the woman, the privileges of the man. That we hate, yes, hate everything, and will abolish everything which tortures and oppresses the woman worker, the housewife, the peasant woman, the wife of the petty trader, yes, and in many cases the women of the possessing classes. The rights and social regulations which we demand of bourgeois society for women, show that we understand the position and interests of women, and will have consideration for them under the proletarian dictatorship. Not, of course, as the reformists do, lulling them to inaction and keeping them in leading strings. No, of course not ; but as revolutionaries who call upon the women to work as equals in transforming the old economy and ideology."

I assured Lenin that I shared his views, but that they would certainly meet with resistance. Uncertain and timorous minds would think them risky opportunism. Nor could it be denied that our immediate demands for women could be wrongly drawn up and expressed.

"Nonsense ! " said Lenin, almost bad temperedly, "that danger is present in everything that we do and say. If we were to be deterred by fear of that from doing what is

correct and necessary, we might as well become Indian Stylites. Don't move, don't move, we can contemplate our principles from a high pillar! Of course, we are concerned not only with the contents of our demands, but with the manner in which we present them. I thought I had made that clear enough. Of course we shan't put forward our demands for women as though we were mechanically counting our beads. No, according to the prevailing circumstances, we must fight now for this, now for that. And, of course, always in connection with the general interests of the proletariat.

"Every such struggle brings us in opposition to respectable bourgeois relationships, and to their not less respectable reformist admirers whom it compels, either to fight together with us under our leadership—which they don't want to do—or to be shown up in their true colours. That is, the struggle clearly brings out the differences between us and other Parties, brings out our Communism. It wins us the confidence of the masses of women who feel themselves exploited, enslaved, suppressed, by the domination of the man, by the power of the employer, by the whole of bourgeois society. Betrayed and deserted by all, the working women will recognise that they must fight together with us. Must I again swear to you, or let you swear, that the struggles for our demands for women must be bound up with the object of seizing power, of establishing the proletarian dictatorship? That is our Alpha and Omega at the present time. That is clear, quite clear. But the women of the working people will not feel irresistibly driven into sharing our struggles for the State power if we only and always put forward that one demand, though it were with the trumpets of Jericho. No, no! The women must be made conscious of the political connection between our demands and their own suffering, needs, and wishes.

They must realise what the proletarian dictatorship means for them: complete equality with man in law and practice, in the family, in the State, in society; an end to the power of the bourgeoisie."

"Soviet Russia shows that," I interrupted.

"That will be the great example in our teaching," Lenin continued. "Soviet Russia puts our demands for women in a new light. Under the proletarian dictatorship those demands are not objects of struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. They are part of the structure of Communist society. That indicates to women in other countries the decisive importance of the winning of power by the proletariat. The difference must be sharply emphasised, so as to get the women into the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat. It is essential for the Communist Parties, and for their triumph, to rally them on a clear understanding of principle and a firm organisational basis. But don't let us deceive ourselves. Our national sections still lack a correct understanding of this matter. They are standing idly by while there is this task of creating a mass movement of working women under Communist leadership. They don't understand that the development and management of such a mass movement is an important part of entire Party activity, indeed, a half of general Party work. Their occasional recognition of the necessity and value of a powerful, clear-headed Communist women's Movement is a platonic verbal recognition, not constant care and obligation of the Party.

"Agitation and propaganda work among women, their awakening and revolutionisation, is regarded as an incidental matter, as an affair which only concerns women comrades. They alone are reproached because work in that direction does not proceed more quickly and more vigorously. That is wrong, quite wrong! Real separatism and

feminism *a la rebours*, as the French say, feminism upside down! What is at the basis of the incorrect attitude of our national sections? In the final analysis it is nothing but an under-estimation of woman and her work. Yes, indeed! Unfortunately it is still true to say of many of our comrades, 'scratch a Communist and find a Philistine.' Of course, you must scratch the sensitive spot, their mentality as regards woman. Could there be a more damning proof of this than the calm acquiescence of men who see how women grow worn out in the petty, monotonous household work, their strength and time dissipated and wasted, their minds growing narrow and stale, their hearts beating slowly, their will weakened? Of course, I am not speaking of the ladies of the bourgeoisie who shove on to servants the responsibility for all household work, including the care of children. What I am saying applies to the overwhelming majority of women, to the wives of workers and to those who stand all day in a factory.

"So few men—even among the proletariat—realise how much effort and trouble they could save women, even quite do away with, if they were to lend a hand in 'woman's work.' But no, that is contrary to the 'right and dignity of a man.' They want their peace and comfort. The home life of the woman is a daily sacrifice to a thousand unimportant trivialities. The old master right of the man still lives in secret. His slave takes her revenge, also secretly. The backwardness of women, their lack of understanding for the revolutionary ideals of the man decrease his joy and determination in fighting. They are like little worms which, unseen, slowly but surely, rot and corrode. I know the life of the worker, and not only from books. Our Communist work among the women, our political work, embraces a great deal of educational work among men. We must root out the old 'master' idea

to its last and smallest root. In the Party and among the masses. That is one of our political tasks, just as is the urgently necessary task of forming a staff of men and women comrades, well trained in theory and practice, to carry on Party activity among working women."

To my question about the conditions in Soviet Russia on this point, Lenin replied: "The Government of the proletarian dictatorship, together with the Communist Party and trade unions, is of course leaving no stone unturned in the effort to overcome the backward ideas of men and women, to destroy the old un-Communist psychology. In law there is naturally complete equality of rights for men and women. And everywhere there is evidence of a sincere wish to put this equality into practice. We are bringing the women into the social economy, into legislation and government. All educational institutions are open to them, so that they can increase their professional and social capacities. We are establishing communal kitchens and public eating-houses, laundries and repairing shops, infant asylums, kindergartens, children's homes, educational institutes of all kinds. In short, we are seriously carrying out the demand in our programme for the transference of the economic and educational functions of the separate household to society. That will mean freedom for the woman from the old household drudgery and dependence on man. That enables her to exercise to the full her talents and her inclinations. The children are brought up under more favourable conditions than at home. We have the most advanced protection laws for women workers in the world, and the officials of the organised workers carry them out. We are establishing maternity hospitals, homes for mothers and children, mothercraft clinics, organising lecture courses on child care, exhibitions

teaching mothers how to look after themselves and their children, and similar things. We are making the most serious efforts to maintain women who are unemployed and unprovided for.

"We realise clearly that that is not very much, in comparison with the needs of the working women, that it is far from being all that is required for their real freedom. But still it is tremendous progress, as against conditions in Tsarist-capitalist Russia. It is even a great deal compared with conditions in countries where capitalism still has a free hand. It is a good beginning in the right direction, and we shall develop it further. With all our energy, you may believe that. For every day of the existence of the Soviet State proves more clearly that we cannot go forward without the women. Think what that means in a country where a good 80 per cent. of the population are peasants! Small peasant economy means small separate households, with the women chained to them. In this respect it will be much easier and better for you than it is for us. Granted that your proletarian women will seize the objective historical moment for winning power, for the revolution. And we don't despair of that. Our strength grows with our difficulties. The force of facts will drive us forward to seek new measures for liberating the women masses. In collaboration with the Soviet State, co-operation will do a great deal. Co-operation, of course, in the Communist and not the bourgeois sense, as preached by the reformists, whose unrevolutionary enthusiasm evaporated in cheap vinegar. Personal initiative must go hand in hand with co-operation, an initiative which grows into and becomes fused with communal activity. Under the proletarian dictatorship the liberation of the women will come about through the development of Communism, even in the villages. I base my highest hopes for that on the electrification of our industry and agriculture. A great work that! And the difficulties of putting it into execution are great, terribly great. The greatest forces of the masses must be awakened and applied to accomplish it. And the forces of the millions of women must help."

There had been two knocks during the last ten minutes Lenin had continued speaking. Now he opened the door and called out "I'm coming at once." Then, turning to me, he added laughingly, "You know, Klara, I shall make use of the fact that I was with a woman. I'll explain my lateness by reference to the well-known feminine volubility. Although this time it was the man, and not the woman, who spoke such a lot. For the rest, I shall bear witness that you can really listen seriously. Perhaps it was that which stimulated me to eloquence." So joking, Lenin helped me on with my coat. "You must dress more warmly," he said thoughtfully. "Moscow is not Stuttgart. You must be looked after. Don't catch cold. Auf wiedersehen!" He shook me heartily by the hand.

* * *

About two weeks later I had another conversation with Lenin on the women's movement. Lenin was visiting me. As almost always, his visit was unexpected, a sudden break in the midst of the overwhelming burden of work which at last overcame the leader of the victorious revolution. Lenin looked very fatigued and worried. Wrangel's defeat was still not certain, and the problem of provisioning the large towns with food faced the Soviet Government like an inexorable Sphinx.

Lenin asked me about the directions or theses. I told him that there had been a big commission attended by all the leading women comrades present in Moscow, who had stated their views. Proposals had been drawn up and were now to be considered by a smaller commission. Lenin

said we must remember that the Third World Congress would deal with the question with all the necessary thorough care. "That fact alone would overcome many of the comrades' prejudices. For the rest, the women comrades must set to work, and that hard. Not lispingly, like kind aunties, but speaking out loudly as fighters, speaking clearly, Lenin cried animatedly. "A congress was not a salon, where women shine by their grace, as the romances put it. It is an arena where we struggle for knowledge or how to act in a revolutionary way. Prove that you can fight. First, of course, against the foe, but also in the Party if it is necessary. We are dealing with millions of women. Our Russian Party will be in favour of all proposals and measures which will help to win then. If they are not with us, the counter-revolution may succeed in leading them against us. We must always think of that—The women masses, we must get them, whatever the difficulties we may encounter in doing so."

Here, in the midst of the revolution, with its richly-flowing life, its strong, rapid pulsation, I had thought of a plan for international activity among the working women masses. "Your big non-party women's conferences and congresses gave me the main idea. We are going to transfer that idea from the national to the international plane. It is a fact that the world war and its consequences deeply affected all women in the various social classes and ranks. They lived in ferment and activity. They are faced by questions in the form of the bitterest worries about maintaining and using life, which most of them never dreamed of, which only a few have clearly understood. Bourgeois society is not able to answer these questions satisfactorily. Only Communism can do that. We must make the masses of women in the capitalist countries

conscious of that and for that purpose arrange a non-party International Women's Congress."

Lenin did not answer at once. With his glance as it were, turned inwards, mouth firmly pressed together, the under-lip protruding slightly, he considered my proposal. Then he said : "Yes, we must do it. It's a good plan. But good plans, even the most excellent, don't work unless they are well carried out. Have you considered how to carry it out? What are your views on the matter ? "

I gave them to Lenin in detail. The first thing was to form a committee of women comrades from various countries in constant and close contact with our national sections, to prepare, arrange and call the congress. Whether that committee should begin to work at once officially and publicly was a question of expediency still to be considered. In any case the first task of its members would be to get in touch with women leaders of women workers organised in trade unions, of the political working-class women's movement, of bourgeois women's organisations of every sort, including women doctors, teachers, journalists, etc., and to set up in the various countries a national non-party Arrangements Committee. The International Committee was to be formed from members of the national Committees, which would arrange and convene the International Congress, and decide its agenda and time and place of meeting.

In my opinion the congress should first of all deal with women's right to professional work. That will involve questions of unemployment, equal pay for equal work, the legal eight-hour day and protective legislation for women, trade union and professional organisation, social provision for mother and child, social institutions to help the housewife and mother, etc. The agenda should also include : The position of the woman in marriage and family law, and

in public-political law. I elaborated these proposals and then went on to suggest how the national committees could make thorough preparations for the congress by a systematic campaign in the Press and at meetings. The campaign would be of particular importance in appealing to the largest possible masses of women, in inducing them to deal seriously with the problems to be discussed and in directing their attention to Communism and the Parties of the Communist International. The campaign should take place among active and working women of all social ranks ; it must ensure the presence and co-operation at the congress of representatives of all organisations dealt with as well as delegates from open women's meetings. The congress must be a "people's representation" in quite another sense from that of bourgeois Parliaments.

Of course, Communist women must be not only the driving, but also the leading force in the preparatory work. They must be accorded energetic support by our sections. All this, of course, applies also to the work of the International Committee, the work of the congress itself and the utilisation of that work. Communist theses and resolutions on all items of the agenda must be submitted to the congress, unambiguous in principle and objectively and scientifically based on prevailing social conditions. These theses should be discussed and approved by the Executive of the International. Communist slogans and Communist proposals must be the centre of the work of the congress, of public attention. After the congress they must be spread among the widest possible masses of women and help to determine international mass action on the part of women. An indispensable condition for good work is of course, for all the women Communists in the committees and at the congress, to be firmly and closely united, to work together systematically on clear and decided principles.

There must be no slipping out of the ranks for anyone

While I had been talking, Lenin had often nodded his head in agreement, or made brief remarks of assent. "It seems to me, dear comrade," he said, "that you have considered the political aspect of the matter very well, and also the chief points of organisation. I firmly believe that in the present situation such a congress can do important work. It may make it possible for us to win over to our side large masses of women. Masses of professional women, industrial workers, housewives, teachers and others. That would be good, very good ! Think of the position during large scale industrial disputes or political strikes. What an increase in the power of the revolutionary proletariat by the addition of consciously rebelling women. That is, of course, if we understand how to win and to keep them. The gain would be great, tremendous. But there are a few questions. It is probable that the State authorities will look most unfavourably on the work of the congress, that they will try to prevent it. But I don't think they will dare brutally to suppress it. What they do won't frighten you. But do you fear that the Communists in the committees and the congress will be controlled by the numerical majority of bourgeois and reformist members, and by their undoubtedly strong routine ? And, finally, and above all, have you really the confidence in the Marxist training of our women comrades to form, as it were, shock troops from among them, who will come through the struggle with honour ?"

I answered that the authorities would be most unlikely to take any violent action against the congress. Tricks and brutal measures against the congress would only act as propaganda for it. The number and weight of non-Communist elements will be met by us Communists with the scientific superior strength of historical materialism in

the understanding and elucidation of social problems, with the coherence of our demands and suggestions, and last, but not least, with the victory of the proletarian revolution in Russia and its pioneer work in the liberation of woman. Weaknesses and deficiencies in the training and understanding of individual comrades can be made up for by systematic co-operation and preparation. I expect the best from our Russian comrades in this matter. They will be the iron centre of our phalanx. With them I would confidently dare more than congress battles. Besides, even if we are out-voted, the very fact of our struggle will push Communism into the foreground, and will be of extremely good propaganda value in creating contacts for work later on.

Lenin laughed heartily. "The same enthusiast as ever about the Russian women revolutionaries. Yes, yes, the old love hasn't weakened. And I believe you are right. Even defeat after a good struggle would be an advantage, a preparation for future gains among working women. Taken all in all, it is an undertaking worth the risk. We can never lose altogether in it. Although, of course, I hope for victory, hope for it from the bottom of my heart. It would be an important addition to our strength,a great extension and reinforcement of our front, it would bring new life, movement, activity to our ranks. And that is always useful. Moreover, the congress would arouse and increase unrest, uncertainty, hostilities and conflicts in the camp of the bourgeoisie and their reformist friends. Just imagine those who will meet together with the ' hyenas of the revolution ' and, if all goes well, under their leadership, —honest, tame social democratic women from the camp of Scheidemann, Dittmann and Legien ; pious Christians, blessed by the Pope, or swearing by Luther, daughters of privy councillors—and freshly baked Government councillors, ladylike English pacifists and passionate French feminists. What a picture of the chaos and decay of the bourgeois such a congress would give. What a reflection of its futility and hopelessness. Such a congress would accentuate the disintegration and so weaken the forces of the counter-revolution. Every weakening of the forces of the enemy is simultaneously a strengthening of our power. I agree to the congress—speak to Gregory about it. He will quite understand the importance of the matter. We shall support it vigorously So begin, and good luck in the fight."

We went on to speak of the situation in Germany, particularly of the coming "Unity Congress" between the old "Spartacists" and the left wing of the Independents. Then Lenin hurried away, greeting a few comrades writing in a room through which he had to pass.

Comrade Zinoviev also approved of my plan. I set about the work of preparation hopefully.

Unfortunately the congress came to grief because of the attitude of German and Bulgarian women comrades, who at that time had the best Communist Women's Movement outside Russia. They rejected the congress. When I told Lenin, he replied : "Pity, a great pity ! The comrades have let slip a brilliant opportunity to open a way of hope to masses of women workers, and so to bring them into the revolutionary struggles of the working-class. Who knows whether such a favourable opportunity will occur again soon ? The iron must be struck while it is hot. But the task itself still remains. You must find a way of reaching the women who have been thrust by capitalism into frightful misery. You must, must find it. That necessity cannot be evaded. Without organised mass activity under Communist leadership there can be no victory over

capitalism, no building up of Communism. That is why in the end the women will be compelled to rise in revolt."

* * *

The first year of the revolutionary proletariat without Lenin. It has proved the strength of his achievements, the overwhelming genius of the leader. It has made us sensible of the great and irreparable loss we have suffered. The thunder of cannon announced mournfully that a year ago Lenin closed for ever his far and deep-seeing eyes. I see the endless trail of grave men and women of the working people, filing past Lenin's place of rest. Their grief is my grief, the grief of millions. But from the newly-awakened pain memory rises overwhelmingly strong, a reality effacing the sorrowful present. I hear every word which Lenin spoke to me. I see each change of his features. . . . Banners are lowered before Lenin's grave, banners dyed with the blood of revolutionary fighters. Laurel wreaths are laid down. There is not one too many. To them I add these modest leaves.

KLARA ZETKIN.

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