

THE RISE AND FALL  
OF THE  
SECOND INTERNATIONAL

BY  
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## INTRODUCTION

Over forty years ago, in 1889, the Second International was founded at the International Workers' Congress in Paris. In the space of twenty-five years it grew and developed into a powerful mass organisation, to which millions of workers in capitalist countries paid allegiance. It was the pride and hope of countless class conscious workers. In numerous resolutions, appeals and speeches, the leaders of the Second International declared in favour of international proletarian solidarity, of determined struggle against imperialist war. In August 1914 the Socialist International was the first victim of the war. Without any attempt at resistance, the proud edifice fell in ruins, like a house of cards. The leading parties in the International, above all the German Party, went over with flying colours into the camp of the capitalist war criminals.

This collapse taught the international working class a sanguinary lesson: to renounce militant international organisation is leath for the working class. The experience of every great struggle between capital and labour demonstrates the necessity of international proletarian solidarity. When capital is closely knit on an international scale, when international cartels and trusts, which serve also as international organisations for capitalism's fight against the working class, dominate the world, a united proletarian International is doubly necessary. The belief that the war of 1914—1918 was the war to end all wars is revealed more and more clearly as an empty illusion. Now, as in the period preceding 1914, feverish competition in armaments is proceeding. The question of how the working class shall, by joint action in all countries, fight against the danger of war, occupies the mind of every class conscious worker.



At the present time it is more than ever necessary to consider thoroughly the question of the international policy and organisation of the working class. Out of the fight against the Imperialist War and the treachery of the Second International there arose, under the leadership of the Russian Bolsheviks, the Third, the Communist International. Through many years of struggle it has defended the dictatorship of the proletariat over one-sixth of the earth's surface, adopting a united revolutionary attitude in all imperialist conflicts, rallying under its banner the most resolute revolutionary class fighters in all countries.

But in a number of the most important capitalist countries the majority of the organised workers regard Communism partly with hostility, partly with distrust. After the end of the war various attempts were made again to organise on an international scale the parties of the Second International, which had broken apart when the first shot was fired. At the Congress held in Hamburg in 1923 the formal unity of all Social Democratic parties was established. The "Labour and Socialist International," as this new body was called, claimed to carry on the traditions of the First and Second Internationals. It promised the workers that in the event of a future war the Social Democratic leaders who had failed them in 1914 would not fail them again. Millions of workers still rely on this promise, as they relied on the promises of their leaders before 1914. But while, in 1914, even the best revolutionaries and Marxists were astonished by the profoundly opportunistic and chauvinist corruption of the Second International, today it requires only a critical examination of the theory and practice, the social and political character of the patched-up International of reformism, to see that the part which it is playing now, in "peace" time, is but the consistent continuation of the treachery of 1914; that in a future war this "International" will play a part even worse than it did in 1914.

The Third, the Communist International, on the other hand, is the only guarantee that in the new slaughter of the peoples which the imperialists of every country are preparing, the proletariat will not again be left defenceless, that the international revo-

lutionary proletariat has now forged a weapon which will not fail it in its hour of need, that the promises which the Second International could not keep will be carried out in the coming war.

What has been said above is proved by a study of the history of the international labour movement in the period from 1889 to 1929. But it is not the object of this book to give in detail the story of those forty years. The history of the Second International has yet to be written. The work here published, written amidst the turmoil of daily life, does not claim to give the reader that which can only be the result of a thorough historical investigation. It merely attempts, on the basis of historical facts, to explain some problems which every worker who wishes to carry out his duty in the international proletariat's great struggle for freedom must understand. Why the Second International was bound to fail; why, in the present period, it is necessary for the proletarian International to be organised in a body fundamentally different from that which collapsed in 1914; why the "International" which claims to be a replica of the old International can at the present time only serve as an auxiliary force of imperialism; why it was essential to establish a new International capable of carrying out the tasks indicated by Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* — these are the questions with which we shall deal in the following pages.

Our object has been, not complete historical description, but selection of the most important points. One defect, of which the author is fully conscious, consists in the impossibility of giving an adequate account of the attitude adopted by the left wing of the Second International towards all disputed questions. That will be possible only when we have the complete edition of Lenin's works in the German language. For as Rosa Luxemburg represented the most advanced section of the German working class movement, Lenin stands in the same position in regard to the international movement. On the question of the attitude of the revolutionary wing of the Second International to the imperialist war, the only comprehensive work at our disposal was Zinoviev's *The War and the Crisis of Socialism*. The development of the Third



International is there portrayed only in so far as it was considered necessary to an understanding of the historical development of reformism.

Quotations of which the source is not given are taken from the reports of the International Congresses or Party Congresses referred to in the text.

We hope that this book will prove a useful weapon in the struggle of the only proletarian International of our day, the Communist International, against the most dangerous forces of imperialist reaction, against the International of social-imperialism and social-fascism.

J. L.

## CHAPTER I

### THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL IN ITS PRIME 1889—1904

#### *I. The Foundation of the Second International* *Paris 1889*

In 1872 the First International, the International Workingmen's Association founded by Marx and Engels, decided to transfer the seat of the General Council from London to New York, thereby, as Engels said, "withdrawing for the time being from the stage," and in fact dissolving its organisation. At that time Marx and Engels saw that there was no possibility of the International's carrying on effective work, for, with the bitter persecution which prevailed then, it would have demanded the greatest sacrifices. The French working class movement had been crippled for years by the defeat of the Commune; the English trade union leaders had withdrawn from the International because of the General Council's support of the Commune; in the less developed capitalist countries the movement had been disrupted by the efforts of the anarchists under Bakunin's leadership. The First International was a revolutionary propagandist organisation which rallied the most advanced workers in all countries under the slogan of proletarian class struggle. Amidst the storms of the Franco-German War and the Paris Commune, its representatives had stood the test of revolutionary internationalism. When, after the defeat of the Commune, reaction triumphed, Marx and Engels considered it inexpedient to maintain the formal existence of the organisation, but they had not the slightest intention of giving up the principle



of the international union of the proletariat, which formed the foundation of their life work. They wished to await conditions more favourable to the revival of the international working class movement.

By the 'eighties these conditions had come into being. In the heroic struggle against the anti-socialist laws, after the initial hesitation of the "whimperers" — to use an expression of Engels' — among the leadership had been overcome, German Social Democracy had been strengthened and had won great influence over the masses. The number of votes given to the Social Democrats had risen from 437,000 in 1878 — the year of the anti-socialist laws — to 763,000 in 1887. The influence of socialist groups was growing in the English trade unions, which were beginning to resist the reformist leaders who were making the working class movement an appendage of the Liberal Party. In France the labour movement was developing on a broad basis, accompanied by vigorous contests between the left wing, led by the Marxists Guesde and Lafargue, and the Blanquists under Vaillant on the one side, and the right opportunist wing, the "Possibilists," under the leadership of Brousse, on the other. At their Congress in Haifeld in 1888—89, the Austrian Social Democrats had united under Victor Adler. Thus in the most important capitalist countries the conditions necessary for the development of socialist mass organisations were present.

The convening of an international congress became a question hotly disputed between the revolutionary and the reformist wings of the international working class movement. The French Possibilists and the English trade union leaders consented to participate in an international congress at Paris only on conditions which would have made it impossible for the Austrian and German Social Democrats to attend. It was obvious that the French opportunists were anxious to make use of an international congress, in which the majority would have been of their way of thinking, for the purposes of their struggle against the Marxists in France. Although this scheme was generally recognised, the leaders of the right wing of the German Social Democrats, Auer

and Schippel, were willing to submit to the plans of the Possibilists.<sup>1</sup> The Leaders of the German Party, Liebknecht and Bebel, on the other hand, tried to persuade the different groups among the French Social Democrats to unite in convening the Congress. Their efforts met with no success and, on the opening of the World Exhibition held at Paris, in celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the storming of the Bastille — July 14, 1889 — two Congresses met at Paris, the Congress of Possibilists, dominated by the reformist representatives of the French and English trade unions, which did not bear an international character, and the Congress of Marxists, at which the revolutionary socialists of twenty important capitalist countries were represented.

The Congress, which opened under the presidency of the Communard Vaillant and the "soldier of the revolution" Wilhelm Liebknecht, proudly proclaimed its adherence to the revolutionary traditions of the French and the international proletariat. The banners which decorated the hall bore the inscription: "In the name of the Paris of 1848 and of March, April and May 1871, in the name of the France of Babeuf, Blanqui and Varlin, greetings to the socialist workers of both worlds!" while the object laid down was the "political and economic expropriation of the capitalist class and the socialisation of the means of production."

As revolutionary socialists, the delegates to the Inaugural Congress had to define their attitude to reformism and to anarchism. At that time, when the mass organisations of the proletariat were beginning to develop, anarchism represented the petty-bourgeois influence among the proletariat; it expressed a lack of faith in the strength of the masses, a reliance on the effectiveness of individual action. The anarchist representatives at the Paris Congress declared themselves opposed to the working class's taking over political power, for that was bound to lead to new forms of oppression. They condemned legislation for labour protection, which was one of the most important points discussed at the Congress, as an anti-socialist bourgeois affair. Their ideas found support among a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Letters from Becker, Dietzgen, Engels, Marx and Others to Sorge* p. 311 (German).



few French syndicalists, and the Italian and English anarchists. The great majority decisively rejected them. From the beginning the attitude of the anarchist representatives had been, not that of comrades anxious to convince the others of the correctness of their convictions, but that of enemies, eager to create disruption in the hostile camp. They were accordingly treated in that fashion by the Congress and, on their refusal to submit to the agenda, ejected from the hall.

Thus the separation from the anarchists was practically completed at the Inaugural Congress, and needed only to be fully confirmed at future Congresses; but the position of the reformists within the Second International was never thoroughly and adequately defined in the whole course of its existence. The question arose in practical form at the Inaugural Congress in the proposal to unite with the Possibilist Congress, which was sitting at the same time. The great majority of the delegates were in favour of amalgamation. The notorious Gompers, leader of the arch-reactionary American Federation of Labor, sent an address of greetings, in which he urgently recommended union with the Possibilists. Only a few delegates were fundamentally opposed to this course.

The French delegate Duprès declared:

"Much has been said about amalgamation. But have we considered whether amalgamation is possible between revolutionary socialists and Cadettists such as Joffrin?<sup>1</sup> Our foreign friends have come to Paris in order to come to an understanding with working class and revolutionary France, not with the allies of bourgeois radicalism and opportunism... Socialists cannot approach the Possibilists, for the latter are nothing but bourgeois politicians, and the foreign socialists would not countenance union with bourgeois. Nobody denies that, in spite of everything, there are convinced socialists among the Possibilists. But let them come to us, and the others can stay away."

Similar sentiments were expressed by the representative of the Marseilles trade unions, who put forward a resolution which said

<sup>1</sup> The name given at that time to adherents of the Society for the Right of Man, an association which united republicans of all shades against moralist reaction. Founded in the Rue Cadet, Paris, its members and the French government parties were called Cadettists.

"... It is incorrect to make advances to those who have for a long time been working hand in glove with the worst enemies of the workers—with the opportunists and bourgeois radicals."

Even the English poet William Morris, who was closer to the anarchists than the Marxists, spoke in the same strain, as did also German delegates from Berlin and Dresden. Wilhelm Liebknecht was opposed to unconditional amalgamation, and moved a resolution in favour of amalgamation on condition that the other congress should put forward acceptable conditions. The proposal was voted upon according to national groups, and passed by twelve votes; only Norway and Sweden voted for the complete rejection of any amalgamation, while the French delegation declared that they had voted for Liebknecht's resolution only for the sake of unity. Amalgamation did not take place because the Possibilists would agree only on condition that they should have the right to decide on the validity of the mandates.

Thus, although the declared representatives of opportunism were not present at the First Congress of the Second International, this was less the act of the Marxists than of the opportunists themselves, who feared that they would be outvoted at the international congress. The attitude taken at the Congress was approved by Engels. In a letter to Sorge dated July 17, 1889, when he had heard of the dispute which arose concerning Liebknecht's resolution, he wrote:

"... of course, a great deal of fake amalgamation business at both congresses; the foreigners want amalgamation, and in both cases the French hold back. Amalgamation under rational conditions would be quite good, but the clamour for amalgamation at any price which went up from our side is mere bluff."

And further on in the same letter:

"If the two congresses together succeeded only in aligning the fighting forces — the Possibilists and London Clique here, the European socialists who, thanks to the others, manage to figure as Marxists) there, thus showing the world where the real movement is concentrated, and where the fictitious one — that is enough. Of course, real amalgamation, if it comes, will not by any means prevent the continuation of violent rows in England and France; on the contrary. It will merely be an imposing demonstration for the great



bourgeois public, a workers' congress of more than nine hundred men, from the tamest trade unionists to the most revolutionary communists."<sup>1</sup>

At the time, therefore, Engels saw no danger in union with the reformists, so long as the superiority of the Marxists was assured. Such an attitude was quite justified at that stage of the movement. For not only parties, but trade unions, were represented at the Congress. For example, Keir Hardie represented 50,000 organised Scottish miners. The majority of the French delegates represented local trade unions, and both parties and trade unions were represented in the German and Austrian delegations. To have admitted only those organisations which took their stand on the basis of the revolutionary class struggle would have meant excluding the mass organisations of the proletariat at a time when the real need of the day was not direct revolutionary action, but rallying the masses and winning them to socialism.

In his opening speech, in which he declared that the Congress was carrying on the work of the International Workingmen's Association, Wilhelm Liebknecht stated: "The international labour movement has become too great to be kept within the bounds of a single united organisation." That was indeed making a virtue of necessity. At the beginning of a new period of advance in the working class movement, when socialist mass parties and trade unions were just developing and the working class was not yet capable of international action, it was impossible to make unanimity on all important questions the condition of adherence to an international organisation. Unanimity in theory and practice must be the result of the struggle for the principles of revolutionary Marxism within a broad international organisation. But to renounce unity in the international because of the breadth of the movement is to renounce its actual purpose — united international proletarian action.

That the Congress was aware of the necessity for united action is shown in its resolution on the May Day celebration:

<sup>1</sup> *Letters from Becker, etc., to Sorge*, p. 317.

"A great international demonstration must be organised to take place at a certain time and in such a manner that simultaneously the workers in every country and every town should demand of the public authorities the limitation of the working day to eight hours and the operation of the other decisions of the Paris International Congress.

"In view of the fact that the American Federation of Labor at its Congress held in St. Louis in December 1888 decided to hold such a demonstration on the First of May 1890, that day is accepted as the day for the international demonstration.

"The workers in the different countries are to organise the demonstration along lines dictated by the conditions of their country."

Since the greater part of the time at the Congress was taken up by the question of unity with the Possibilists and by reports on the position of the movement in the different countries, there was no opportunity for a thorough discussion of these resolutions or of a number of other important decisions which were taken. They were voted upon without discussion, only explanations being allowed. Resolutions were passed on the abolition of standing armies, on the arming of the people, on the eight hour day and labour protection, on the struggle for political power "by means of the ballot box" but "to the exclusion of any compromise whatever with other political parties." A proposal from the French delegation for the general strike as "the beginning of the socialist revolution" was defeated after Liebknecht had spoken against it.

## 2. *The General Strike Against War; Celebration of May Day*

*Brussels 1891*

The Second International Congress, which was held in Brussels in August 1891, dealt principally with the question of the trade unions, of strikes and particularly with the general strike against war. The question of the danger of war and the struggle against war, which has been discussed at every international workers' congress, was of peculiar urgency at that time, because of the alliance concluded between France and Russia, in answer to the triple alliance concluded between Germany,



Austria and Italy in 1883. The Congress failed to define its attitude to the existing international situation; the discussion, which turned mainly upon the demand for a "world strike" against war put forward by the Dutch anarchist Nieuwenhuis, consequently remained abstract, especially as at that time the workers had no experience of the political mass strike, and even the attitude of socialists to the strike as a weapon in the economic struggle lacked clarity.

The resolution of the French and English majority on the question of trade union organisation, of the strike and the boycott, recommended the workers to prepare for a general strike by building up a strong organisation, but described the strike as a double-edged weapon which should only be employed after mature consideration of all the circumstances; it advised the workers to "resort rather to mediation and arbitration, than to declare a strike," if that were possible and if it did not injure their honour. Similar ideas were expressed in the counter-resolution moved by the Germans, who recognised the strike as a necessary method of struggle, but added:

"Since, however, strikes and boycotts are double-edged weapons which, if used at an incorrect time or place, endanger rather than promote the interests of the working class, the Congress recommends the workers to weigh carefully all the circumstances in which they desire to make use of these weapons."

A resolution calling for the establishment of an international trade union organisation was rejected by the German vote; the German delegates pointed out that it was impossible to do this legally considering the legislation on this subject in the different countries. The attitude of the Germans was characterised by that caution which the party had exhibited since the abrogation of the anti-socialist laws (1890).

In 1891, for the first time, reformism in the German Party came out openly with its own programme. In his notorious "Eldorado Speeches"<sup>1</sup> Vollmar recommended the "tactics of

<sup>1</sup> So called from the meeting place in Munich in which the speeches were delivered.

reformist operations, which will achieve the object desired by the only possible means of practical partial successes," and described the triple alliance as a guarantee of peace. Thus, although it was precisely the German Party which was most interested in the differences of principle determining the ideas of the reformists, it was the Germans who opposed the suggestion, coming from the Dutch delegates, to include on the agenda the question of tactics, of the means to be used in the struggle for the emancipation of labour, and the question of alliance with bourgeois parties. They declared that these points could not be discussed at an international congress, "for the deciding factor was the economic and political development of the respective countries, and of that only the comrades of the country concerned were competent to judge."

In spite of this conception of the role of the International, which was characteristic of the prevailing opinion of the time, the question of tactics was discussed. In the resolution submitted by the Commission on Labour Protection, which Vandervelde moved, it was stated that the ruling and exploiting classes are opposed to any effective labour legislation and that the workers must unite against the capitalist bourgeois parties; nevertheless, "wherever they are in possession of political rights, they should refuse to vote for any candidates who do not bind themselves to support their demands." The demands meant were those for labour legislation put forward by the Paris Congress, and thus the tactics recommended left the workers' parties free to support bourgeois parliamentary candidates who promised to advocate legislation in favour of labour protection.

Bebel sharply opposed directing the activities of the parties to reforms instead of to the final objective, the course which was implied in such election tactics, and at the same time attacked reformism in the German Party:

"I wish above all to emphasise that in my opinion the chief task of Social Democracy is not to secure laws for labour protection, but to explain to the workers the nature and character of present day society, in order that that society may disappear as quickly as possible, the more quickly as



it bears within itself, by virtue of its own laws of development, the fatal germ of its own decay. The workers must learn to understand the nature of that society so that, when its last hour has struck, they will be able to establish the new society. And I would emphasise this the more as recently the opinion has often been expressed abroad that there exist within the German Party differences of principle in regard to this task or these tactics. That is an error; no such differences exist, and whoever tries to divert the party from the execution of this task, will have to leave the party.

It is true that he took the edge off his attack by declaring that, although the German Party would put forward no candidate who did not subscribe fully to the entire Social Democratic programme, down to its most extreme consequences, it conceded to comrades from other countries freedom of action according to national circumstances, and would refrain from taking part in the vote on that question.

Even the leader of the Austrian Party, Victor Adler, who later developed into one of the greatest diplomats of opportunism, went further on this point. He said:

"For us, parliamentarianism as a whole, the franchise, the vote, labour protection, are only means to an end, good means for revolutionising minds and thus creating the weapons which will carry out this revolution. We shall never be induced to lose sight of the end because of these means."

He would have to vote, he said, *against* the passage which made the support of a candidate dependent upon his advocacy of labour protection; in Austria, where there was no universal franchise, and where there was a temptation to "flirt with the bourgeois-radical parties," the Party rejected it.

"... because we are convinced that we shall never get our demands fulfilled by the ruling classes of society, nor shall we win the workers if we ourselves disguise or hide our own colours."

In the resolution as adopted, the paragraph concerning the tactics of compromise with bourgeois parties was omitted.

On the subject of militarism the Congress passed a resolution which was filled with the spirit of revolutionary Marxism and represented the sharpest demarcation from bourgeois pacifism. It described the system of exploitation as the cause of the condition

of latent warfare and of the militarism resulting therefrom; all efforts to abolish militarism and to establish peace, which did not refer to the economic causes of war, were of no avail, a socialist order of society alone being able to dispense with militarism and secure peace. The workers were called upon to protest energetically and indefatigably against all warlike manifestations, and to hasten the triumph of socialism by perfecting their international organisation. That was the only means of averting the frightful catastrophe of a world war.

A counter-proposal brought forward by the Dutch went much further. Their resolution ran:

"... that all modern wars, originating exclusively in the capitalist class and in their interests, are means by which they divert the forces of the revolutionary movement and consolidate the supremacy of the bourgeoisie by intensifying the most shameless exploitation. The Congress therefore decides . . . that the socialists of all countries will answer a declaration of war with an appeal to the peoples to cease work."

In moving this resolution Nieuwenhuis argued: the outlook of the great nations was not sufficiently international; there were chauvinists even among the Social Democrats, as the case of Vollmar in Germany proved. On the outbreak of war all socialists must adopt the same attitude. Otherwise, at the word of command, the peoples would just march out to war and destroy each other. Chauvinism led to a differentiation between wars of aggression and wars of defence. In the event of war socialists would be placed in the front lines, so that they might kill each other. Therefore they must refuse to shoot each other. It was true, they would then be imprisoned, but the cell was preferable to death. The civil war against the bourgeoisie was to replace the war of nations. Instead of governments, the representatives of the people and an international court of arbitration should decide disputes between the nations. A people which did not obey its ruling should be boycotted by the others. In existing conditions, the peoples should rise in the event of war.

This speech is a remarkable mixture of correct revolutionary ideas with the most pacifist and syndicalist illusions; on the one



hand the civil war against war, on the other a court of arbitration! Liebknecht was of course justified in pointing out, in opposition, that it was impossible to proclaim a "world strike" or revolution beforehand. Given, particularly, the weakness of the political and trade union organisation of the socialist movement in the most important capitalist countries at that time, it would have been senseless to have bound the parties to take steps which it was beyond their power to carry out. Moreover, if one were seriously considering the prospects of a civil war, the revolutionary workers could not be advised to refuse military service and allow themselves to be imprisoned. For it was impossible to begin the civil war with any prospect of success, without weapons, and unless the utmost possible was done to carry the spirit of rebellion into a reactionary army.

But Nieuwenhuis was quite right in referring to the danger of chauvinism within the socialist parties, and in dealing with Vollmar not as an individual case. For, as early as 1885, the Social Democratic fraction in the German *Reichstag* had, by a majority, voted for the state subsidy for a steamship line to the colonies, basing their support on reasons closely akin in spirit to social-patriotism. Therefore it was by no means unnecessary to discuss the character of the future war and the attitude to be adopted towards it by socialists. It is true that Nieuwenhuis' polemic against the differentiation between wars of aggression and wars of defence lacked a Marxist foundation. He merely pointed out that every diplomatist is an expert at presenting any war as a war of defence. But that certainly does not prove that it is impossible to have a war of defence. This question, so decisive for a correct socialist attitude towards war, was not thoroughly cleared up either at this or at any subsequent congress of the Second International.

Liebknecht's vigorous reply to Nieuwenhuis ignored all these problems. He protested against the accusation of chauvinism which German Social Democracy, after the position it had taken up in 1870, so little deserved. "On the outbreak of war military law prevails. Whoever refuses to obey is immediately court mar-

tialled and straightaway shot." They could not make themselves ridiculous by revolutionary phrases, he said.

However weak the discussion was, it is noteworthy that no mention was made in any of the speeches or in the resolution that was passed, of "defence of the fatherland," the creed which later became the gospel of the Second International.

The weakness of the International in questions of united action was manifested in the discussion on the May Day celebration. The Paris resolution on this subject — the only decision which laid upon the parties the obligation of joint activity — was at the Second Congress contested by two of the most important delegations. The Germans and the English proposed that the celebration should be held on the first Sunday in May. Actually, in 1890, both the Germans and the English had organised large demonstrations, but they had made no attempt to bring about a cessation of work on a large scale, whereas the French and the Austrians had carried on a determined and successful struggle around this question. The resistance offered by these two latter parties prevented the complete omission of a reference to cessation of work.

A compromise resolution was arrived at, which declared that the First of May was to be a day of rest in so far "as this was not rendered impossible by the circumstances prevailing in the different countries."

### 3. Against Tsarism; May Day and Tactical Questions

Zürich 1893

The Zurich Congress met in August 1893, at a time when class contradictions were extremely acute. In England 200,000 miners had been on strike for several months and their struggle, conducted with great strength and determination, ended with a partial success. In Belgium the workers, by means of a general strike, had forced from the bourgeoisie a concession in the matter of the franchise. In all countries political and trade union organi-



sations were rapidly developing. At the same time the increase in the building of armaments meant that the working class had to intensify its struggle against the danger of war.

Before the Congress could begin its deliberations on the agenda, it had again to deal with the question of the admission of anarchists, who were represented at the Congress mainly by the "youth" under the leadership of Gustav Landauer. They had been excluded from the German Party at the Erfurt Congress of 1891, and had then formed an independent anarchist group. A preliminary conference held in Brussels had laid down as the condition of admission the recognition of the necessity of workers' organisations and of political action. Since Landauer declared that the anarchists were not opposed to every form of political action, the German delegation, led by Bebel, moved an amendment to the conditions of admission which ran:

"By political action we mean that the workers' parties utilise or seek to win political rights and the machinery of legislation in order to further the interests of the proletariat and to win political power."

In moving the amendment, Bebel emphasised that fundamental differences separated the socialists from the anarchists. The anarchists could call a special congress for themselves, just as the Christian socialists had done. "Just as we have defined our boundary line to the right in this respect, so we shall define it to the left."

The amendment was accepted by a large majority, and, under protest, the anarchists left the Congress. Friedrich Engels, who appeared at the last session and made the final speech, emphasised the necessity for organisational separation from the anarchists. We shall return later to the question why the Second International failed to carry out the promise made by Bebel, that is, why it never drew as clear a line to the right as it did to the left. At the moment we only wish to refer to a fact of great importance, that the anarchists were an obstacle in the way of carrying out the practical tasks with which the socialist parties were at that time directly confronted; for the question of the struggle for political power was not an immediate one; the basis for it had first of

all to be laid in the shape of proletarian mass organisations and in spreading socialist ideas among the masses. In most countries the parties were concentrating their forces on the struggle for the franchise. At such a time this rendered joint activity with those who were fundamentally opposed to parliamentary activity impossible from the outset. But the reformists, who did not openly oppose the practice of the party, although they sought to undermine it by subterranean means and to divert it from the path of class struggle, seemed at first less dangerous; the entire extent of the reformist danger only became apparent when the working class approached great revolutionary tasks.

It was a characteristic "accident," of symbolic significance, that Rosa Luxemburg's mandate was rejected at the same time as those of the anarchists. Rosa Luxemburg was delegated to the congress as representative of the newspaper of the Socialists of Poland and Lithuania, an organisation which had been established in opposition to the P. P. S. which was even then infected with Polish nationalism.<sup>1</sup> Her mandate was declared invalid at the instance of Daszinski, leader of the P. P. S., the man who, ten years after Rosa Luxemburg fell in the fight for the proletarian revolution, was, as Marshal of the Sejm, playing the part of faithful servant to the fascist Pilsudski.

In the discussion on the attitude of the Social Democracy in the event of war, a factor emerged which had not been present at Brussels: the question of the struggle against tsarism. There was again a resolution from the Dutch calling for strike action and the refusal of military service on the outbreak of war, countered by a resolution from the Germans along the same lines as the Brussels resolution. Plekhanov, at that time leader of the Russian Social Democracy, the Emancipation of Labour Group founded in 1893, in reporting for the commission, opposed the general strike on the ground usually brought forward at that time, although it had been disproved by the general strike in Belgium in 1893:

<sup>1</sup> P. P. S. The Polish Socialist Party, to a certain extent related to the Russian Socialist-Revolutionaries.



"A general strike is impossible within present day society, for the proletariat does not possess the means to carry it out. On the other hand, were we in a position to carry out a general strike, the proletariat would already be in control of economic power and a general strike would be sheer absurdity."

To Liebknecht's argument that a military strike in countries where service was compulsory would mean the annihilation of the protesters, Plekhanov added that "a military strike would in the first place mean the disarming of the cultured peoples and would abandon western Europe to the Russian Cossacks."

Nieuwenhuis again attacked the chauvinism manifested by the German Party, but this time his words were directed not against Vollmar, but against Bebel, against his famous declaration in the Reichstag that in a war against Russian tsarism he would himself buckle on the sword. Nieuwenhuis said that it would not perhaps be a misfortune if the Russians were to invade Germany. The culture of Greece and Rome was not destroyed by the invasion of the barbarians. The refusal to perform military service would, it is true, lead to civil war, but civil war was preferable to the war of nations. The mutinies in the armies of England, Belgium and Italy, the Paris Commune of 1871 showed that it was possible.

A delegate from Poland sharply attacked Nieuwenhuis. In that country Bebel's speech had given an impetus to socialist thought and had awakened the old revolutionary temper of the population.

Liebknecht again recalled the attitude of the German socialists in 1870. German Social Democracy had never given up its struggle against militarism, had never renounced it as a weapon. The mailed fist of militarism had to be broken by the spirit of socialism. "But we cannot do that by childish conspiracies in the barracks, but only by untiring propaganda among the people."

On behalf of the Austrian Party Victor Adler declared that they had to stop Russia from taking the road which would lead over the bodies of the Polish martyrs. Socialist Europe must not be abandoned to tsarism. By Russia he meant not the Russian people but tsarism, "and in every country — in Austria too — we have enough tsarism."

For the English delegation Aveling said:

"When we are strong enough to carry out a military strike, we shall do something quite different, for then we shall be concerned with sending capitalism to heaven or to hell."

Volders, a Belgian delegate, attacked the incorrect idea of the Germans that special anti-militarist propaganda was unnecessary. The Belgian socialists knew how to agitate among the troops, how to carry socialist propaganda into the barracks. They held their meetings in the neighbourhood of the barracks, so that the soldiers might have a chance of hearing the truth. The amendment moved by Volders ran:

"In all legislative assemblies the representatives of the working class are to refuse to vote for military credits. They are to protest against militarism and to advocate disarmament."

In his concluding speech Plekhanov vigorously defended Bebel's attitude:

"If the German army were to cross our frontiers, it would come as a liberator, as the French soldiers of the National Convention came to Germany hundred years ago; as the conquerors of the princes, they brought freedom to the people."

The majority of the French and of the Norwegians voted for the Dutch resolution. The German resolution and the Belgian amendment for rejection of military budgets and for general disarmament were passed, those who had voted for the Dutch resolution refraining from voting.

There is no doubt that the majority, with their rejection on principle of the general strike, and their lack of understanding of the necessity for anti-militarist work, were wholly in the wrong; nevertheless, their refusal to regard with indifference the danger of a Russian invasion, and their emphasis on the need for a struggle against tsarism, were completely in accordance with the traditions of revolutionary Marxism since 1848 and with the attitude adopted by Engels in the 'nineties. In 1893 Russia was unquestionably the strongest pillar of international reaction. It is true that Victor Adler was right in saying that there was enough "tsarism" in Austria — and in Germany too — but the position



was different in those countries, in so far as Russia at that time lacked a revolutionary mass movement; it exhibited only the beginnings of a socialist organisation, whereas a socialist mass organisation was developing in Germany. At that time a Russian victory over Germany would undoubtedly have strengthened the forces of international reaction, would have dealt a blow at the international working class movement. Consequently in 1892, in his famous article "Socialism in Germany," Engels urged the necessity of national defence in the event of a Russian attack on Germany. He wrote:

"A war in which the Russians and French would attack Germany would be to the latter a struggle for life or death, a struggle in which it could only assure its national existence by the use of the most revolutionary measures. Unless it is compelled thereto, the present government will never unleash the revolution. But we have a strong party which can force it to do so, or which can, should the need arise, replace it — the Social Democratic Party.

"And we have not forgotten the great example which France offered us in 1793. The centenary celebration of 1793 is drawing near. Should the Tsar's thirst for aggression and the chauvinist impatience of the French bourgeoisie hold up the victorious but peaceful advance of the German socialists, then they — depend upon it — are ready to prove to the world that the German workers of today are not unworthy of the French sansculottes of a hundred years ago, and that 1893 can take its place at the side of 1793."<sup>1</sup>

In the situation obtaining in 1893, Engels was in favour of the national defence of Germany against tsarism but, obviously, he was not recommending civil peace between the socialists and Wilhelm II; he was referring to a revolutionary war in which the socialists were to seize the leadership. Plekhanov was following the same line of thought when he compared the part that would be played by the German army with that played by the French revolutionary army. He was certainly not thinking of the Prussian Grenadiers under Wilhelm II's command as liberators.

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels: "Socialism in Germany," published in the *Neue Zeit*, Vol. X, I, pp. 485-6. Cf. also Zinoviev: *The War and the Crisis of Socialism*, p. 154 (Russian), where, owing to a misprint, the date is given as 1896 instead of 1893.

This attitude of revolutionary socialists on the question of the struggle against tsarism at a time when German imperialism had just begun to develop, when the epoch of imperialist war was just opening, can in no sense justify the position taken up by the German social-patriots in 1914. The use of the hostility entertained for tsarism by Marx and Engels in order to justify the social-imperialist treachery of 1914 has already been exhaustively criticised and refuted in Marxist literature — by Zinoviev in the book to which we have already referred, by Lenin and Zinoviev in *Socialism and War*, in the articles published in *Against the Stream* and in Rosa Luxemburg's *Junius Pamphlet*. It is indicative of the complete decay of German Social Democracy from the scientific aspect — a necessary result of its development into reformism — that it has never attempted to examine seriously this revolutionary Marxist criticism, although it still occasionally appeals to Marx and Engels in reference to the policy of 1914.

All the parties criticised the attitude of the German Party in relation to the May Day celebrations. In proportion to the forces at their disposal, the Germans had done less to carry out the May Day decision of the Paris Congress than any other party. In April 1890 the Social Democratic group in the Reichstag (against the vote of Wilhelm Liebknecht), and in opposition to the May Day appeal issued by the Berlin organisation, published an appeal which was definitely hostile to the celebration of May Day. In unconcealed contradiction to the spirit and letter of the Paris resolution the Reichstag group declared that the same reasons which made a general strike inexpedient were applicable to the plan for a general cessation of work on one day.

"In such circumstances we cannot find it in our conscience to encourage the German workers to make the First of May a day for a general stoppage of work."

The First of May was to be celebrated by meetings, celebrations, and demonstrations. Work was to cease only where this was possible "without conflicts." The result of this decision was that the workers "downed tools" only in Hamburg, while dis-



sension and discouragement followed within the party and among the advanced workers, which to some extent found expression in the opposition of the "youth." Friedrich Engels justified the position taken up by the Party leadership, on the grounds that the anti-socialist laws were just about to expire and that the government should be given no opportunity for provocative action; but he too was of the opinion that:

"For the rest, the fraction declaration is bad and the nonsense about the general strike wholly unnecessary."

Had it been merely a matter of facilitating the abrogation of the anti-socialist laws by a certain cautiousness, the decision could have been excused. In fact, however, in sabotaging a strike on May Day, the German Party leadership was pursuing a consistent policy of avoiding any struggle which might involve sacrifice. The Berlin Party Congress of 1892 decided, in view of the economic crisis — an excuse can always be found to evade a struggle — to discountenance a cessation of work and to organise the celebration for the evening. In other countries, where May Day demanded no less sacrifice, the socialist parties considered it their bounden duty to maintain at any cost the standard of international proletarian solidarity. The French workers, for example, in spite of outrageous police brutality which, on May Day 1891, had led to the death of ten workers in Fourmies, organised their revolutionary demonstration. In Austria-Hungary too, where the working class suffered no less from the reaction than in Germany and where the May Day celebrations regularly called forth measures of opposition, demonstrations were held each year with great *élan*.

Victor Adler, reporting on behalf of the commission, declared openly that the purpose of the resolution was principally to induce the Germans, who by their retreat were making the struggle of the workers in other countries more difficult, to proceed with greater determination. The commission proposed that the Brussels resolution should be reaffirmed and strengthened by the following amendment:

"It is the duty of the Social Democrats in every country to strive for a cessation of work on May Day and to support every effort made in this direction in different places and by different organisations . . .

"The May Day demonstration for the eight hour day is at the same time a manifestation of the firm determination of the working class to abolish class differences by means of the social revolution and to so to take the only road which leads to peace within each nation and to international peace."

In moving this amendment, Adler said:

"If we do not move forward, the May Day celebration will die out . . . But in Germany they were much more anxious to carry out the decision against a cessation of work than to see that the celebration was organised for the First of May, and not for any Sunday in the month."

The speech given by Bebel in defence of the German attitude does not represent the most glorious page in the life history of that great leader of the working class. It breathed the spirit of that petty, selfish bureaucracy which was gaining a growing influence within the German Party with the strengthening of the organisations, particularly of the trade unions.

Bebel declared that he could not in any circumstances vote for a resolution which, in contradiction to the Brussels decision, deprived the different parties of the right to determine the form which their May Day celebrations should take. That was unthinkable. If at a party meeting the minority were to vote for the cessation of work, then according to the proposed resolution the majority would have to obey the minority. That would involve a breach of party discipline, and the party would have to accept the financial as well as the moral responsibility for such a decision. Moreover he could not bring himself to accept the wording "that class differences were to be abolished by means of the social revolution. And for a number of German states this would make the May Day celebration legally impossible."

After the word "revolution" had been replaced by "transformation" the German delegation voted for the last amendment; then, together with Denmark, Bulgaria and Russia, Germany voted against the first amendment and Singer made the matter worse by saying that the German comrades voted "on principle" for cessation of work just as warmly and honestly as the others, but



they could not "allow themselves to be dictated to in this matter by any individual."

This description of an international decision as the "dictation by an individual" expressed that lack of respect for the International which was characteristic of the practice of the parties organised in the Second International. In the years which followed the German Socialists pursued the tactics of renouncing a strike on May Day wherever the cessation of work might involve sacrifices.

The discussion on the political tactics of Social Democracy also revealed one of the weakest points of the Second International. While the most important leaders of the time were united in rejecting opportunist tactics of compromise with the bourgeoisie and in pursuing the objective of the proletarian revolution, they had no clear conception of the tasks of the proletariat in the revolution and of the relation of the working class to the bourgeois state.

The resolution put forward by the commission and passed by an overwhelming majority represented the following line of thought: trade union organisations and political action are both necessary for agitation on behalf of the principles of socialism and for winning urgently necessary reforms. Consequently workers must fight for political rights in order to be able to put forward their demands in all legislative and administrative bodies and to win for themselves the means of political power in order to "change them from being the means used for the rule of capitalism into the means for emancipating the proletariat." The selection of the methods and forms of struggle was to be left to the different countries, but it was necessary

The resolution also declared in favour of the initiative and referendum, and of a system of proportional representation.

"... to keep in the foreground of these struggles the revolutionary goal of the socialist movement, the complete economic, political and moral transformation of present day society. In no case should political action serve as the pretext for compromise and alliances which violate our principles or encroach upon our independence."

This resolution, which uttered a warning against unprincipled compromise and recommended the workers never to lose sight of their revolutionary goal, nevertheless indicated a thoroughly reformist conception of the state: not the destruction of the bourgeois state and the creation of the proletarian state, but the transformation of the organs of capitalist rule, that is, of the bourgeois state with its bureaucracy and armed force, into the means whereby to liberate the proletariat. While the international congresses never let pass an opportunity of celebrating the memory of the Paris Commune and of prophesying the World Commune, the most important lesson which Marx drew from the experiences of the Commune was forgotten, namely, that the proletarian revolution cannot simply take over the old state machine, but must destroy it.

Here was evidence of the confusion in which this question had been left by the programme of the German Party, adopted at the Erfurt Congress in 1891, despite Engels' criticism that "what the programme really should contain is omitted." This programme, which in the time of the Second International was held to be the best Marxist Party programme, correctly describes the tendencies of development within bourgeois society, the intensification of the class struggle which necessarily leads that society into decay; but it was content with a programme of action, containing bourgeois-democratic and social reforms, that made no mention of the tasks of the proletarian revolution in relation to the state.

Vandervelde, always an expert — even at the time of his greatest fall — in defending a wrong cause with fine words, expressed with peculiar felicity this mixture of revolutionary principles with utter confusion concerning the fundamental tasks of the revolution. He said:

"We do not ignore the dangers of corruption by parliamentarianism, for it leads to the most unnatural compromises, even to the betrayal of principle. But this danger of corruption does not lie in parliamentarianism itself, but in the fact that parliaments are in the hands of the bourgeoisie; when parliaments are controlled by the emancipated proletariat, the basis for corruption



will disappear. Since, however, we recognise the dangers of parliamentarianism in bourgeois society, we have erected certain safeguards by demanding that those representatives of the workers who enter parliament should fulfill certain conditions. In the class struggle, they should in no circumstances lose sight of the fact that no compromise with the bourgeois parties should be made which might in any way mean the surrender of even one iota of the class character of the proletariat. This is the only way in which the proletariat can achieve victory. If capitalism is not annihilated, if capitalism is not razed to the ground, the proletariat cannot triumph; but every compromise retards the annihilation of capitalism."

Compromise could not be entirely prohibited; it was necessary for small parties which did not have the franchise.

power could not be fought out in the parliamentary arena, while on the other the revolutionary transformation of the state system was visualised only as the transfer of parliament into the hands of

Thus on the one hand it was openly stated that the struggle for the proletariat.

On behalf of the Dutch delegation, Vliegen moved a resolution directed against "state socialism." At that time state socialism was understood to mean that reformist viewpoint, represented particularly by Vollmar, which, following the Lassallian tradition, hoped for the solution of social problems through reforms in the bourgeois state. It is true that the resolution did not contain any positive formulation on the question of the relation of the proletariat to parliamentarianism, to bourgeois parties and to the state, but it also avoided the confusion of the majority resolution in stating clearly

"... that improvements in the position of the worker in present day society can only be welcomed by the workers in the sense that they improve their capacity to fight, that they provide the means for better organisation and facilitate the expropriation of the possessing classes."

In speaking to the resolution, Vliegen remarked that the parties in Germany, England and France "were acting as possibilists, even if this was not said or written outright," and explained possibilism, *i. e.*, opportunism, in the following words: "The characteristic feature of possibilism is that it raises a means to the level of an end."

The attack from the Dutch again brought Wilhelm Liebknecht to his feet. He supported the rejection of "state socialism" for, as the Berlin Party Congress of 1892 had declared, socialism and state socialism were irreconcilable contradictions. He protested vigorously against the "myth" that the Germans no longer took their stand on the ground of revolutionary class struggle. The German programme was more radical than any other programme, but questions of tactics were not questions of principle. "If the conditions were to change twenty-four times in one day, we would change our tactics twenty-four times." The Dutch wanted to limit parliamentary activity to making protests; that was a mistake.

"Just as tactics in themselves are neither revolutionary nor reactionary, so the state machine is not in itself reactionary. It is nothing but an instrument for exercising power, a sharp and powerful weapon. If an enemy attacks me with a weapon, I shall not master him by despising that weapon; I shall seek to deprive him of that weapon, if I do not wish to feel it in my own body. We can only triumph over the power by which we are opposed if we seize the mighty sword which it wields!... We are concerned with a struggle for power, and this struggle must be fought out on political soil, so that we can get into our own hands the legislative machinery which our enemies have used for hundreds of years to suppress and exploit the proletariat."

While, in this question of the state, Liebknecht openly took up a thoroughly reformist attitude, he spoke decisively, on behalf of the German delegation, against any compromise with bourgeois parties, as did Adler for Austria, Turati for Italy and Quelch for England.

The resolution was passed unanimously, the Dutch abstaining. A resolution on the agrarian question, in favour of the public ownership of the land, and a resolution on the "national and international formation of the trade unions" which recommended a loose connection and mutual support among trade unions, were also accepted. The latter resolution had been countered by the Dutch with a proposal for international unions and by the Austrians with a proposal recommending all countries to take up the struggle for universal and equal suffrage. The Congress closed its session with a speech by Engels which contained noteworthy remarks on the importance of the International. Engels said:



"We must allow discussion, or we shall become a sect, but a common outlook must be preserved. Free connection, voluntary cohesion supported by congresses — that is enough to give us the victory, of which no power in the world can deprive us."

#### 4. Exclusion of Anarchists; the Agrarian and Colonial Questions

London 1896

Friedrich Engels died in 1895. His death, at a time when the important differences with the reformists within the German Party and the International were becoming more prominent, was the more regrettable since, shortly before his death, there was published that Introduction to *Class Struggles in France*, falsified by the Central Committee of the German Social Democratic Party, which was for many years exploited as a conclusive argument against the left wing. In that Introduction Engels had emphasised the necessity of utilising the franchise and parliament, had welcomed the growth of the German Party in conditions of legal struggle and had uttered a warning against premature outbreaks; in this connection he wrote as follows on the subject of barricade fighting:

"And, finally, the newly-built quarters of the large cities, erected since 1848, have been laid out in long, straight and wide streets, as though made to order for the effective use of the new cannon and rifles. The revolutionary who would himself select the new working class districts in the north and east of Berlin for a barricade battle would have to be a lunatic."

So much for the "entire rejection" of barricade fighting. But the cautious editors omitted the concluding paragraph, which ran:

"Does that mean that in future street fighting will no longer play its part? Not at all. It only means that since 1848 conditions have become much less favourable to civil insurgents, and much more favourable to the military. In the future street fighting can only be successful if this disadvantage is outweighed by other factors. It will therefore occur less often at the beginning of a great revolution than it will during the course of the revolution, and it will have to be undertaken with powerful forces. But, as throughout the French Revolution, and on September 4 and October 31, 1870, these forces will prefer open attack to passive barricade tactics."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See article by D. Riazanov on Engels' Introduction to *Class Struggles in France*, in *Unter dem Banner des Marxismus*, Berlin, Vol. I, p. 150.

By the omission of this paragraph, Engels' remarks were distorted to mean the contrary of what he had intended. An analysis of the future forms of street fighting was falsified into a general warning against street fighting. It is true that Engels protested energetically against this falsification, but he died shortly after it had been published, and could no longer prevent the misuse of his words. This inexcusable act of the German Party Committee indicates the path away from the proletarian class struggle which it was to pursue in later years, but, in the years which immediately followed, both the German Party and the International were driven to the left because of the more vigorous attacks from the opportunists.

There were no great differences at the London Congress held in July and August 1896. The door was finally closed behind the anarchists. Since, in spite of the more stringent conditions of admission decided upon by the Zurich Congress, a great deal of time was continually being lost in disputes concerning the validity of the anarchists' mandates, the London Congress decided on a simple condition of admission for the future: "Anarchists are excluded." After the anarchists had been ejected — and matters went so far that the chairman threatened to call in the police — the majority of the Dutch delegation, under the leadership of Nieuwenhuis, also left the Congress.

However, anarchists were not completely excluded from the Congress of the Second International. It was expressly stated that anarchists who were not representatives of anarchist organisations, but were delegated on behalf of trade unions, could, as before, take part in the sessions of the Congress. Such were the terms of the resolution, but the English Social Democrat Irving moved that only those unions should be admitted which supported the complete political independence of the working class movement, that is, which did not support liberals or Tories during elections. This proposal, however, was turned down and the admission of trade unions was made dependent on their recognition of the necessity for political and parliamentary activity. This excluded the syndicalist trade unions which, particu-



larly in the case of France, usually sent a majority of anarchists in their delegations.

While the line of demarcation against the left was sharply drawn, the right wing was strengthened by the representatives of the followers of Millerand. They had joined the socialists in peculiar circumstances. After the elections of 1894, in which 25 socialists of different tendencies had been elected, about 30 deputies, led by Millerand and Jaurès, who had been elected as bourgeois radicals, declared their readiness to unite with the socialists to form a parliamentary fraction. This union took place, the radical group only being required to include in their bourgeois reform programme the general demand for the "socialisation of the means of production."

Engels had the greatest misgivings about this amalgamation, saying that an alliance would be preferable. He pointed out that the socialists must not lose sight of the fact that they were dealing with bourgeois elements, with whom a conflict on questions of principle was bound to arise. Above all they must retain the freedom to criticise, in the press and in parliament, these doubtful elements.

The course which the Millerandists subsequently pursued entirely confirmed Engels' distrust.

The three leaders of this reformist wing, Jaurès, Millerand and Viviani, requested that the Congress should recognise them as delegates because of their position as members of the Chamber of Deputies, and it was only when this principle of representation met with no response that they produced mandates from socialist organisations.

The agrarian question had been placed on the agenda of the 1893 Congress at the request of the socialists from agrarian countries, but lack of time had prevented any discussion. At the London Congress, however, it was dealt with thoroughly. The resolution of the commission, as in 1893, did no more than enunciate general principles on the transfer of the land to public ownership and on the organisation of the rural proletariat for the fight against exploitation. Owing to the variety of conditions in

different agrarian countries, it was considered impossible to impose binding regulations for the workers' parties of all countries. A proposal from the English, which promised substantial amelioration of the lot of the rural working population through the nationalisation of the transport system, was rejected, after Schönkank, with reference to the measures taken by Bismarck, had uttered a warning against illusions on the subject of nationalisation in the bourgeois state.

The resolution on political action contained a frank recognition of the principles and objects of revolutionary socialism.

"1. This Congress understands, by political action, all forms of organised struggle for winning political power and the utilisation of the legislative and administrative institutions of the state and the municipalities by the working class with the object of attaining emancipation.

"2. The Congress declares that the most important means of obtaining the emancipation of the workers as human beings and as citizens and of establishing the international socialist republic is the winning of political power, and it calls upon the workers of all countries to unite and, independently of all bourgeois parties, to demand:

- (1) universal franchise for all adults;
- (2) equal franchise for all adults;
- (3) voting by ballot;
- (4) the initiative and the referendum in state and municipality."

The resolution spoke in favour of the complete right of self-determination of all nations and against the colonial policy which, "under whatever religious or civilising pretexts," was only and always designed to extend the sphere of capitalist exploitation in the exclusive interests of the capitalist class.

There was discussion on only one point, the demand that the struggle should be conducted independently of bourgeois parties. This clause aroused the opposition of an English trade unionist



and of a representative of the Fabians, that group of petty-bourgeois intellectuals which Engels had acutely described as

"... a band of place-hunters who have enough understanding to realise the inevitability of social transformation but who consider it impossible to entrust this great work to the raw proletariat and therefore have the kindness to place themselves at the head."<sup>1</sup>

In accordance with their principle of "permeating liberalism with socialism" they wanted to induce liberal candidates to accept socialist demands. Consequently the Fabian representative declared that he saw no difference at the elections between a radical and a workers' candidate. After a sharp speech by Bebel the resolution was passed against a few votes of the English trade unionists.

In contradiction to this openly revolutionary political resolution, a resolution on the economic policy of the working class revealed a confusion which left the door open to reformist ideas. The resolution demanded a strengthening of international working class organisations to meet the development of international monopoly. So far, so good. But it also contained a recommendation "to establish an international agency which should aim at controlling the machinations of these capitalist associations and at the socialisation of these undertakings by means of national and international legislation." Socialisation in this context obviously meant a measure to be carried out without the overthrow of capitalism, without the proletariat's winning power. The same confusion was displayed in the demand to the workers

"... immediately (!) to clear the way for definite measures for the socialisation, nationalisation and communalisation of production in their respective countries, and to inform each other of the steps they had taken, in order to achieve, as far as possible, unified international procedure."

Although this clearly refers to socialisation within bourgeois society, the subsequent paragraph on the trade union struggle runs as follows:

<sup>1</sup> *Letters from Becker, etc., to Sorge*, p. 390.

"The exploitation of the workers can cease only when society itself has taken ownership of the means of production, including the land and the means of transport. The indispensable preliminary to this is a system of legislative measures. If these are to be carried out, the working class must be the decisive political power. But the workers become a political power only to the extent to which they are organised. The trade unions therefore, in organising the workers, make the working class a political power."

In this section ambiguous phrases, wavering between reformist state socialism and revolutionary socialism, were deliberately used; nevertheless the resolution was passed almost unanimously. A minority of the French delegation voted against it, because the resolution rejected the international general strike.

A resolution on the war question was passed which represented a retreat as compared with former decisions. It demanded the abolition of standing armies, the arming of the people, the establishment of courts of arbitration, and that, "in the event of governments not accepting the decisions of the court," the people should directly decide on the question of war or peace. These demands could only be realised "if the workers have a decisive influence on legislation and establish real fraternity among the peoples by adhering to international socialism." Thus, while every variety of pacifist panacea was recommended and the possibility of obtaining demands merely by parliamentary influence was indicated, a proposal from the French to recommend a general strike and "in the last resource, to maintain peace by the use of revolutionary means," received no support.

### 5. *The Struggle Against Millerandism — the Pliable Kautsky*

Paris 1900

When the Fifth Congress of the Second International met in September 1900, it had to define its attitude towards new factors of decisive importance to the international working class movement. Reformism had come to flower in theory and practice. It had attained a theoretical programme in the system of revisionism developed by Bernstein in his *Principles of Socialism*, published in 1898. By Millerand's entry into a bourgeois govern-



ment, and by the approval given to this step by the adherents of Jaurès, it had made its first great experiment.

Rosa Luxemburg had opened her brilliant campaign against revisionism and had subjected Millerandism to annihilating criticism.<sup>1</sup> The Congresses of the German Social Democratic Party held in Stuttgart in 1898 and in Hanover in 1899 had decisively turned down the ideas of revisionism, although without resolving to take any organisational measures. In France the support given to Millerand by the adherents of Jaurès had led to the dissolution of the fraction established in 1894. The Marxists led by Guesde and the Blanquists led by Vaillant conducted a determined struggle against the adherents of the coalition policy, or as it was then called, Millerandism.

The close of the nineteenth century was marked by a number of colonial wars which opened the age of imperialism: the Spanish-American War for Cuba in 1898, the outbreak in 1899 of the Boer War and the intervention of the European powers in China, with Germany playing a leading part.

The struggle against Millerandism and the fight against war were therefore the most important questions discussed at the congress. At the Paris Congress in 1889 Nieuwenhuis, in his ingenuously pathetic way, had raised the question of the participation of socialists in the government.

"If I were offered a place in a ministry — I do not hope, and I do not fear that this will happen — I would make only one stipulation: will private property be attacked? If the answer were yes, then I would accept, unwillingly, but dutifully; if the answer were no, I would say: get thee behind me, Satan, thou art trying to mislead me."

In Millerand's case there was no question of a government coalition with socialists who believed or maintained that they could in this way bring about the abolition of private property. It was a typical instance of the careerist renegade who uses a favourable situation to win ministerial position. For years France had been torn by the struggle between the militarists and clericals on one side, and the democratic-republican representatives of finance

<sup>1</sup> R. Luxemburg: *Collected Works*, Vol. III (German).

capital on the other. If the reactionary bloc had been compromised by the Dreyfus affair, the republicans had been equally compromised by the Panama scandal. The Dreyfus affair, the condemnation of a Jewish officer as a spy on the lying evidence and despicable forgeries of a militarist clique, had stirred large masses of people. Under Guesde's leadership, the radical Marxist wing of the French labour movement took up an attitude of blank, sectarian "neutrality." It was satisfied with the knowledge that the dispute was one between two groups of the bourgeoisie and made no attempt to give a proletarian character to the mass movement against class justice and militarism by intensifying the struggle against militarism and by dissociating themselves sharply from the bourgeois republicans and their corruption. On the other hand, the adherents of Jaurès rushed to the support of the bourgeois republicans, without defining their differences in the struggle against reaction, and thus created the conditions necessary for the Millerand "experiment."

In 1899, without the consent of his party, without any negotiations or agreement between the bourgeois parties and the socialists, Millerand entered the Waldeck-Rousseau government. The purpose of this action was given as the defence of the republic against reaction. Since the socialists had no obligations to this government, it was not a question of a coalition government in the proper sense. The Guesdists refused to accept responsibility for Millerand's action and carried on a persistent fight against the government.

Had all the socialists adopted the same attitude, the question would merely have been one of the individual case of a renegade; but the adherents of Jaurès considered Millerand's acceptance into the government as indicating the progress of democracy, and for years supported the policy of the government through thick and thin.

In the brief period of its existence before the Paris Congress, the Millerand government had already been stained by the blood of workers shot down by the police in a strike at Chalons. And so, for the first time, the question of socialist participation in the



government of a bourgeois state, with all its implications, was definitely raised before the Congress.

The majority of the commission which dealt with this question, as Vandervelde reported, agreed that it was a problem which was "of a purely academic and local character" for all countries with the exception of France. Jaurès was looking further ahead when he stated that the ministerial question would arise whenever strong socialist parties had developed. The greater development of democracy in France accounted for its first arising there. In fact, as all subsequent development showed, the decision at the Congress had to be taken, not on an individual instance, but on the principles of the attitude of socialists to the bourgeois state and to bourgeois democracy. That was how Rosa Luxemburg put the question, and she answered it as a revolutionary Marxist:

"In bourgeois society Social Democracy, by its very nature, has to play the part of an opposition party; it can only come forward as the governing party on the ruins of the bourgeois state."<sup>1</sup>

The question of winning state power and the question of alliance with bourgeois parties were taken together as one item of the Congress agenda. On the latter point the Congress unanimously passed a resolution moved by Guesde, that election alliances with bourgeois parties cannot last, for they come up against the basic principle of the party, the class struggle. Joint action with bourgeois parties was only to be permitted in exceptional cases and for a limited period.

In itself, the resolution was correct, but it was defective in that it omitted to mention the conditions on which alliances were permissible and, particularly, in that it failed to lay down that no alliance must be allowed to weaken the struggle for the demands of the proletariat. This, it is true, was only a question of tactics, but the question of socialist participation in a government was one of principle.

<sup>1</sup> R. Luxemburg: *Collected Works*, Vol. III.

It was chiefly due to Kautsky that at the Paris Congress the question was put in this manner, was distorted and obscured so that a question of principle became one of tactics. Kautsky, who at that time still stood in the left wing and at the German Party Congress in Hanover in 1899 had, together with Rosa Luxemburg, fought strenuously against Bernstein, took up for the first time at this Congress that position midway between reformism and Marxism which became the distinguishing mark of the so-called centre which he led.

Kautsky's resolution, on which the majority of the commission were agreed, ran:

"The winning of political power by the proletariat in a modern democratic state cannot be the result of a *coup de main*, but can only come as the conclusion of long and patient activity for the political and industrial organisation of the proletariat, for its physical and moral regeneration, for the gradual winning of seats on municipal bodies and legislative authorities.

"But where governmental power is centralised, it cannot be won in this piecemeal fashion. The entry of a single socialist into a bourgeois ministry cannot be considered as the normal beginning for winning political power; it can never be anything but a temporary and exceptional makeshift in an emergency situation.

"Whether, in any given instance, such an emergency situation exists, is a question of tactics and not of principle. The Congress does not have to decide that. But in any case this dangerous experiment can only be of advantage if it is approved by a united party organisation and if the socialist minister is, and remains, the delegate of his party.

"Whenever a socialist becomes a minister independently of his party, or whenever he ceases to be the delegate of that party, then his entry into the government, instead of being a means to strengthen the proletariat, weakens it, instead of being a means to further the winning of political power, it becomes a means of delaying it.

"The Congress declares that a socialist must resign from a bourgeois government if the organised party is of the opinion that that government has displayed partisanship in an industrial dispute between labour and capital."

It can be seen that the resolution does not in any way condemn in principle the participation of socialists in a bourgeois government. Essentially criticism is only directed against the fact that Millerand pursued a policy of coalition independently of the



party, that is, actually placed the party at the service of a bourgeois government without giving the party an opportunity of deciding the question.

Since that time the abundant experience of the working class in this question of coalition policy has sufficiently proved that this factor in Millerand's case was by no means peculiar, but that, even where there were formal coalitions, where the minister was supposed to enter the government as the agent of the party, he allowed his governmental activity to be laid down for him by the bourgeois parties and then utilised the party bureaucracy in order to win the party membership in support of his policy, or at least to keep them from rebelling against it. It is true that Kautsky's resolution contained a personal condemnation of Millerand, but since it admitted the possibility that such a "dangerous experiment" could be of advantage, that, indeed, it might be one path to power — if not the normal one — it was a great concession, in principle, to reformism. The guardian of Marxist orthodoxy had so far forgotten the simple principle that in class society the government, as the executive organ of the state, can only represent the interests of one class, the ruling class, that he regarded "partisanship in an industrial dispute between labour and capital" as a possible case, not as a necessity. This profound thought was developed further by Plekhanov in a proposed amendment which allowed socialists to enter into a ministry only if, "in all disputes between workers and capitalists, it preserved the most strict neutrality."

Vandervelde was so little impressed by this wisdom that he passed it over with a polite joke. In moving the resolution drawn up by Kautsky he laid great stress on the contention that this was a question of tactics and not of principle. "Undeviating in principle, tactics are a matter for each country." That was how he formulated the opinion of the majority of the commission. He declared that it was self-contradictory of the Guesdists to pursue the objective of winning political power in state and municipality by the ballot — for example, to accept the position of town mayor — and at the same time to shut fast the door of the

government to socialists. There was no essential difference between political and administrative power.

On behalf of the minority the Italian socialist Ferri moved the resolution drawn up by Guesde:

"The Fifth International Congress at Paris declares again that the winning of political power by the proletariat, whether it occurs by peaceful or by violent methods, means the political expropriation of the capitalist class.

"Consequently it allows the proletariat to take part in bourgeois government only in the form of winning seats on its own strength and on the basis of the class struggle, and it forbids any participation whatever of socialists in bourgeois governments, towards which socialists must take up an attitude of unbending opposition."

He described the vacillating attitude of the commission as symptomatic of the spiritual state of socialism in all countries. Nothing could be done with the "pliability of Kautsky;" a strict rule was essential. It was to the credit of the Jaurès group in the Dreyfus affair to have taken over the leadership in the struggle against clericalism and militarism, while the Guesdists stood inactively aside. On the other hand they had made a mistake in supporting Millerand. In the fight against socialism, the bourgeoisie employed different methods according to the stage of development socialism had reached.

"Infant socialism is calumniated and derided, the child is persecuted with reactionary measures, but adolescent socialism it tries to hypnotise and to divert from the path of virtue. It is like a mother-in-law who is anxious to get her daughter married. The daughter is adorned and decorated: she makes advances, and if the youth is caught by them, he becomes a tame, enslaved and unhappy husband....

"Kautsky's resolution is composed of ifs and buts; it leaves a way open. It is true that the door is closed to the return of another Millerand case, but the window is left open. The principle is inscribed large on a placard and is saved, but in practice everything is allowed. It speaks of a dangerous experiment, but they will say: we are so brave, we will take the risk! The resolution recommends bourgeois tactics with socialist principles. That leads us along a slippery path. There is no difference between tactics and principle. Practice is only applied theory, theory only applied practice. What we shall get to is shown in the fact that not a single socialist in the French parliament protested against the campaign in China; indeed, they even voted for the credits for that campaign, of robbery."



Jaurès appealed first to the fact that the tactics of election alliances with bourgeois parties were permitted by all socialist parties. It was true that Millerand had received his portfolio from the hands of the president, and not of the electors, but in the selection of the president the deputies elected by the people played their part. Finally Jaurès declared that he would vote for Kautsky's resolution because it made the ministry question one of tactics and not of principle. The working class was mature enough to conduct its own affairs, and its hands should not be tied. The entry of a socialist into a bourgeois ministry as the mandatory of his party was the beginning of the political expropriation of the bourgeoisie. This candid statement was received by the majority of the Congress with enthusiastic and prolonged applause.

The attitude of the Marxists was put by Guesde. Election alliances with bourgeois parties must be kept at a minimum. The more intense the class struggle grows, the more rapidly will these alliances disappear. The entry of a socialist into a cabinet could at best mean the achievement of partial reforms which would change nothing in the class position of the proletariat. What was necessary was not only the winning of the central authority, but the dictatorship of the proletariat, of which the great bourgeois revolutionaries had been afraid in 1798. Socialism had grown, but it seemed to have lost in depth what it had gained in extent, and, by all appearances, its spine was not so straight as formerly.

Guesde opposed Kautsky's resolution and appealed to Wilhelm Liebknecht, who had said that a socialist who entered a bourgeois ministry thereby ceased to be a socialist.

"The irreconcilable contradiction of classes makes it impossible for one and the same person to represent the interests both of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. And the position is not in the least changed if an organised party stands behind the socialist minister. That only makes the position worse, for then the whole party bears the responsibility for the mistakes and crimes of the bourgeois ministry and for its bankruptcy. The party is discredited in the eyes of the proletariat as soon as the meaning of this compromise ministry is brought home to them in the crackling of rifles and the clash of swords. Every minister is responsible for the entire policy of the cabinet, for its foreign policy too, for its military and naval budgets

By his deeds an English or German Millerand would endanger international solidarity. The contradictions in Kautsky's resolution would greatly endanger the advance of the proletariat. We hold firmly to this belief, that outside the class struggle there is no hope for the proletariat."

That was the first and last time that a leader of the Second International openly and clearly expressed at one of its congresses his recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Marx's statement that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, and that this dictatorship is only the transition to the abolition of all classes, which Marx himself realised to be the kernel of this theory,<sup>1</sup> was completely forgotten by the parties of the Second International, with the exception of the Bolshevik Party.

In Kautsky's resolution the Belgian reformist Anseele welcomed the approach of a new epoch of reformist practice.

"What is most significant in Kautsky's resolution is that it expresses the idea that the victory of socialism cannot be the result of a *coup de main*, but only of long and patient work. That is a break with the past. Up to the present we have preached belief in the great day of the revolution, just as the church refers its flock to the glories of heaven, or the bourgeoisie assigns omnipotence to political liberty; and consequently the idea has arisen that up to the day of the revolution we can sit still with our hands in our laps. From today on new tactics will be employed — and that does not mean, as Guesde fears, a weakening of socialist consciousness — the tactics of unceasing and untiring day to day work. It is easy to inspire youthful and enthusiastic hearts for the last great fight; it is much more difficult to carry out, day after day, the petty, irritating tasks which fall to the member of an organisation. It is glorious to build barricades; it is equally glorious to do this other work. We pay all due honour to the earlier protagonists of the revolution, but we should not place too low a value on those who today use methods more adapted to existing circumstances."

But even Anseele considered it necessary to mitigate this shameless admission of reformism by a revolutionary phrase.

"Although we use only peaceful and legal means to achieve our object, we shall not be spared the last struggle, for the bourgeoisie will not let

<sup>1</sup> See Lenin: *State and Revolution* (London and New York, 1925).



their political and economic power be taken from them without putting up a fight."

The Communard Vaillant, leader of the Blanquists, supported Guesde and said that Kautsky's resolution was a surrender to Bernstein.

Anseele was supported by Auer, who had long before gone over completely to revisionism. His speech expressed nothing more than regret at the fact that things were not so advanced in Germany as to make ministerial positions possible. "It is true," he said, "that the case of Millerand has not occurred in our country.... But I hope that we too will soon have gotten this far." In any case, in Germany it was impossible for a party member to enter the cabinet without the approval of the party. But, considering the unsteadiness of French party conditions, whom should Millerand have asked?

Naturally enough, this socialist, seized with a longing for ministerial position, was in favour of Kautsky's resolution. He could not, it was true, subscribe to every sentence, but he was in agreement with its general tendency.

In spite of the character of the welcome it received, Kautsky did not see any necessity to strengthen his resolution. Amid cries of protest from the Guesdists, it was accepted by 29 votes against 9. Each country held two votes. Two votes against the resolution were given by Bulgaria and Ireland, and France, Poland, Russia, Italy and the United States each gave one vote against it.

This was the first great defeat for the revolutionary wing of the International, but the resolutions on the colonial question and on militarism were filled with a revolutionary spirit. The same van Kol who was soon to appear as one of the leaders of Dutch social-imperialism, moved, on behalf of the commission, a resolution which engaged the proletariat to fight in every possible way against the colonial policy of the bourgeoisie, to promote the formation of socialist parties in the colonies and to establish the closest contact with them. It is worthy of note that a number of English labour representatives spoke on behalf of the resolution:

Hyndman, the founder of the Social Democratic Federation, Harry Quelch, who laid great stress on the unanimous opposition of the English workers to the Boer War, and Curran, the leader of the London gas-workers and the first labour candidate to be elected to Parliament in a straight fight. Curran said:

"Great efforts are being made now in England to convince the trade unionists that the colonial policy is in their interests, for it creates new markets and thereby increases the possibilities of work and raises wages. But the English trade unionists are not to be caught with those fine words; they answer: So long as there are still children in England who go hungry to school, so long as there are workers who wander about in rags and unemployed who die in wretchedness, the English workers have no interest in exporting to the colonies the goods they produce. And if the jingoes rejoice in the fact that England has become a great country on which the sun never sets, then I say that in England there are thousands of homes on which the sun has never risen."

The resolution was accepted unanimously.

Rosa Luxemburg moved the resolution against militarism.<sup>1</sup>

She referred to the new factors in world politics, to the development of colonial exploitation, which had already led to four bloody wars, and to the permanent danger of war in which all countries would be equally involved. That provided a new basis for joint proletarian action. International co-operation between the workers' parties was necessary not only from the point of view of the daily struggle, but also in relation to the socialist objective. In dealing with this question Rosa Luxemburg advanced the idea which was to become the basic feature of all subsequent anti-war resolutions, the utilisation of the crisis created by war for the overthrow of capitalism:

"It is becoming more and more probable that the breakdown of capitalist society will come as the result, not of an economic, but of a political crisis brought about by world politics. Perhaps the rule of capitalism will endure a long time, but one day, sooner or later, its hour will strike, and if we are to be ready to play our great part at the decisive moment, it is essential that the workers in every country should prepare for that moment by continuous international action."

<sup>1</sup> Daszinski made another attempt to contest the validity of her mandate, but this time unsuccessfully.



The resolution, which was passed unanimously, emphasised the necessity for energetic international action and for a joint struggle against militarism and world policy, the term in use at that time for imperialist policy.

The practical means recommended for this purpose were:

- (1) the education and organisation of the youth for the class struggle;
- (2) all socialist members of parliament to vote against any expenditure for military or naval purposes or for colonial expeditions; and
- (3) the organisation of simultaneous and similar movements of protest against militarism whenever an occasion of international significance arose.

The Congress also protested against the peace swindle of the Hague Conference.<sup>1</sup>

As against former decisions, the resolution marked a step forward. Although the problem of imperialism was not thoroughly discussed, although the resolution failed to give an exact analysis of the new world situation, the most essential points, the greater danger of international war, the reactionary character of that war, serving only the interests of exploitation, and the duty of the proletariat to strengthen its international activity, were clearly made.

The greater strength of international action was also to be assured from the organisational aspect.

Van Kol affirmed that up to that time the international congresses had made very fine resolutions, and had left the matter there. This, the basic weakness of the Second International, was to be remedied by the establishment of a permanent international committee, an international secretariat, and an inter-parliamentary commission. In practice, however, these measures were of no use. Since the international bureau had no executive power, no means

<sup>1</sup> In 1898 the "bloody Tsar" Nicholas invited the governments of European countries to a peace conference at the Hague, to discuss the questions of disarmament, arbitration, the humane conduct of war and similar matters; it was a prelude to the League of Nations comedy of today.

of controlling and guiding the activities of the various parties, no authority to undertake anything against sections which disregarded the decisions of international congresses, the situation described by van Kol remained unaltered.

An excellent example is given in the case of the decision taken at the Congress for equal and direct suffrage and secret ballot, in which particular stress was laid on the demand for the franchise for women. That did not prevent either the Austrian or the Belgian party from dropping, in their practical struggles, the demand for votes for women, for the sake of a compromise with bourgeois parties.

The Congress closed with a brief discussion on the general strike.

The German trade union leader Legien repeated the outworn argument that the organisation was not strong enough to conduct a general strike. The position of protagonist of the general strike was occupied by Briand, who played the radical before his desertion to the bourgeoisie.

"For me," declared this master of fine phrases, "the general strike is a means to the revolution which offers greater guarantees than those of the past, a revolution which will not merely allow us to pluck a few of the fruits of victory, but which will enable the proletariat to seize the means of production in society, and to keep them."

The left wing of the French delegation, some of the delegates from the Latin countries, and the representative of the Russian Socialist-Revolutionaries voted for a minority resolution along these lines.

## 6. The Fight Against Revisionism

*Amsterdam 1904*

The Amsterdam Congress of 1904 marks the zenith of the development of the Second International. A decision had to be taken about the first great imperialist war to shake the capitalist world, the Russo-Japanese War which flared up in 1904, and about the great differences of principle with the revisionists which



had reached a very intense pitch, not only because of the Millerand affair in France, but also because of the struggle in Germany concerning the evaluation of the great election victory of 1903. Towards both these questions the Congress adopted an unambiguous, proletarian, revolutionary attitude.

The German Party, the leading party in the Second International, which, as we have seen, by no means always stood on the left wing, appeared at the Amsterdam Congress as the guardian of the Marxist line in opposition to revisionism. The years 1903 and 1904, in fact, marked the highest point in the development of German Social Democracy and in the political life of August Bebel.

The Dresden German Party Congress of 1903 was profoundly influenced by the passionate and inflexible struggle which Bebel was conducting against revisionism. Never had Bebel expressed more clearly the revolutionary will of the class conscious worker, never had he been regarded with greater confidence by the German and international proletariat.

In 1903 the German Social Democratic Party entered the elections with a platform of struggle against protective tariffs, against militarism and against the personal régime of Wilhelm II. Compared with 1898 its votes had increased from 2.1 million to 3 million, its percentage of the total poll from 18.4 to 24 and the number of its seats from 32 to 55.

Friend and foe raised the question of what the result of this tremendous election victory would be. If the German Social Democrats held fast to the line of revolutionary class struggle, their growing power was bound to lead to a great intensification of class contradictions, to a great accentuation of the class struggle. That was the perspective envisaged by Bebel and by Kautsky, who was at that time still in the left wing.

Wholly different conclusions were drawn by the reformist adherents of democratic illusions.

They expected "development into socialism" to proceed at a much more rapid rate, they hoped that the "gradual acquisition of governmental power" would soon begin in Germany, as it had in France with the promotion of Millerand into the cabinet.

Bernstein, the *enfant terrible* of reformism, put the question in practical form. A vice president's post in the Reichstag had to be filled, and a Social Democrat was entitled to that position, in accordance with the strength of that party. But parliamentary custom made it obligatory on the holder of that post to "go to court," and to present himself most obediently to "His Majesty" Wilhelm II. Bernstein stated that this was an unimportant formality, but Bebel was voicing the opinion of the masses of the party membership when he declared that they would be bitterly opposed to a Social Democrat's paying homage to the "representative of the ruling power" who, whenever occasion offered, indulged in wild attacks on the "enemy at home."

Bernstein's attack, which was supported by Vollmar and a large section of the Reichstag fraction, as well as the dispute which had arisen in the bourgeois press concerning the question of co-operation with socialists, impelled Bebel to settle accounts with the revisionists.

The resolution moved, which contained a condemnation of Bernstein's proposal in the matter of the vice president and of revisionist aspirations in general, rejected the tactics of reconciliation with bourgeois society and repeated in sharper form the resolution moved by Kautsky in 1900 against participation in the government; it was adopted by the overwhelming majority of 288 against 11, each delegate who voted giving his name. The ayes included such prominent leaders of revisionism as Auer, Heine, Kolb, Peus and Südekum. They explained this manoeuvre by saying that they knew nothing of "revisionism" and consequently could not share in its aspirations, and that in any case they had no intention whatever of giving up those well-tried and triumphant tactics based on the class struggle which were recognised in the resolution.

This was of course a deliberate manoeuvre intended to facilitate the inconspicuous and assiduous undermining of the principles of the party, by the method of paying formal allegiance to those principles. This lack of principle, or rather this denial of principle, is in general characteristic of opportunism. Opportunism can



only develop and gain influence in a proletarian party if it disguises its true nature. The German revisionists mastered this art of masquerade and secret undermining to a nicety. At this Congress Bebel spared neither words nor threats. He insisted that the party must determine the tactics of the Reichstag fraction and added, with direct reference to Wolfgang Heine: "Whoever does not obey, clears out!" At this Congress, at the height of his powers, he had no desire to conceal antagonisms or to endure patiently the popular tactics of unity at any price which was subsequently to lead the party into a morass.

"Without unity in principles and convictions, without unity in objective, there can be no unity and no enthusiasm in the fight."

Thus spoke Bebel at that time. But the tactics adopted by the revisionists, of the formal maintenance of discipline, of obedience, of retreat, meant that the left wing, which was never so strong as at that Congress, where it was carried along by the consciousness of strength among the workers who had been heartened by the election victory, saw no opportunity of taking organisational measures against reformism. When the revisionists spread the rumour that there was a desire to draft the resolution in such a fashion that it would be unacceptable to representatives of the right wing, in order that they might be thrust out of the party, the author of the resolution denied the rumour as a malicious slander. In fact Rosa Luxemburg's suggestion, made after Bernstein's first appearance, to exclude from the party those who supported his standpoint, was not repeated by any one at the congress. The representatives of bourgeois ideas remained within the party, obtained most influential positions (so much so that Bebel complained that *Vorwärts*, under the management of Kurt Eisner, had not published his statements against the revisionists), and gradually gained control of the party machinery, particularly of the trade unions.

In the same year the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party was held in London. Here, too, the fundamental struggle between the revolutionary wing under Lenin's

leadership, and the supporters of compromise under the leadership of Martov, flared up hotly.

The question discussed at this Congress was the attitude towards the liberals, from the standpoint, not of tactics during parliamentary elections, but of preparation for the approaching revolution against tsarism. The Congress accepted a party programme drawn up by Lenin and Plekhanov which, as against the Erfurt programme, recognised the dictatorship of the proletariat as an indispensable factor in the social revolution.

The problem was not whether socialists should write for bourgeois newspapers, but whether socialists who did not carry out their duty in the illegal organisations in a regular and disciplined fashion should be considered members of the party. That was the famous question dealt with in section one of the statutes of organisation. Lenin explained his irreconcilability on this point on the ground that he saw in this clause the only guarantee of keeping the party clear of petty bourgeois elements, of making it possible to build a party which should be capable of fulfilling the grave tasks of organising the revolution. This Congress marked the formal organisational break between the majority under Lenin's leadership — called *Bolsheviks* because they were in the majority — and the opportunist minority — *Mensheviks* — under Martov's leadership.

The consequences of the fight against reformism, the independent organisational constitution of the revolutionary wing of the party, which were not drawn in the German Party until 1914, occurred within the Russian Party in 1903, and that was the principal reason why, when the Revolution of 1905 came, the proletariat was able to take the leadership of the mass movement; in 1914, it maintained without vacillation the line of proletarian internationalism, and in 1917, it was able in the course of a few months to change the bourgeois democratic revolution into the victorious proletarian socialist revolution.

In 1904, at the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, the Russian Social Democrats were unanimously against the war. At the opening of the Congress Plekhanov, as leader of the Russian Party,



and Sen Katayama, as leader of the Japanese Party, rose from their seats among the presidium and shook hands; it was a solemn vow of international proletarian solidarity which filled the socialist workers of all countries with pride and joy. The Congress broke into stormy applause, which lasted for many minutes. Ten years later Plekhanov had forgotten that solemn vow; in company with the Mensheviks he had fallen to the position of patriotic enthusiasm for the tsarist "fatherland," while Sen Katayama kept the promise he had made to the international working class in 1904.

The chief question at the Amsterdam Congress, however, was not international policy, but the item on the agenda which read: "International Rules of Socialist Tactics." By 27 votes against 3, with 10 abstentions (!) the commission had adopted a motion drawn up by the Guesdists which contained the essential part of the resolution of the Dresden Party Congress. This resolution ran:

"This Congress decisively condemns the revisionist efforts which would change the tactics employed up to the present, tactics crowned with success and based upon the class struggle, in such a way that the winning of political power by defeating our enemies is replaced by a policy of *rapprochement* with the existing order of things.

"The result of such revisionist tactics would be that a party which is working towards the quickest possible transformation of existing bourgeois society into socialist society, that is, a party which is revolutionary in the best sense of the word, would become a party that is satisfied with reforming bourgeois society.

"Consequently this Congress, in opposition to these revisionist tendencies, and convinced that class contradictions are not weakening but are continuously growing more acute, declares:

"That the Party rejects all responsibility for the political and economic conditions resulting from the capitalist system of production and that consequently it refuses to approve of any methods which are calculated to maintain the ruling class in government;

"That the Social Democracy, in accordance with Kautsky's resolution at the International Socialist Congress held at Paris in 1900, cannot strive to take part in governmental power within bourgeois society.

"This Congress further condemns any effort to hide existing class contradictions designed to facilitate support of the bourgeois parties.

"The Congress expects the Social Democratic fractions to utilise in the future as in the past the greater power which they have won by the increase

in their numbers and by the tremendous growth in the support they have found among the working class electorate, in order to explain the object of Social Democracy and, in accordance with the principles of our programme, to protect the interests of the working class, to exert all their strength to extend and to ensure political liberty and equal rights, to carry on, with greater energy than was possible in the past, the fight against militarism and colonial and imperialist policy, against injustice, oppression and exploitation in every form, and to work for social legislation and for the fulfilment of the political and cultural tasks of the working class."

It will be seen that in spite of the reference to Kautsky's 1900 resolution, the question of participation in bourgeois governments is here formulated much more sharply and clearly. The fruits of ministerialism in France had made the left wing (Bebel, Plekhanov, Kautsky) favourable to such a sharper formulation. In a series of articles in the *Neue Zeit*, Kautsky himself had attacked Millerandism much more vigorously and thoroughly than he had done at the Paris Congress. In 1901 he wrote that Millerand's activity in the ministry had not only disorganised, but corrupted the party. At the Dresden Party Congress Kautsky declared that at Paris, in order to promote unity within the French Party, he had tried to find a formula which, while it was directed against Millerand in principle, characterised his attitude as a mistake rather than a crime. But his resolution was hostile to the revisionist conception that "political power could be won bit by bit without revolution."<sup>1</sup>

In the commission Jaurès, with his unconditional defence of ministerialism, was more or less isolated, but he found support among a large section of the "marsh" who, under the leadership of Adler and Vandervelde, did everything in their power to weaken the resolution in order to make it acceptable to the revisionists. They put forward a number of "improvements" which recommended the omission of the word "revisionist" and the substi-

<sup>1</sup> Kautsky betrayed his uncertainty on this question by again speaking in the commission about an "emergency situation" in which a socialist might enter a bourgeois government; as an example he gave the case of a socialist entering a government in order to organise national defence (!). Jaurès ridiculed this statement by asking whether ministerialism became a part of orthodox theory once it was amalgamated with nationalism; he had to admit that he was unable to grasp Kautsky's nationalist ministerialism in all its purity.



tution of a warning against the dangers and disadvantages of participation in bourgeois governments for the direct condemnation of such a policy. No less than sixteen delegates voted for these proposals of reconciliation with reformism. In the commission the greater number of these "conciliators" refrained from voting on the majority resolution. It is true that the irreconcilability of the majority was not extended to organisational measures; that was shown in the unanimous acceptance of a resolution demanding that in any country only one socialist party was to exist, and making it the duty of all comrades and organisations to bring about unity of organisation based on the decisions of the International.

There was therefore no idea of excluding the Jaurèsists in France and the revisionists in Germany from the International; what was considered necessary was obedience to the decisions of the International within the framework of a united organisation. Vandervelde, who, as reporter for the commission, repeated "objectively" the arguments for and against the Dresden resolution, laid chief emphasis on this point of formal organisational unity. Jaurès made a passionate speech in defence of Millerandism, praising the successes of Millerand's governmental activity.

"We have saved the bourgeois republic, we have made a place for freedom of thought, we have defeated clericalism, we advocate world peace, we have repulsed chauvinism, nationalism and caesarism."

He justified the alliance with the bourgeois radical socialist party by the bold assertion that it was "not a proletarian party, nor was it a party of capitalist exploitation." He advocated participation in the government as the way to power which would have to be followed more frequently in all countries, the stronger the proletariat became. That was the position in Italy, Belgium and England. It was a fatal error on the part of the Germans that through their Dresden resolution they wanted to impose their tactics on all other countries.

And then from defence Jaurès proceeded to the counter-attack. It was not the daring attempts of the French socialists, but the political impotence of the German Social Democracy, which stood in the way of the progress of socialism. The contradiction between

apparent power and real power would become the greater, the stronger they grew at elections. The Germans did not understand how to make use of the power of three million votes, because they had carried out neither revolutionary nor parliamentary activities. Revolutionary tradition was lacking. The "Red Kingdom" of Saxony had allowed itself to be deprived of the franchise without putting up any resistance, the workers in the Krupp concern had sent a humble address of greeting to the Kaiser. The German Parliament had no influence on the executive power; even if the socialists got a majority, they would be unable to do anything.

"But you don't yet know," he called out to the representatives of the German Party, "which road you are going to take, the revolutionary or the parliamentary road. After that great victory we expected an immediate slogan of struggle, a programme of action, definite tactics. You examined the facts, felt about, waited — but your mind was not made up. And so, behind the inflexibility of theoretical formulas which your excellent comrade Kautsky will supply you with in plenty to the end of his days, you concealed from your own proletariat, from the international proletariat, your incapacity to act."

The greater democracy, the more freedom there was in a country, the more would the development of the proletariat be hindered by the German proposal.

Bebel replied with a thorough exposition of democracy, republicanism and government participation which still serves as the sharpest condemnation of the theory and practice of Social Democracy today.

He remarked that the objection raised to the Dresden resolution was that it was designed only for German conditions. It was true that Germany was not only a monarchy — it was made up of nearly two dozen monarchies. With the exception of Russia and Turkey, it had the most reactionary government in Europe. Nevertheless the resolution was applicable to other countries with bourgeois governments.

"We are of course republicans, socialist republicans, but we don't rave about the bourgeois republic. However much we may envy you French your republic, and wish that we had one, we don't intend to get our heads smashed in for its sake. Monarchy or bourgeois republic — both are class



states, both are a form of state to maintain the class rule of the bourgeoisie, both are designed to protect the capitalist order of society."

Bebel went on to explain his meaning with a few examples. Nowhere were workers on strike treated in a worse and more contemptible fashion than in the great republic across the ocean. Even in Switzerland the militia were called out against strikers, and there had never been any great strike in France without the military being used against the workers. Even under the Waldeck-Rousseau-Millerand ministry, 70 workers at the labour exchange in Paris had been wounded in a police attack, and when Vaillant, in the Chamber of Deputies, demanded the punishment of the guilty police authority, a section of the Jaurèsists voted against the proposal.

"If a workers' representative in Germany dared to accept a parliamentary ruling which surrendered the most vital interests of the proletariat, he would be deprived of his mandate the following day, and could never again act as a workers' representative."

Bebel declared, quite correctly, that revolutionary tactics by no means excluded the struggle for reforms; on the contrary, it was precisely through its tactics of struggle that the party had been able to force concessions from the Bismarck government on the question of social policy.

But in all reforms and concessions, the profound gulf which separated the socialists from their enemies must never be forgotten. The English bourgeoisie always made premature concessions in order to keep back the development of a socialist movement in England. If the liberals were to win the next election, they might possibly take into the government John Burns, a socialist, not in order to get nearer to socialism, but in order to avoid it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This prophecy was fulfilled. John Burns, one time radical socialist and later opportunist trade union leader, entered the Liberal Campbell-Bannerman-Asquith cabinet, and was soon finished as far as the working class movement was concerned. In the commission Bebel had declared: "It is therefore a great deception to see in the entry of one or more socialists into a government an approach to socialism; our enemies know quite well that the bourgeois classes do not become friends of the socialists, but that a part of the socialists do become friends of the bourgeois classes, and the socialist representatives are forced to take responsibility for all the acts of a bourgeois government."

Bebel vigorously contested the assertion that by its policy Jaurès' fraction had served the cause of peace; on the contrary, it had voted for the military state, for the colonial state, for indirect taxation for secret funds. Millerand had not sent greetings to the International Socialist Congress of 1900, but to that bloodiest of despots, the Tsar. The consequences of opportunist policy could be seen in the fact that at every vote in the Chamber the Jaurès fraction was split into two or three groups. An end had to be made to this sorry spectacle, so that French socialism could again take its place in the socialist movement.

After this brilliant speech, received with the most stormy applause, Victor Adler came forward with a conciliatory dirge. He took his ground on the principles of the Dresden resolution, but nobody must be condemned, wounded or damned. The teeth of the Dresden resolution had to be drawn, so that nobody might be hurt. He doubted whether this innovation of international reprimands would serve any useful purpose.

Ferri spoke for the majority of the Italian Party. The three years' experience of the Italian Party with revisionist practice had been a tragic one. The alliance with the liberals had been followed by the bitterest suppression of the working class movement by the liberal government. Unity had to be achieved, but it must be socialist unity.

Anseele, who in 1900 had enthusiastically welcomed the "new tactics," referred to the experiences of the Belgian strike for the franchise in 1902. In spite of the preponderance of opportunist influence in its leadership, the Belgian Party, in 1902, under the pressure of the militant masses, had decided on a general strike for universal suffrage. Although the masses entered the struggle with the greatest determination, the leaders only waited for a favourable moment to call off the fight and to come to an understanding with the bourgeois parties, and consequently the movement completely collapsed, and heavy losses resulted.

In reference to that struggle this open adherent of reformism said:



"And if one day a fraction of the bourgeoisie were to offer us to introduce universal suffrage, compulsory popular education and legislation for labour protection on condition that we were to take part responsibility for governmental power, then woe to him who refused and thrust the Belgian Party back into new hecatombs. Woe to the Belgian socialists who prefer bloody street battles to reforms — even though those reforms bear the mark of government."

And, anticipating an argument which has since been repeated in unending variation by the coalition politicians of all countries, he declared that there was no means of getting entire governmental power immediately; if in the meantime a part of that power was refused, it meant leaving the enemy class with the monopoly of governmental power.

Nor was the famous argument of "responsibility" lacking from his speech. It was easy enough for the socialists of Russia, Bulgaria, Spain, Poland and Japan to deny responsibility for the actions of their governments.

"If I were a representative of one of those countries, I should hold back on this question, and hesitate to condemn socialist tactics which I would be too weak to translate into action in my own country."

Thus spake this worthy internationalist. He understood the inflexibility of a minority, but that minority was not to be allowed to thrust its inflexibility on to the parties which were not so diminutive as itself and for whom governmental responsibility became a greater necessity from day to day. "In the face of responsibility, inflexibility must yield."

On behalf of the parties attacked by Anseele in his chauvinist speech, Rosa Luxemburg put forward the following statement:

"In the name of the Russian Social Democracy, the Polish Social Democracy, the Spanish Workers' Party and the Social Democratic Party of Japan, we protest against this attempt to divide the members of the Congress into the active and passive and to form, so to speak, a European Concert of the great socialist powers which alone has the right to decide on the fundamental questions of international socialism.

"Signed: Plekhanov, Luxemburg, Iglesias, Katayama, Rakovsky."

When the vote was taken the conciliatory proposal of Adler and Vandervelde was rejected, votes for and against were equal.

The Dresden resolution was passed by 25 votes against 5, with 12 abstentions.

Of the debates in the tactics commission it is instructive to note the attitude adopted on the question of the necessity or possibility of laying down international tactical rules and on the question of unity in the party. Jaurès declared that it was impossible for the Congress to lay down rules which should be binding in all cases. Kautsky replied that the application of tactical principles was constantly being changed, and therefore the principles themselves could still remain the same. Bebel pointed out that the resolution did nothing more than prescribe for tactics those boundaries which were determined by the class character of the state. "It is essential to have unity and determination among the Social Democrats in all countries, but that is only possible if, in addition to upholding the same principles, we take up the same tactical standpoint in all questions of general policy."

MacDonald, as the unprincipled philistine which he already was, stated on behalf of the I. L. P. that the whole question was a matter of personal disputes, which were unimportant for an international congress. The acceptance of the Dresden resolution would lead to a split, and that would be a crime.

The veteran of the Spanish working class movement, Iglesias, pointed out that in other countries the anarchists would use the case of Millerand in order to discredit the socialists. It was therefore necessary to say:

"That man does not belong to us. It is said to be normal for a right and left wing to exist even in socialism, but we must take care lest one day that right wing stands right outside of the party."

The Dutch reformist Troelstra spoke of the injustice which had been done to revisionism, since it was after all only a "literary tendency." "Both tendencies belong to the party, and together form its being."

Adler gave a more profound analysis: "There are two tendencies in every human being; there is as much revisionism in Bebel as there is in me."



To the motion which called for unity among the different tendencies in a party, Rosa Luxemburg moved the amendment that unity could only be achieved on the basis of the class struggle. She reminded the delegates that Jaurès had repeatedly violated congress decisions.

"What else can we do but put forward regulations for tactics? If we omit to do that, what meaning will there be in our congresses, what will become of international solidarity? Jaurès sees nothing but words in the class struggle, in international solidarity. Renaudel is only a shield for Jaurès. If a socialist minister in a bourgeois government cannot act according to his principles, it is a matter of honour for him to resign; if a revolutionary in a moderate party has to deny his principles, his honour bids him leave. I don't want Renaudel's sort of unity."

Guesde declared that to renounce uniform international action in socialism was to introduce nationalism into the International.

This discussion gave evidence of all the contradictions which necessarily led later on to the disintegration of the Second International. The narrow majority against revisionism when the vote was taken showed that the revolutionary wing was still preponderant, but it also showed how deeply the reformist poison had eaten into the ranks of the International.

This process was also to be seen in the treatment of the colonial question. In this case openly opportunist formulations found unanimous acceptance. The English Fabians, those typical bourgeois socialists, moved a resolution directed against the cruelty practiced in India by the British government; it called upon the workers of Great Britain to force their government to give up its wicked and disgraceful colonial system and to introduce self-government for the Indians under English supremacy, a matter which would present no great difficulty.

The theoretical basis for this renunciation of the right to complete self determination was given in the colonial resolution, which, it was true, confirmed the resolution of 1900, but included the words:

"To demand for the natives that extent of freedom and independence which is in accord with their level of development, bearing in mind that the complete emancipation of the colonies is the goal to be achieved."

This was a recognition of the imperialist theory that the natives can only be educated up to independence by a period of capitalist serfdom.

The question of the general strike again aroused lively discussion; it had been brought from the realms of grey theory into those of actual practice by the Belgian mass strike.

The Dutch Marxist Roland-Holst moved a resolution which contained a warning against anarchist propaganda for the general strike, declared an "absolute general strike" to be impracticable, because it would make the existence of the proletariat itself impossible, and called upon the workers to strengthen their organisation, on which the success of the strike, once it was realised to be necessary and useful, would depend. In that resolution the political strike was described as the "most extreme method" to be used for "bringing about important social changes or for withstanding reactionary attacks upon the rights of the worker."

The Berlin delegate, Dr. Friedeberg, who was flirting with anarchism, objected to the resolution on the ground that it deepened, instead of mitigated, the differences between the socialists and the anarchists. He was in favour of the general strike because parliamentarianism was showing itself more and more to be an obstacle in the way of the working class movement.

The outlook of the narrow-minded trade union bureaucrat was voiced by the representative of the German woodworkers' union, Robert Schmidt. The question of the general strike could not even be discussed as far as the great German trade unions were concerned. The road of parliamentary struggle and trade union organisation was the correct road.

The Dutch reformist Vliegen followed the same line. The general strike was not a weapon. (Pfannkuch, German member of the presidium, interjected: "A knife without a blade.")

Beer, secretary of the Vienna metal workers, demanded that the sharpest protest should be made against propaganda for the general strike and that its danger should be made clear.

Briand, for the Jaurèsists, spoke again in support of the general strike. The general strike was the last weapon of resistance.



against the political disfranchisement of the working class. If the socialists were to decide against it, the anarchists would gain in influence. The fact that there were still higher forms of struggle than the general strike was mentioned by only one delegate, a Russian Socialist-Revolutionary, who recalled the saying of Marx that the weapon of criticism must not replace the criticism of weapons.

The French resolution was rejected by a large majority and the Dutch resolution accepted, against the votes of Switzerland and Japan, the French delegates and the Russian Socialist-Revolutionaries abstaining.

The infection of a part of the socialists by chauvinism was shown in the discussion on the question of immigration and emigration. The Dutch, Americans and Australians moved a resolution against the immigration of workers from backward countries, such as the Chinese and Negroes.

The American social-chauvinist Hillquit, representative of the opportunist Socialist Party of America, defended the practice of the American trade unions in refusing membership to the Chinese and stated that it was to the vital interest of the American working class to reject Negroes and coolies.

A delegate of the Socialist Labour Party of America, which was led by Daniel de Leon, protested against this chauvinist conception. He pointed out, correctly, that it was in utter contradiction to the whole realm of socialist thought, and to the saying: "Proletarians of all countries, unite."

Paepelow, of the Building Workers' Union, only too well known to the German workers, objected to this use of the Marxist saying, but wished to dissociate himself from the American resolution. At last it was agreed to deal with this question at the following Congress.

## CHAPTER II

### OPPORTUNIST DEGENERATION

1904—1914

#### *1. The Turning Point; the Russian Revolution of 1905 and the Debates on the Mass Strike in the German Party*

1904—1907

In an article entitled "The Historic Fate of the Teachings of Karl Marx" which appeared in *Pravda* in March, 1913, Lenin distinguished three periods in the development of the international working class movement.

The first period: from the 1848 Revolution to the Paris Commune of 1871, "a period of storms and revolutions," in which pre-Marxist socialism died out and the liberal bourgeoisie, startled by the proletariat coming forth independently for the first time, crawled in the dust before reaction. Independent proletarian parties arose, united in the First International. The second period (1872 to 1904) was distinguished from the first by its "peaceful" character, by the absence of revolutions. In the west the bourgeois revolutions had ended, in the east the time for them was not yet ripe. Proletarian socialist mass parties were growing up, learning how to make use of bourgeois parliaments; trade unions and co-operatives were growing up. It was a period of the rallying of the masses, of preparation for future battles. The theoretical victory of Marxism within the workers' movement compelled its enemies to disguise themselves as Marxists. Liberalism appeared in the form of socialist opportunism. The third



period was ushered in by the Russian Revolution of 1905, which drew in its wake a chain of revolutions in Asia. The "peaceful" period had passed. Severe crises were developing everywhere. After the period when the proletariat was gathering its forces, the period of the realisation of its aims began.

The Amsterdam Congress had "recognised" the political mass strike, but had warned against, rather than recommended its use. But the awakening Russian proletariat paid no heed to the wise advice of bureaucrats who made a fetish of organisation and considered that it was necessary to have a hundred per cent organisation before the mass strike could be operated. When tsarist absolutism was shaken by its crushing defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, when indignation against the system of bloody violence and worthless corruption had seized the masses, the Russian proletariat placed itself at the head of the mass movement. A wave of mighty political mass strikes shook the power of the ruling classes, the first soviets arose in the most important industrial centres and in December 1905 the Moscow proletariat rose in armed insurrection. For nine days the workers of Moscow fought on the barricades against the superior forces of the tsarist troops. The revolution was defeated; the liberal bourgeoisie, terrified by the revolutionary advance of the proletariat, was bought over by tsarism with a sham constitution. Bitterly persecuted, the proletariat had to form its ranks anew and gather its forces for a new decisive battle.

The Russian Revolution had a tremendously animating effect on the working masses of Europe and the suppressed peoples of Asia.

In October 1905 the Congress of the Austrian Social Democratic Party at Vienna was discussing the struggle for universal suffrage. During the session news arrived of the general strike in Russia, which had wrung from the Tsar the first promise of a constitution. The report aroused great rejoicing and tremendous militant enthusiasm. The delegates decided to conclude the session at once, to return to their homes and to take steps immediately in preparation for a mass strike. On the evening of the same day

thousands of workers demonstrated before Parliament and the royal residence. Industrial towns in other parts of the Empire followed suit. Mass demonstrations took place everywhere, leading in some cases to collisions with the military. On November 28, 1905, work was stopped in all the industrial districts of Austria. In ordered ranks the workers marched through the streets to demonstrate for the universal franchise. Under the pressure of this mass movement Gautsch, the Minister President, announced the introduction of an electoral bill into the House of Deputies. The discussions were dragged out for a year. Only the Social Democrats' threat of a mass strike accelerated the deliberations of parliament, and in January 1907 universal suffrage became law. In the elections in May 1907 the Social Democrats received more than a million votes and increased the number of their deputies from 11 to 87.

In Germany the discussion on tactics which had followed the election victory of 1903 received a new impetus from the Russian Revolution. As Bebel had foreseen at the Dresden Party Congress, the victory of 1903 had spurred the bourgeoisie, frightened by the growing power of Social Democracy, to greater reactionary unity. In government circles the question of abolishing the universal franchise was considered, as well as limitations on the municipal franchise. Instead of abolishing the medieval three-class system of franchise which obtained in Prussia, the ruling classes planned to introduce reactionary changes into the franchise of the other states.

While the left wing of the party — and, up to 1905, the party leadership under Bebel — because of the sharpening of class contradictions, upheld the necessity of employing sharper methods of struggle, the opportunists, and particularly the opportunist trade union leaders, only saw the danger of the organisations being weakened by great struggles. It was precisely the growing realisation of the fact that it was becoming more and more difficult to obtain any improvements for the workers by the old methods of political struggle, that is, in essentials, by parliamentary action, which gave rise in the trade unions to that "pure"



trade unionist outlook which was hostile to the revolutionary class struggle. This was made quite clear at the Cologne Trade Union Congress in May 1905. Six months before the congress which was to decide on its attitude to the political mass strike, the trade union leaders accepted a resolution put forward by Bömelburg, which not only opposed the political mass strike, but even any discussion on the question. The most important section of the resolution ran:

"The Congress rejects... all attempts to lay down definite tactics by propaganda in favour of the political mass strike; it advises the organised working class energetically to oppose such attempts.

"The Congress considers that the general strike, as it is portrayed by anarchists and other people without any experience in the sphere of the economic struggle, is unworthy of discussion; it warns the working class against neglecting its day to day work by the acceptance and dissemination of such ideas."

While the masses of the Social Democratic workers were pressing ahead under the inspiring impression of the Russian Revolution, the reformist trade union leaders exerted their influence to keep the party from taking any step forward. This was the situation in which the Jena Party Congress, held in September 1905, assembled.

In reporting on the mass strike, Bebel treated it in the same fashion as he had done at Dresden in 1903. The election victory and the intensification of class contradictions were forcing the party to look about for new methods of struggle. They would continue to work as an opposition party in the Reichstag but it was impossible to exercise decisive influence on the government.

"If you want that sort of influence, then put your programme in your pocket, forget your principles, take no notice of any but purely practical matters, and we shall be warmly welcomed as allies."

Since, however, the party was not taking that road and had, at Dresden, thrust in the face of its enemies the challenge to fight, the Social Democrats and the workers were being more sharply attacked in every direction. Bebel referred to a number of important lockouts and said:

"It is wholly to the good that contradictions should be driven to a head, for that creates a clear situation in which there is no more evasion, no more deception, no more compromise."

So far Bebel foresaw developments quite correctly, but at the decisive moment his attitude was hesitating and confused. If the advance of Social Democracy and the labour movement only led to the stronger cohesion of reactionary forces, parliamentary successes would be made more difficult by the united front of the bourgeois parties; if the trade unions saw themselves faced by a more and more powerful organisation of capital, if they had to count upon disfranchisement and the use of armed force against political mass strikes and mass demonstrations, then the workers' party must face firmly the prospect of growing struggle and direct the entire activity of the party from the standpoint of the struggle for power by every means. That did not in any way exclude the systematic work of organisation and agitation, of trade union and parliamentary activity, but it demanded the bold and determined employment of sharper weapons of struggle. of the mass demonstration and the mass strike without fear of taking up armed struggle against the power of the class enemy when conditions should be ripe for such action. But what did Bebel say?

"It is of course an error to say that the Social Democrats are working towards bringing about revolution. That is not at all the case. What interest have we in producing catastrophes in which the workers will be the first to suffer?"

He added, it is true, that the ruling classes, through lack of understanding, were themselves preparing catastrophes, but again emphasised that "the possibility of keeping developments within peaceful channels exists, and depends partly on us."

In this way, as against the Cologne trade union decision, Bebel defended the mass strike as a peaceful method of struggle, a method which bore a defensive character, to be used in order to ward off a blow aimed at the rights of the working class.

"A party which allowed itself to be frightened away from defending its human and civil rights by the administrative power or punitive laws would indeed be a pitiful party."



Bebel attacked Heine who had shown that according to law such a mass strike must necessarily lead to conflict with the state powers. He referred to the great miners' strike, which had run its course quite peacefully. Finally he said:

"And in conclusion there is a point at which the question of injury no longer arises.... Worthless and pitiful is the working class which allows itself to be treated like so many dogs who do not dare to show their teeth to their oppressors. Look at Russia; look at the June days; look at the Commune! In the spirit of these martyrs will you not go hungry for a few weeks in order to defend your highest human rights? But you do not know the German workers if you do not trust them to do that. What would Heine have said in Wyden in 1880 had I proposed to strike the word "legally" out of our programme? We agreed to it unanimously and without debate. (Heine: Quite right.) Then we shall be quite right if we do the same thing again."

With every expression of sympathy for the Russian Revolution, Bebel emphasised that conditions there were "so abnormal" that it could not be taken as an example. Rosa Luxemburg put the question in a fundamentally different fashion:

"Listening to the speeches here in the debate on the question of the political mass strike, one really must shake one's head and ask: Are we really living in the year of the glorious Russian Revolution or is it still ten years before that event?... Schmidt says, why should we suddenly give up our old and tried tactics for the sake of the general strike, why should we suddenly commit political suicide? Doesn't Robert Schmidt see that the time has come which was foreseen by our great masters Marx and Engels, when evolution is transformed into revolution? We see the Russian Revolution, and we would be fools if we were to learn nothing from it. And Heine gets up and asks Bebel if he has considered that in the event of a general strike it is not only our well organised forces, but also the unorganised masses who have to play their part, and have we got these masses in control? Those words betray Heine's utterly bourgeois outlook, which is a disgrace to a Social Democrat. Former revolutions, those of 1848, have shown that in revolutionary situations the masses must not be bridled; it is the parliamentary advocates who must be kept in control, so that they do not betray the masses and the revolution."

To the opportunist Heine, who had disclaimed all responsibility for the shedding of blood, she replied:

"... for we see from history that all revolutions are bought with the blood of the people. The difference is that until now the blood of the people has

been shed for the ruling classes, and now, when we talk of the possibility of their shedding their blood for their own class, we are met by cautious so-called Social-Democrats who say, no, our blood is too dear to us."

Clara Zetkin put the question in a similar light:

"And it is true that we must reckon on the ruling authorities themselves not respecting this legality. I shall continue to maintain that the proletariat must not hold itself bound in all circumstances by the threads of bourgeois legality. Bourgeois legality is finally nothing but the force of the possessing and ruling classes brought within binding juristic limits... I repeat that we must take into account that the bourgeois classes, when the time comes, will throw off the mask of legal struggle against us, and will fight us with brute force, and so we must set a thief to catch a thief. If the reactionaries want to talk Russian to us, then the proletariat will answer in Russian."

The reformist horror of this revolutionary perspective was most clearly expressed by David:

"We have always said that, as far as we are concerned, we shall do everything in our power to attain our objects by legal means. With the perfection of military methods, an armed struggle with militarism is hopeless. This retrogression in revolutionism is explained by the fact that the belief in the inevitable internal dissolution of the capitalist economic order, in its inevitable suicide, in other words, the belief in the catastrophe theory, has been given up. In its place we seek out the old revolutionism and refuse to change the road which the party has persistently followed for decades. Comrade Luxemburg has repeatedly referred to the revolution in Russia. (Interjection: Let her go there!) The revolution in Russia teaches us a great deal, but precisely the opposite of what Comrade Luxemburg would persuade us it does. It teaches us that in no circumstances can we compare the revolution in Russia with German conditions. What may be the right thing there can be just the reverse for us, and it is sheer madness to draw conclusions as to the tactics necessary for us from Russian conditions."

In this discussion Legien appeared as a great revolutionary:

"If the general strike, or whatever else you may call it, comes, for me that means the beginning of the revolution. Once the masses go out on to the streets, there is no going back. Then it is a case of bend or break. New methods of struggle are being sought in the party just because the idea of resistance by force has been incorrectly given up. I have never been of the opinion that revolutions in the old sense of the word are no longer possible today. I am convinced that when our power has grown so great that it is a danger to the bourgeoisie, they will risk their all on one card. Then they



will drive us with bayonets. But once that time comes the bayonets and the means of power which the bourgeoisie control will fail them. (Interjection: That's the question!) Have not the greater part of our people been soldiers? Don't they know how to handle rifles? I say, that once it comes to mass action, then we are really confronted by the revolution. Then there is no going back... In a certain respect I consider that propaganda for the political mass strike is dangerous. If you do not draw the necessary conclusion that the mass strike is the beginning of the revolution, then you are encouraging the workers to do something which I would in no circumstances encourage them to do. If the workers are not to resist when they are being attacked, then do not encourage them to go on to the streets, for as soon as they do go on to the streets they will be charged, and I would not encourage them to take it quietly. We must educate the workers so that they have enough self consciousness and self regard not to allow themselves to be cudged, so that, when they are attacked, they can hit back."

The object of this radical speech from such a reformist was to frighten the vacillating elements in the party centre, whom, at that time, Bebel was coming more and more to represent, from making use of the mass strike. Bebel spoke on behalf of the mass strike, but against revolution; and the reformists replied, through the mouth of Legien, mass strike is revolution. Bömelburg, the author of the Cologne resolution, stated that he was in agreement with Bebel if the latter did not mean by the general strike a method of disorganising the state.

In his concluding speech Bebel again laid chief emphasis on a denial of the connection between the mass strike and revolution. It is true that he said:

"...but if it were to come to that (the shedding of blood. — J. L.) without our contriving it, then, on the day that it really happened, you would find me, not in the rearguard, but in the vanguard, where I have always stood in the first rank all my life."

Nevertheless he considered it necessary, while paying all due respect to Rosa Luxemburg's revolutionary speech, to emphasise that Engels had repeatedly stated that he was no longer in agreement with the means recommended in the *Communist Manifesto*. He also called to mind Engels' introduction to *Class Struggles in France* which, due to the falsification introduced by the party committee, read as a polemic against barricade fighting.

After this discussion a resolution was passed, with Bömelburg abstaining, and fourteen representatives of the right wing voting against it, in which, after an analysis had been made of the political situation, the intensification of the class struggle and the danger of disfranchisement, it was stated:

"In the event of an attack on the universal, equal, direct and secret franchise or on the right of association, it is the duty of the whole working class to use every means which is appropriate to ward off the attack.

"The Party Congress considers that one of the most effective means of preventing such a political crime against the working class or of winning rights which are essential to their emancipation is the widest possible use of mass cessation of work."

In opposition to the Cologne trade union resolution, this resolution made it the duty of all party comrades to conduct mass agitation for the mass strike. If this resolution was to be put into practice, the resistance of the reformist trade union bureaucracy had to be broken. No doubt existed at the Jena Congress that this decision was directed immediately against the Cologne decision.

It is therefore not difficult to understand the astonishment and indignation which seized the revolutionary workers when, in August 1906, they read in a newspaper published by local trade unions which had broken away from the central trade unions of a conference held by the Party Committee and the general commission of the trade unions, which had taken place secretly in February 1906 and had quietly buried the Jena decision on the mass strike. According to the report Bebel, on behalf of the Party Committee, had agreed to a number of theses, of which the first ran as follows:

"The Party Committee does not intend to carry on propaganda in favour of the political mass strike, but will, on the contrary, do everything possible to prevent such a happening."

At the Mannheim Party Congress held in September 1906 Bebel hotly contested the truth of the report. He declared that had he agreed to such a decision, it would have been treachery to the party, and he would have deserved his exclusion, not only from the Party Committee, but from the party itself. But his words



made no difference to the fact that the February conference signified the complete surrender of the Party Committee to the reformist trade union bureaucracy, the funeral of the political mass strike and the beginning of the turn made by the Party Committee into the path of reformism. Bebel explained the agreement with the general commission in the sense that he had only rejected the mass strike in the then existing situation, since the state of the organisation was not yet ripe for it. He went so far as to support a motion put forward by Legien which maintained that there was no contradiction between the Jena and Cologne resolutions.

In fact the resolution passed at Mannheim contained a formal confirmation of the Jena decision, but it also stated that the Cologne trade union decision in no way contradicted this, and the following paragraph signified the subjection of the party to the trade union:

"Once the Party Committee has agreed on the necessity of a political mass strike, it must immediately get into touch with the general commission of the trade unions and take all the steps which are required in order to carry out successful action."

The resolution was accepted against five votes from the extreme right, after an amendment moved by Bebel and Legien signifying agreement with the Cologne decision had been passed against 62 votes from the left.

The question of the relation between the party and the trade unions came up in the discussion because of a proposal from Kautsky which said:

"... it is necessary, in order to ensure united thought and action by the party and the trade unions, that the trade unions should be guided by the spirit of Social Democracy, for Social Democracy is the highest and most comprehensive form of the proletarian class struggle" and "no proletarian organisation, no proletarian movement which is not filled with the spirit of Social Democracy, can do complete justice to its tasks."

This wholly correct analysis of the relation between the revolutionary party and the mass organisations could not be refuted by any delegate, but after Bebel had described the acceptance of such

a formula as "inopportune," Kautsky felt it incumbent upon him to withdraw it.

At this Congress it was clear that Bebel had passed his prime. He was no longer capable of grasping the new tasks of a new period. Not only did he argue against the use of the mass strike in general in the situation of that time; he also turned against street demonstrations because they were bound to lead to bloodshed, he turned against the "childish" idea of a mass strike in the event of the German government intervening against the Russian Revolution.

"From the first day of the outbreak of such a war in Germany, five million men will march under arms, of whom some hundred thousands will be party comrades. The whole nation will be armed. Frightful poverty, general unemployment, hunger, closed factories, monetary depreciation — do you think it possible at such a moment, when everybody is thinking only of himself, to incite a mass strike? If a party leadership were so mad as to call for a mass strike at such a moment, mobilisation would be accompanied by the declaration of a state of war all over Germany, and then it would not be the civil, but the military courts, who would make decisions."

In his reply, it is true, he tried to correct this lamentable point of view after it had been attacked by Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg. He did not believe in the possibility of intervention against Russia.

"Should it occur, however, then it is obvious that the German Social Democracy, by virtue of its international connections and its international solidarity, and for the sake of giving a people the possibility of fighting for its liberation from the fetters of despotism, will do everything in its power to frustrate the plans of the German government. The same is true in the event of another European war. In that case, too, we shall not go into the war with shouting and hurrahs, but we shall try to fulfil our cultural mission on behalf of peace."

Legien, who, as joint reporter, presented the views of the trade union commission against Bebel, realised how to exploit Bebel's weakness. He said that the general strike must either cripple the machinery of bourgeois rule — and there was no possibility of that, because the masses were not well enough organised — or it would have on the bourgeoisie the effect of a demonstration of



the masses, and in that case it was impossible to take up Bebel's attitude, and to renounce going on to the streets in order to avoid bloodshed. As at Jena, he declared himself in favour of the political mass strike as a revolutionary method of struggle, but maintained that the revolutionary period had not yet come in Germany, although it would come.

"When the hour of revolutionary decision comes the masses, if they have conservative people at their head, will simply make their decision over the heads of their leaders."

Bebel spoke in a similar strain:

"Do you think the mass strike can be made by the Party Committee? No, the Party Committee must be thrust aside by the masses."

These remarks, which defined the role of the party as being not the vanguard, but the rearguard of the masses, were attacked by Rosa Luxemburg with the statement that it was

"... a childish idea of the general strike to believe that its fate depended on whether the general commission and the Party Committee came to a secret decision."

With the desertion of Bebel and the Party Committee to the right wing, the Social Democratic Party and the trade union bureaucracy actually became an obstacle instead of an instrument in the revolutionary class struggle. In spite of a decision taken by the Congress of the Prussian section of the party in 1904 to give up street demonstrations, great demonstrations for the franchise had taken place in Prussia, Hamburg and Saxony in 1905 and 1906. Despite brutal police treatment, despite severe sentences imposed by class justice, despite the great indignation of the masses, the party leadership made not the slightest attempt to organise a political mass strike, but opposed the demand for it in obedience to the agreement with the trade union leaders. Bebel himself had to admit that since the Jena Congress he had never spoken in favour of the mass strike at a mass meeting.

At the Mannheim Party Congress Rosa Luxemburg had declared that the whole working class movement would for years be learning from the experiences of the tremendous struggles which had occurred in the Russian Revolution. In the *Vorwärts*

in January 1906 Kautsky had written that the Moscow barricade fighting would compel the party to revise its tactics. It was not the period of barricade fighting which was past (as had been said on the basis of the falsified Introduction by Engels), but the period of the old barricade tactics. The overwhelming majority of the party and trade union leaders drew from the experiences of the Russian Revolution and the growing acuteness of class contradictions in all capitalist countries the opposite conclusion — that of retreat from decisive conflicts with the class enemy, of avoiding struggles which demanded sacrifice as the struggles in Russia had done, of adaptation to the bourgeois order of society, of limiting the movement to parliamentary and trade union methods of struggle.

Since that time three distinct tendencies can be distinguished in German and international Social Democracy: the right wing, openly reformist and revisionist, always defeated at party congresses, but actually always gaining more influence; the radical left wing under the leadership of Rosa Luxemburg, Mehring and Clara Zetkin (later Kautsky drew closer and closer to the centre, and in the years preceding the war became its theoretical leader); and thirdly, under Bebel's leadership there grew up the centre, which, while maintaining the old revolutionary forms of speech, in practice drew closer and closer to revisionism.

When Plekhanov, who, after a short stay with the Bolsheviks, had gone over to the Mensheviks, declared after the defeat of the Moscow insurrection in December 1905 that "they should not have taken up arms," he expressed the thought, not only of the declared reformists in all countries, but also of these leaders of the centre, who, in the period of the peaceful development of the mass movement, had served the working class in words, but in the new period of revolutionary struggle remained behind the movement and objectively became an obstacle in the way of the proletarian class struggle; while subjectively, by the logic of history, they became, to a greater and greater extent, traitors to the working class. And when Lenin answered the howling lamentations of the Menshevik liquidators with the words:



"They should have taken up arms more resolutely, energetically and aggressively; we should have explained to the masses that peaceful strikes by themselves are useless, and that fearless and ruthless armed struggle was required,"<sup>1</sup>

he was drawing the lessons of the Russian Revolution not only for the revolutionary wing of the Russian labour movement, but for all real revolutionaries in the proletarian International.

The new period of imperialist war, of bourgeois and proletarian revolutions which opened with the year 1904, demanded new forms of organisation for the proletarian parties and the International. The organisational question, which had been fought out by the Bolsheviks in 1903, the question of the close adhesion of consistent revolutionary elements into a united party and the organisational separation from all opportunist elements, became acute in every country. It is true that the powerful mass movement, as exemplified at that time in demonstrations and strikes in a number of European countries, showed that no opportunist leadership can stay the mass movement in a revolutionary situation. To that extent Rosa Luxemburg was absolutely right in pouring scorn on the secret agreement of the party and trade union leaders. But the experiences of those very struggles showed that the masses cannot come through victoriously without a firm revolutionary leadership. In a series of articles Rosa Luxemburg herself showed that the opportunist attitude of the Belgian party leadership had brought the powerful mass strike movement of 1902 to disaster.<sup>2</sup>

The Prussian franchise struggle offered a further proof that the masses with an organisation of brakes at their head cannot triumph.

Rosa Luxemburg did not draw the correct lessons from these experiences. She hoped that the spontaneity of the masses would find the correct way over the heads of the leaders. In the struggle around principles of organisation she stood with the Mensheviks

<sup>1</sup> Lenin: "The Lessons of the Moscow Uprising," in *The Revolution of 1905*, Martin Lawrence, London, and International Publishers, New York, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> Luxemburg, *Works*, Vol. IV, p. 30 ff.

against the Bolsheviks; in an article published in the *Neue Zeit* in July 1904, she argued against the strongly centralist formation of the party which was demanded by Lenin.

"Mistakes committed by a really revolutionary workers' movement are historically immeasurably more fruitful and valuable than the faultlessness of the best of all possible central committees."

This was the argument she put against the efforts of the Bolsheviks to create a really revolutionary leadership of the proletariat. As if the party and the central committee would prevent the masses from learning from the experiences of the movement, as if the development of the revolutionary party and its leadership are not, on the contrary, the organisational form in which the learning of the masses from their experience is made concrete!

It was pointed out that Lenin himself had no idea of carrying over into the Second International the division which had been fought out in 1903 in the Russian Party. And it is certainly true that under the pressure of conditions, with the most furious reaction raging, with a certain depression in the working class movement and with some growth in the influence of the Mensheviks, Lenin gave way to the urgent desire for unity in the working class and at the Stockholm Congress in 1906 agreed to formal union with the Mensheviks in one party.

It is putting the question in an unhistorical fashion to ask whether the split in German Social Democracy or in the Second International was possible in 1905 or 1906, and whether it would have been in the interest of the class struggle. Actual development shows that the conditions were not yet ripe for such a split. In the *Crisis of Menshevism*, an article published after the congress at which the union was agreed upon, Lenin put the question in the following way:

"We are not founding a special Bolshevik tendency; we are only maintaining, always and everywhere, the standpoint of revolutionary Social Democracy. But within Social Democracy there will always be, until the socialist revolution, an opportunist and a revolutionary wing."

What was at issue was clarity on the irreconcilability of the revolutionary and opportunist wings, clarity on the fact that the



division between the two must grow more acute the closer the social revolution approached, clarity in recognising that the successful carrying through of the proletarian revolution demands the independent organisation of the revolutionary wing. At the time that the Bolsheviks formally united with the Mensheviks into one party, they always maintained their own fraction, they never relaxed their basic criticism of Menshevism, they always fought for their revolutionary policy with every appropriate means. The left radical wing of the German Social Democratic Party, under Rosa Luxemburg's leadership, failed to create at the right time the organisational conditions for the independent leadership of the revolutionary section of the German Party. The same was true of the other parties in the Second International, with the exception of the so-called "narrow" section of the Bulgarian Party, which in 1903 had broken away from the opportunist "broad" section. In France the union of the Jaurèsists and Guesdists had been accomplished in June 1905 on the basis of the Amsterdam resolution. That resolution emphasised that the party must be in fundamental opposition to all bourgeois parties and to the state, that it was not a reformist party but a party of class struggle and revolution. The Social Democratic fraction in the Chamber of Deputies was ordered to vote against the budget. Outwardly, the union was highly successful. In a year and a half the membership of the party rose from 37,000 to 52,000 and the number of its seats in the Chamber from 37 to 54. But scarcely had Millerand's case been settled — that had been the condition made previously to establishing organisational unity — than Briand's entry into a bourgeois cabinet aroused new conflicts.

The first effect of the Amsterdam resolution in England was the loose association of the various organisations affiliated to the Second International into a "Section of the International," which was established in July 1905. The only Marxist organisation in Great Britain, the Social Democratic Federation, did not join the Labour Representation Committee, which was founded in 1900 as the organ to conduct political work in the parliamentary sphere, and which was transformed in 1906 into the Labour Party. The

S.D.F. justified its action by stating that the Labour Party was not a socialist party; this was of course quite correct, but since it was not a closely united party bound to a bourgeois programme, but a loose amalgamation, based on collective membership, of trade unions and parties, the policy of the S.D.F. only meant that the revolutionary elements could be more easily separated from the mass of trade union members, and that the opportunist Independent Labour Party — or, as the Marxists called it, the Independent of Socialism Party — and the completely bourgeois-liberal Fabian Society, won decisive influence over the policy of the Labour Party.

This development was the more fatal to the English working class movement, as it was just about that time that it began to grow more political and more radical. In 1906, for the first time, the Labour Party entered the elections independently of the Liberals — even if not with a socialist programme — and won thirty seats as against two in 1900.

So in all countries the Socialist International grew in extent, while opportunism penetrated further and further into its ranks — with what success, was shown in August 1914.

## 2. Right Majority — Left Resolutions Stuttgart 1907

In estimating the character of a political organisation it is necessary to examine not only the position it takes up with regard to the questions on its agenda, but also the questions to which it does not define its attitude. The agenda of the Stuttgart Congress in August 1907 consisted of the following items:

- (1) militarism and international disputes;
- (2) relations between the political parties and the trade unions;
- (3) the colonial question;
- (4) immigration and emigration of workers;
- (5) the franchise for women.



The period between the Amsterdam and Stuttgart Congresses witnessed the greatest historical event since the Paris Commune: the Russian Revolution. In that period, too, occurred the great debates on the political mass strike. But the leaders of the International did not consider it necessary to define their attitude to the lessons of the Russian Revolution. It was left to each one individually to agree either with the Russian liquidators in concluding that now the Russian socialists should also follow the European road of peaceful trade union and parliamentary work in the reactionary Duma, or with the Bolsheviks and the German left radicals that now, in this new period of harder fighting against the capitalist masters, the other parties would also have to learn to "speak Russian."

With the exception of a speech by Rosa Luxemburg in the war commission, the Russian Revolution was mentioned only in greetings of address and in declarations of sympathy. At the opening of the Congress a great international meeting was held at the Canstatt Green. It was on that occasion that Plekhanov put forward his Menshevik theory of the Russian Revolution. Its goal was not the establishment of the socialist republic, as many eloquent socialist writers had maintained, but the creation of bourgeois liberties, which are essential to the peaceful progress of the proletarian movement for emancipation.

From another tribune Clara Zetkin announced:

"We cannot close this meeting more fittingly than by paying tribute to the greatest event of our time, the Russian Revolution, which is the prelude to a series of revolutions in which the proletariat of all countries will break their chains and win the world."

Vandervelde followed the middle course for, although he did not speak of the revolution outside Russia, he attributed higher aims to the Russian Revolution: "We hope that the Russian Revolution will not be merely a bourgeois-democratic revolution, but that it will bear the signature of the socialist proletariat."

The resolutions of sympathy which were passed by the congress avoided any mention of the character and perspectives of the Russian Revolution; they merely declared that "the Russian

Revolution, which has only just begun, has already become a powerful factor in the struggle between capital and labour."

The extent of opportunist infection and the depth of its roots were disclosed in the discussion on the colonial question. From many points of view, this question was of decisive importance.

The development of imperialist hostilities, which constantly threatened the proletariat with the outbreak of a world war, was concerned principally with rivalry for colonies. Italy had joined the German-Austrian entente, because it envisaged danger to plans of robbery in the Mediterranean from the advance of France towards Tunis. The Anglo-French understanding of 1903, the basis of the Triple Entente, was come to on the basis of a division of colonial areas. France admitted England's right to subject Egypt and assured to herself the right to plunder Morocco undisturbed. German imperialism, which did not benefit at all from these negotiations, brought the world to the verge of war by its "panther spring to Agadir" (the despatch of the warship "Panther" to Morocco). The concessions Germany received in 1906 at the Conference of Algeciras again postponed the struggle. But the struggle for a share in colonies, as one of the most important causes of imperialist conflict, could not be concealed.

In 1907 the German Social Democrats had suffered an election defeat on the question of colonial policy. In 1904, when the German imperialists had in the most brutal fashion suppressed the rising of the Hereros in South West Africa, murdering half the population and driving thousands of women and children to death in the desert, the socialist members of the Reichstag abstained from voting on the war credits for this slavery expedition on the ground that it was not yet known who had begun hostilities. Later the party corrected its position and voted against the credits. It was the only party in the Reichstag which opposed the colonial policy of Germany, even if it did so in a somewhat confused and inconsistent fashion. In December 1906 the Bülow government suddenly dissolved parliament, when a manoeuvre of the centre opposition seemed to endanger the course of colonial policy. The elections — known as the Hottentot elections —



were carried on in an atmosphere of the most extreme chauvinist-imperialist hostility towards the Social Democrats; in particular the liberal bourgeoisie, whose representative Dernburg was in the colonial office, showed in this election its complete adherence to imperialism, and was consequently bitterly opposed to the Social Democrats. The bourgeois parties, referring to the Russian Revolution and to the discussions on the mass strike which had taken place in Germany, used the "red spectre" to scare off petty bourgeois support of the S.D.P.

Despite these difficulties, the party gained a quarter of a million votes and also increased its percentage of the total poll, but it lost 38 seats. This result can easily be explained; the basis of the constituencies, which had been established in 1869, gave the agricultural and petty bourgeois areas a greater number of seats in proportion to the population than the industrial and proletarian areas. The party gained the votes of at least half a million workers, and lost a quarter of a million petty bourgeois votes, which meant that the seat was lost in several constituencies.<sup>1</sup>

At that time, when imperialism in Germany was pushing ahead, it was inevitable that the petty bourgeois masses and the upper sections of the proletariat should be won over to imperialist policy by their temporary prosperity—which reached its height in 1906—and by the prospect of a great advance on the basis of colonial exploitation. The election results presented the socialists with a clear alternative: either firmly to maintain an anti-imperialist, proletarian revolutionary policy and penetrate deeper into the proletariat, which would mean renouncing temporarily the support of the petty bourgeoisie, and consequently the loss of seats; or, by giving up the struggle against the imperialist colonial policy, to enter into competition for the support of the petty bourgeoisie, infected with chauvinism, and thus transfer the basis of their organisation from the proletariat to the petty bourgeoisie and the labour aristocracy.

<sup>1</sup> Proportional representation was not in force at the time in Germany; the system was one of single member constituencies, voting by ballot, and the elected candidate had to have an absolute majority.

Support for colonial policy was one of the chief points in reformist policy in all countries. The Jaurèsists had voted the credits for the China campaign, the Fabians announced it as a victory when a member of their society, Sidney Olivier, who had taken part in the Zurich Congress as secretary of the British section, was appointed Governor of Jamaica. In their report to the Stuttgart Congress it was pointed out that "this is one of the most important posts in the colonial service, the salary attached to it being greater than that of most ministers in England."<sup>1</sup>

In Germany Bernstein, Cunow and Schippel put forward the theory that since colonial expansion arose from the nature of capitalism, it could not be fought. It was impossible to fight what had been recognised as necessary. Before the Dresden Party Congress Bernstein wrote in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*:

"Without the colonial expansion of the national economy, the poverty which we can observe in Europe and which we are anxious to eliminate, would be much greater, and the prospect of eliminating it much less, than is the case at present... Even against the debit balance of the colonial outrages, the advantages which the colonies have brought weigh down the scale... Social Democracy is in the position of being able to examine recent colonial projects quite dispassionately, according to their objective value. In countries which are not overburdened with colonies, there is no economic consideration inducing Social Democrats to resist such colonial proposals as really prove to be capable of success."

In 1903, when Kautsky was still in the left wing of the party, he was fully aware of the meaning of this policy. At the Dresden Party Congress he said:

"The revisionist comrades are just as anxious to protect the interests of the proletariat as we are, but they ally themselves with the bourgeois parties at the expense of a third party, and that is the colonies. The proletarians are told: let us go out into the wide world, let us plunder the primitive peoples, and we shall divide the booty, and then we shall both have more than we have got today. And so, wherever revisionism is thought out to its logical conclusion, colonial policy plays a great part in harmonising the interests of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat."

<sup>1</sup> The Socialist Labour International, *Report of the Social Democratic Organisations to the International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart*. Berlin, 1907, p. 212 (German).



In the dispute on colonial policy it had therefore to be decided whether the parties in the Second International, acting as the representative of the international proletariat, of all the exploited and oppressed, would carry on the revolutionary struggle on the side of the colonial slaves against the imperialists, or whether they would act as the representative of the labour aristocracy in Europe, corrupted by surplus profits, and align themselves with the imperialist slave-owners in favour of colonial exploitation. The choice was one between two utterly irreconcilable class lines, and the complete lack of purpose which characterised the centre was manifested in the attitude of Bebel, who in December 1906 declared in the Reichstag:

"That a colonial policy is being conducted is not in itself a crime. In certain circumstances this can be a work in the interests of civilisation: the question is, how this policy is being conducted. If you come to strange peoples as friends, as benefactors, as teachers of humanity, in order to help them, in order to help them make use of the treasures of their country, so that both the natives and the whole of human culture may be benefited, then we are in agreement with it. But that is not the case with your colonial policy. You do not come as liberators and teachers, but as robbers, as oppressors, as exploiters."

This illusory "socialist" or "democratic" colonial policy, which was contrasted with capitalist colonial policy in order to evade the real struggle against colonial policy, was the formula behind which the majority of the colonial commission at the Stuttgart Congress took refuge. The revisionist David declared the "colonial idea" to be an integral part of the universal cultural aims of the socialist movement, and expressed this "socialist colonial policy" in the formula that the colonial population as well as the natural treasures of the colonies had to be protected against capitalist exploitation. A Belgian delegate, Terwagne, declared on behalf of the minority of his party that it was after all impossible to leave everything in the Congo just as it was; consequently the policy of colonisation should not be rejected in principle and for all time, for under a socialist regime it could work in the interests of civilisation. The Austrian social-patriot Pernersdorfer expressed himself in the same fashion.

The opposite conception, the utter rejection of colonial policy, was put forward by Ledebour and Wurm for the Germans, and Karski for the Polish left. The speeches of these representatives of the left wing were, however, remarkable in that they placed no hope in the revolutionary strength of the colonial peoples, but only discussed the question of defending the defenceless colonial peoples by the strength of the European proletariat. A few years later the great revolutionary movements in Turkey, Persia and China showed how false this estimate was.

By a majority the commission accepted a resolution which began with the following sentence, formulated by the Dutch delegate van Kol:

"The Congress declares that the usefulness or the necessity of the colonies in general — and particularly for the working class — is greatly exaggerated. It does not however reject colonial policy in principle and for all time, for under a socialist regime it may work in the interests of civilisation."

To this recognition of colonial policy "in itself" was added a condemnation of capitalist colonial policy and a number of practical demands, including one for an international treaty between governments in order to establish a colonial legislative system which would protect the rights of natives and be mutually guaranteed by the states entering into the treaty. The minority of the commission suggested replacing van Kol's introductory paragraph by an outright condemnation of colonial policy, by an exposure of all the chatter about "the mission of civilisation" which was used as a cloak for capitalist exploitation and robbery, and they also proposed that the "practical" demand for a guarantee treaty among capitalist governments should be entirely omitted. There was also a proposal put forward by the English delegation which, going beyond the Amsterdam resolution, declared in favour of the emancipation of India from British supremacy. In moving the majority resolution van Kol said:

"Before 1870, when we were still a small group, when we still believed in the catastrophe theory, we thought it was enough just to protest against capitalism..... Now we have also recognised it as our duty to act against capitalism. And in colonial policy too we must have a reform programme."



The great majority of the commission adopted a resolution which rejects a purely negative standpoint and demands a socialist colonial policy. The minority resolution expresses nothing but gloomy desperation.... Even Ledebour is convinced that capitalism is a necessity in Europe, that it is a necessary and inevitable stage of development. Does that not also apply to capitalism in the colonies?... Does Ledebour want to deprive the present order of society of the indispensable raw materials which the colonies can offer it? Does he want to deprive only the present age of the immeasurable wealth of the colonies? Do those German, French and Polish delegates who signed the minority resolution wish to take on the responsibility of simply abolishing the present colonial system? There have been colonies as long as humanity has existed, and I believe that there will be colonies for a long time yet, nor will there be many socialists to claim that colonies will be unnecessary in the future order of society.... Perhaps he will tell us what to do with the surplus population of Europe, in what countries the people who have to emigrate will make their homes, if not in the colonies. What will Ledebour do with the growing output of European industry, if he does not want to create new markets for them in the colonies?"

Bernstein put forward the same case:

"We must get rid of the utopian idea which would have us simply leave the colonies. The logical conclusion of such a conception would be that the United States should be given back to the Indians."

As representative of the minority, Ledebour directed his attack chiefly on the stupid supposition that the rejection in principle of colonial policy meant giving up the struggle for reforms to improve the position of the colonial peoples. He energetically contested the usefulness to the working class of colonial policy and said that the road taken by Bernstein and the English Fabians must lead into the bog of capitalism.

A similar attitude was taken up by the French socialist Bracke, who attacked the utopian idea of demanding a socialist colonial policy from capitalist governments.

Kautsky made a sharp attack on the majority resolution. It was contradictory to socialist and democratic thought. Bernstein's theory was the theory of two groups of peoples, of which one was destined to rule and the other to be ruled, the theory of slave-owners and despots, that one group came into the world to wear spurs and the other to bear a saddle to carry the former.

Van Kol's reply was if possible an even more shameless recognition of colonial exploitation than his speech. He derided the erudite Kautsky:

"Today we have again been treated to the old wives' tale of colonial cruelties, which has long become a boring subject to a parliament of socialists. It is true that at the present time colonial policy is imperialist, but it is not necessarily so, it can also be democratic. In any case it is a grave injustice for Kautsky to say abstractly that colonial policy and imperialism are one and the same thing.... And the learned Kautsky has done even worse in giving advice on the industrial development of the colonies. We are to take machines and tools to Africa! Empty theory. That is how he wants to civilise the country. If we were to take machinery to the savages of central Africa, what would they do with it? Perhaps they would perform a dance around it or add another god to the great number they already have.... If we Europeans come there with tools and machinery, we should be the defenceless victims of the natives. So we must go there with weapons in our hands, even if Kautsky does call that imperialism."

The resolution on the independence of India was not put to the vote, but was referred to the International Bureau.

The minority amendment to the colonial resolution was passed by the close majority of 127 votes against 108, the ten votes of the Swiss delegation being withheld.<sup>1</sup>

The votes against the amendment—that is, for a "socialist" colonial policy—were cast by the full strength of the Germans, Austrian, Belgians, Danes, Dutch, Swedes and South Africans<sup>2</sup>—it was obvious that the German delegation was held together only by party discipline—by a majority of the English and French and a minority of the Italians. The majority who passed the minority resolution of the commission consisted, characteristically enough, of the representatives of the imperialist great powers of Russia, America and Japan, and of the representatives of small countries and oppressed peoples.

<sup>1</sup> At this Congress, for the first time, the different delegations were entitled to a number of votes in accordance with the strength of the parties they represented. The largest received 20 votes, the smaller ones from 15 down to 2.

<sup>2</sup> The South Africans were, of course, representatives of the white workers, not of the colonial slaves.



The voting signalised the victory of opportunism in the working class movement of the imperialist countries. As against that it was of little importance that finally the resolution, as amended against colonial policy, was passed unanimously with the Dutch abstaining. During the voting an exciting incident occurred, for at first David voted against the resolution on behalf of the German delegation; this led to a vote being taken in the German delegation itself, which resulted in a large majority in favour of the resolution. It was clear that at first the centre voted with the right in favour of van Kol's resolution, and then with the lefts against the rights for a resolution which contained the direct opposite of that resolution.

In the discussion on the question of militarism and international conflicts the alignment was not so clear as in the colonial question. The dispute was chiefly between the semi-anarchist attitude of Hervé and the centrist position of Bebel, while the resolution which was actually passed corresponded to those ideas of the Marxist left which were least often expressed in the discussion itself. Four resolutions had been moved. Bebel's resolution declared that as a rule wars were the result of the competitive struggle of capitalist states in the world market. They would only cease when the capitalist economic order was abolished; it was essential for all labour representatives to fight against armaments and to vote against military appropriations. "In the democratic organisation of the army, which includes all those capable of bearing arms, the Congress sees an essential guarantee that offensive wars will be rendered impossible." Should a war threaten to break out, then the workers were to prevent the outbreak of war by "the means they consider most effective" or, if that did not prove effective, they were to do everything to put an end to the war as quickly as possible.

The resolution moved jointly by Jaurès and Vaillant for the majority of the French delegation described militarism as a means of keeping the working class under the capitalist yoke. An attack on the independence of a nation was an attack on the international working class.

"The nation which is threatened and the working class must defend their independence against such attacks, and they have a right to the support of the working class of the whole world. This policy of defence and the anti-militarism of the socialist party implies the demand for the disarming of the bourgeoisie and the arming of the working classes by means of the general arming of the people.... The prevention of war is to be effected by the national and international socialist action of the working class, using every means in its power, from parliamentary intervention and public agitation to the mass strike and insurrection."

The resolution of the Guesdist French minority opposed special anti-militarist agitation, since militarism was only a result of capitalism, and the methods of desertion and military strike, going as far as revolution, which were advocated for the anti-military struggle, were calculated to make the propaganda for socialism more difficult. The positive demands recommended were a shorter period of military service, the rejection of all credits for the army and navy and propaganda in favour of the general arming of the people. In the event of an international conflict the International Bureau was to meet and take the necessary measures.

Finally Hervé's resolution ran:

"Considering that it is all the same to the proletariat in the name of what nationality or government they are exploited by the capitalists and considering that the interests of the working class are exclusively opposed to the interests of international capitalism, the Congress rejects bourgeois and governmental patriotism, which falsely maintains that there is a community of interests existing between all the inhabitants of one country. It declares that it is the duty of socialists in all countries to unite for the overthrow of this system in order to establish and to defend a socialist regime. In view of the diplomatic notes which threaten the peace of Europe from all sides, the Congress calls upon all comrades to answer any declaration of war, no matter from what side it is made, with the military strike and with insurrection."

Bebel's resolution was of so general a character that even the most extreme adherents of defence of the fatherland such as Vollmar gave it their approval. The Vaillant-Jaurès resolution linked recognition of the revolutionary methods of struggle against a war of aggression with recognition of the duty of defending the fatherland. It was drawn up, obviously, to meet the anxiety of large sections of the French people about an attack from German



militarism. It did not express the will of French socialists to answer a war of imperialist France with revolutionary struggle, but the will to direct the power of the German Social Democracy to the use of the sharpest weapons against German militarism. The Guesdist resolution, with its rejection of special anti-militarist propaganda, showed how the abstract, formal and undialectic conception of Marxism which prevailed among this group in the French labour movement had been transformed into opportunism.

Hervé's ideas were described by Kautsky, correctly, as "heroic stupidity." In his book *Leur Patrie*, Hervé had enunciated the same ideas which were contained in his resolution. Following these lines, his adherents carried on a courageous, energetic, anti-militarist and anti-patriotic agitation.

At that time Lenin wrote that the contents of Hervéism were positive in so far as they gave an impulse to socialism, and were not limited merely to parliamentary methods of struggle, but also developed among the masses the consciousness of the necessity of revolutionary methods of struggle in connection with those crises which inevitably accompany war and finally, Hervéism was positive in indicating that a living consciousness of the international solidarity of the workers and the falseness of bourgeois patriotism had taken root among the masses.<sup>1</sup>

But from the standpoint of revolutionary Marxism he sharply criticised Hervé's semi-anarchist folly.

The thesis of the *Communist Manifesto* that "the workers have no fatherland" fully answers the patriotism of Vollmar, Noske and Co. (Noske, who had already given himself a bad name by his patriotic speeches in parliament, and Karl Liebknecht, the champion of anti-militarist agitation, especially among the youth, were invited to take part in the sitting of the commission.) But it does not follow from that that it is a matter of indifference to the workers in which "fatherland" they live. For the political, cultural and social environment is an important factor in the class struggle, and from the standpoint of the proletarian class struggle,

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, "The International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart," in *Collected Works*, Vol. XII.

though not from that of bourgeois patriotism, the proletariat has to consider the question of the fate of the country. The question is not whether the proletariat should answer a declaration of war with a strike or an insurrection, if that is expedient, but whether the proletariat should undertake to answer *every* declaration of war with insurrection. Such a decision would be foolish, for it means that the proletariat would resort to insurrection not when the conditions for such action were most favourable, but when it pleased the bourgeoisie to declare war, that is, at a time which in most cases would certainly not be the most favourable for the decisive struggle. If it is expedient, the proletariat can resort to the military strike, but it is by no means expedient to bind oneself to this "tactical recipe." Finally, if the proletariat decides on insurrection, this is not in order to replace war by peace, but in order to replace capitalism by socialism.

How far removed from such Marxist criticism of Hervéism was the speech with which Bebel opened the commission discussions! Against the appeal to the statement in the *Communist Manifesto* that the workers have no fatherland, Bebel declared boldly that the pupils of Marx and Engels no longer shared the views of the *Manifesto*.

"What we are fighting is not the fatherland itself, for that belongs far more to the proletariat than to the ruling class, but the conditions which prevail in that fatherland in the interests of the ruling classes."

And with truly astonishing naiveté he stated that:

"To maintain that in any given case it would be difficult to say what is a war of aggression and what a war of defence is incorrect. Matters have changed since the threads which lead to war catastrophes were invisible to the informed and observant politician. Cabinets can no longer conceal their policy."

And just as Jaurès had praised the Triple Entente as a bulwark of peace, Bebel assured the Congress that "nobody in important circles in Germany wanted war . . ." Finally, on the question of defence, he said:

"If we, as Social Democrats, cannot entirely dispense with military armaments, so long as the relations of individual states to each other have not



undergone radical transformation, we need them purely for defence, and on the broadest possible democratic basis, which will prevent the misuse of the military forces. Consequently we shall fight the existing militarism in Germany by every possible means and with all our strength. But beyond that we cannot allow ourselves to be forced into adopting methods of struggle which might be fatal to the life and, in certain circumstances, to the very existence of the party."

Hervé was not unjustified, when replying to this speech, in saying that the socialist world regarded with astonishment and regret the attitude of the German Social Democracy to militarism, that the entire German Social Democracy had become bourgeois and that Bebel had gone over to the revisionists. He had issued the slogan: Workers of the world, murder each other!

The entire German delegation was indignant at this speech. Seven years later it was shown that Hervé's words applied to the overwhelming majority not only of the German, but also of the French Social Democrats. Bebel himself died in 1913. Jaurès was murdered on the eve of the war. Had they retained the attitude which they adopted in 1907 they would have fallen to the same level of bourgeois patriotism as Hervé, so radical in 1907, who volunteered for service in August 1914.

Bebel's speech contained not only the incorrect conception that on the outbreak of war between imperialist states the decision as to who was aggressor and who defender could be based on the childish question, "Who started it?", not only the illusion that a more democratic organisation of the defence of the state makes it merely an instrument of defence — it also contained the fundamental rejection of revolutionary methods of struggle because they might endanger the legal existence of the party. Bebel's fall on the question of the mass strike after the Jena Congress was necessarily followed by his failure on the question of the struggle against war. Actually, Bebel had fallen to the position of Vollmar, who declared:

"It is not true that we have no fatherland. . . . The love of humanity cannot for a moment prevent me from being a good German."

In fact the reformist Jaurès displayed more revolutionary determination than the ex-revolutionary Bebel, when he declared:

"In the *Neue Zeit* Kautsky advocated direct action in the event of German intervention in Russia in support of the Tsar. Bebel repeated this from the tribune of the Reichstag. If you can say that, then say the same for all international conflicts. It is true that military intervention by Germany in support of the Tsar against the Russian Social Democracy would be the most extreme, the most acute form of the class struggle. But if a government does not take the field directly against Social Democracy; if, frightened by the growth of socialism, it seeks a diversion abroad, if in that way war between France and Germany breaks out, then should the German and French proletariat be allowed to murder each other at the bidding and for the benefit of the capitalists without the Social Democrats having exerted their strength against it to the very utmost? If we were not to do that, we should be completely dishonoured."

Bebel's respect for legality went too far even for the not overbold Victor Adler, whom in 1903 Bebel had accused of revisionism. He rejected Vollmar's patriotic analysis of the resolution. In the name of the Polish and Russian Social Democrats Rosa Luxemburg recalled the Russian Revolution.

"If the bloody shadows of the fallen revolutionaries were here, they would say: 'We can do without your praise, but learn from us.' And it would be treachery to the revolution if you were not to do so. . . . The Russian Revolution not only arose out of the war, it also served to stop the war."

She contended that Vollmar should be disavowed by the great mass of the German proletariat, recalled the Jena resolution in favour of the general strike and announced that an amendment to Bebel's resolution, rendered necessary by the speeches of Bebel and Vollmar, would be introduced. In his reply Bebel used a ridiculous argument against the mass strike in the event of war:

"According to a statement made by Chancellor Caprivi in 1893, Germany, in the event of war, would immediately call all men capable of bearing arms to the colours, that is, six million men, of whom two million are Social Democrats, and in France four and a half million soldiers. Where should we get the people for the mass strike? Four million families would be in the greatest need, and that is worse than any general strike."

Then the memory of better days awoke in the old fighter:

"I do not know what will come, but I do know that this war will probably be the last and that the whole of bourgeois society will be at stake. We



can do nothing, therefore, except educate, spread light, agitate and organise. From a certain standpoint a Social Democrat might say that a great European war would further our cause more than a decade of agitation and therefore we should wish for the war. We do not desire such a frightful way of attaining our goal. But if those who are most interested in the maintenance of bourgeois society do not see that by such a war they are tearing up the very roots of their existence, we have nothing against it; then I say: go your own way, and we shall succeed you. If the ruling classes themselves did not know that, we should have had the European war long ago. Only the fear of the Social Democracy has so far prevented them. But if such a situation does arise, then we shall no longer be concerned with such trifles (!) as mass strike and insurrection; then the very features of the civilised world will be completely changed."

A sub-commission was set up to formulate the resolution. Lenin offered Rosa Luxemburg the mandate of the Russian Social Democracy. On behalf of the Russian and Polish Social Democracy, Rosa Luxemburg put forward an amendment which gave Bebel's ambiguous resolution a clear revolutionary character.

A paragraph was inserted embodying the essence of the anti-militarist agitation carried on in Germany among the working class youth, particularly by Karl Liebknecht, which called upon the parties to educate the working class youth in the spirit of socialism and the fraternity of the peoples, to train them systematically in class consciousness, so that the ruling classes would not dare to use them as tools for strengthening their class domination over the militant proletariat.

The concluding paragraph of the resolution, formulated by Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin, contained those directions which became the guiding principles of proletarian internationalism in time of war.

"If a war threatens to break out, it is the duty of the working classes and their parliamentary representatives in the countries involved to exert every effort to prevent the outbreak of war by the means they consider most effective, which naturally vary according to the sharpening of the class struggle and the general political situation. In case war should break out anyway, it is their duty to intervene in favour of its speedy termination and with all their powers to utilise the economic and political crisis created by the war to rouse the masses and thereby to hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule."

The significance of this paragraph becomes particularly clear in application to the various examples of revolutionary struggle against a reactionary war, especially to the Russian Revolution of 1905. Nevertheless the resolution betrays the trait of compromise, firstly in the demand for a popular system of defence in place of a standing army — a demand issuing from the times of bourgeois revolutions and national wars, which loses its revolutionary content and assumes a reactionary character in the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolution, when the need of the day is the disarming of the bourgeoisie and the arming of the proletariat. Secondly, in the demand for the "utilisation of courts of arbitration in place of the pitiful institutions of governments, a step which will assure to the peoples the benefit of disarmament." That was an expression of the pacifist illusions which were always contested by consistent Marxists.

The question whether, in an imperialist war, there can be any talk of the defence of a country which has been attacked, was not answered explicitly either in the affirmative or the negative. Vandervelde, who moved the resolution on behalf of the commission, spoke of the "inalienable right of every country to defend its independence from external attack," and from that concluded that the militia was necessary as a means of defence.

As chairman Singer moved that the resolution should be accepted forthwith. Hervé, on the contrary, wanted discussion, since there was a great difference between the resolution and the speeches which had been made in the commission. The German delegation would have to state that it did not share the opinion of Bebel and Vollmar, but agreed with the standpoint taken up in the resolution.

However, with the usual diplomatic pretence of agreement which did not exist, the resolution was passed unanimously, without discussion. Differences of principle were not fought out, but covered over. A good resolution unanimously accepted concealed the incapacity of the International for united action.

The other points on the agenda were of secondary importance in comparison with these two. On the question of the relation of



the party to trade union organisations a resolution was passed which, in essentials, corresponded to the resolution by Kautsky rejected by the Stuttgart Congress of the German Social Democratic Party. According to this resolution, the party and the trade unions have tasks of equal importance to carry out. The relations between them are to be as close as possible and the desirability of uniformity in trade union organisation was not to be lost sight of.

"The trade unions will only be able to fulfil their duty in the workers' struggle for emancipation if their activities are guided by a socialist spirit. It is the duty of the party to support the trade unions in their efforts to improve and to raise the social position of the workers.

"The Congress declares that the progress of the capitalist system of production, the growing concentration of the forces of production, the greater unification among the employers, the increasing dependence of individual concerns on the whole of bourgeois society, will necessarily condemn trade union activity to impotence if the unions confine their attention to the interests of craft corporations and if their work is conducted on the basis of professional egoism and the theory of a harmony of interest between capital and labour."

This resolution was opposed by some French trade unionists, who had wanted to include the principle of the neutrality of the trade unions and a recognition of the general strike, and also by the leader of the Socialist Labour Party of America and the Industrial Workers of the World, Daniel de Leon, who was anxious for a sharper condemnation of the reactionary American unions and wanted the resolution to include paragraphs on the formation of the unions on industrial lines and on the role of the trade unions in the building of socialist society.

In the commission Plekhanov too, representing the Mensheviks, declared his adherence to the principle of trade union neutrality, while Voinov,<sup>1</sup> for the Bolsheviks, took up the Marxist standpoint on this question.

In the discussion on woman suffrage Clara Zetkin, reporting for the commission, sharply attacked the opportunist tendency of renouncing the demand for woman suffrage. In England, for example, the opportunists had voted in favour of a proposed

franchise which would have benefited only the women of the possessing classes, merely in order to win the support of bourgeois feminists. The Austrian Party had thrust the demand for votes for women somewhat in the background, imagining that a more modest franchise would be easier to achieve. The resolution declared that, when the struggle was carried on, it should be conducted on socialist principles, that is, as the demand for a universal franchise for men and women; it was passed with only one dissident, but a woman representative of the Fabian Society declared quite openly that:

"Whatever this Congress may decide, we shall, in virtue of the autonomy of nations, work together with the bourgeois suffragists."

On the question of emigration and immigration a number of chauvinist voices were again raised against the "import of coolies." But here again a resolution was accepted which followed the lines of proletarian internationalism.

Thus we see that a congress at which the opportunists were already in the majority passed revolutionary resolutions on all questions. How did it happen that the lefts, although in the minority, could carry the day as far as resolutions were concerned? The reason is clear. First of all the Marxists had on all questions a united, consistent and international standpoint, while the opportunists had no settled opinions and the opportunists of one country disagreed with those of another. Secondly, the reformists were not anxious to express their opinions openly before the international working class. Each party wanted to appear better than it actually was in practice. But the experience of the Second International has shown well enough how worthless are the finest decisions if they are not backed by an organisation which is prepared to carry them out.

<sup>1</sup> Party name of A. V. Lunacharsky. — Ed.



3. *Nationalism in the Trade Union Question — Opportunism  
in the Co-operative Question*  
Copenhagen 1910

While class contradictions and the class struggle were growing more acute in every country, the Copenhagen Congress, as Vandervelde said in the opening address, was "rather a congress of thorough detailed work than an ardent proclamation of struggle."

The Russian Revolution had aroused a tremendous fermentation in the countries of the east. There developed in rapid succession the revolution of the Young Turks and the democratic revolution in Persia, both of which were directed against Russian imperialism. In India and China revolutionary sentiment also increased. In capitalist countries the sharpening of the situation was evidenced in armed collision during strikes. In Spain the reactionary government answered proletarian hostility to the Morocco adventure with furious acts of terrorism which reached their climax in the shooting of Ferrer. In Sweden in 1909 the workers answered a lockout by which the employers hoped to impose a wage reduction with a general strike in which 300,000 workers took part and which was successful in getting the proposed wage cut withdrawn. In Germany a number of demonstrations for the franchise showed the militancy of the masses. The left wing under Rosa Luxemburg's leadership intensified their propaganda in favour of the general strike but the centre and right wing bloc which was opposed to the mass strike movement was strengthened by the acquisition of Kautsky, although as late as 1909 he had, in his work *The Road to Power*, proclaimed a "new era of revolutions" and indicated the perspective of an approaching imperialist world war.

In the article "What Next?" published in the *Neue Zeit* in 1910, he put forward his magnificent theory of the "strategy of exhaustion." The time was not yet ripe for decisive struggle, for the strategy of overthrow. In consequence the mass strike as a weapon of revolution was not yet expedient. It is true that in 1910 the Magdeburg Party Congress had censured the members

in southern Germany who had approved the budget, but on the decisive question of the mass strike the left wing was opposed by such a great majority that Rosa Luxemburg considered it wise to withdraw a resolution she had sponsored in favour of the mass strike.

The question of practical international solidarity arose at the congress in several forms. The Swedish trade unions complained with justice that their struggle had received insufficient international support, particularly from the English, French and Belgian unions. The English excused themselves on the ground of the statutes of their unions, which did not permit larger expenditure for such purposes; but the speaker for the Independent Labour Party explained apologetically that the trade unions would gradually reach the path of socialism. A resolution which called upon the workers "to render support, both morally and materially, to the greatest extent that was possible in the state of the movement in the different countries" in all great struggles between capital and labour found unanimous acceptance.

The question of international solidarity rose even more sharply when a commission was deciding on the trade union split in Austria.

In Austria there were as many socialist parties as there were nations in that "cage of peoples." At the London Congress in 1896 Victor Adler had said that the division of the socialist movement according to nations was in the interest of the working class movement. In reality, however, this only proved that the spirit of true proletarian internationalism was not alive in the parties of the Second International. Actually, in a revolutionary Marxist party, it would have been possible to unite the socialists of all nationalities on a common standpoint, even on the national question, of such burning importance for Austria, without any further ado. The unconditional recognition of the right of self-determination for all nations, without reference to the existence of the Austrian state, with complete unity in the struggle of the workers against that state, would have established the foundation on which no national contradictions could possibly have developed.



Since, however, there was an influential right wing among the socialists of all nations in Austria, to whom nationalism was of more importance than socialism, unity of ideas was unattainable. The German Social Democrats in Austria were not in favour of complete self-determination for all peoples, for that was a demand directed against the existence of this state of all nationalities. They spoke platonically against the suppression of nationalities and in favour of autonomy, but only within the framework of Austria.

Among the socialists of the oppressed peoples, on the other hand, and particularly among the Czech socialists, bourgeois nationalism was predominant, making the proletarian class struggle subordinate to the question of national independence and making this latter question the central point in a national programme upheld jointly with the bourgeois nationalist parties.

In spite of this split in the party there was, at least until 1904, a united trade union movement. Then, however, the Czech Social Democrats established their own trade union centre in Prague and, wherever there were Czech workers, tried to split the trade union movement along national lines. These efforts, which in a country of more than one language, were obviously inimical to the most elementary interests of the working class, were energetically opposed by the left wing in Czech Social Democracy. The so-called centrists, who favoured the international unity of the trade union movement, exercised a predominant influence over the Czech workers organised in trade unions, particularly in Moravia.

The commission considered a resolution which, referring to the Stuttgart resolution on the relation of the party to the trade unions, demanded the unity of the trade union organisations in every state and declared that any attempt to break international united trade unions into nationally separatist parts was hostile to the spirit of that resolution.

Nemec, leader of the Czech Party, put the question in the following way: the National Council of Trade Unions at Vienna was only ostensibly international, for it was in contact with the German Party. The Czech workers did not want to give any money "for Vienna." The Czech Party needed the support of its own

trade union organisation: "Advancing separately, striking together," that was the principle of this original internationalist. On this question Legien appeared as a radical internationalist — probably because of his nationalism, since it was a matter of opposing the Czechs. He even threatened the Czech separatists with exclusion from the International. Karski, member of the Polish left, who later played an important part in the Spartakusbund, refuted excellently the appeal of the Czech separatists for a split in the political organisations.

"The Czechs say that in Austria the Social Democrats are organised according to nationalities, and so the trade unions must also be organised nationally. That is a sophism; if you have one cripple in the family, you don't deliberately make another member of the family into a cripple also."

Plekhanov referred to the example of Russia and said that it was precisely where the party was split that it was essential to establish unity in the trade union movement.

Friedrich Adler, who was present at the Congress as Swiss delegate, maintained that Czech Social Democracy had become a prisoner of the nationalists.

The resolution was then passed against the votes of the Czech separatists. This unanimous condemnation made so little impression on them that the Czech reformist Modracek called out: "Your resolutions don't mean much."

While nationalism, which had already eaten into the International, was expressed on the trade union question, reformism, which had in fact already won a majority, came to the forefront in the matter of the co-operatives.

At the Paris Congress in 1900 Lafargue had stated that the opinion that co-operatives were to be recommended as a means of overcoming capitalism had met with general dissent. But it was precisely this Bernsteinian conception of co-operative socialism which was expressed, even if in a less definite form, in the resolution of the co-operative commission. In that resolution the consumers' societies were assigned the task of "helping to prepare in making production and exchange democratic and socialist." It is true that in another place it was stated that the co-operatives



can never bring about the emancipation of the workers, but, as was customary when the centre predominated in the Second International, there was such a confusion of reformist and revolutionary ideas that any delegate could read into the resolution whatever he chose.

After von Elm, for the German delegation, had given the reformist view on the nature of co-operatives in bourgeois society, and Guesde had given the Marxist view, Lenin put forward an amendment which stated that the co-operatives would only be effective in the direction of democracy and socialism after the capitalists had been expropriated. This proposal forced all the members of the commission to show their true colours, and they were the colours of reformism. The amendment was rejected against a small minority. The resolution was then passed against the votes of Modracek, for whom, as an extreme "co-operative socialist," it was not reformist enough, and of Lenin.

In his article, "The Co-operative Question at the International Socialist Congress at Copenhagen, 1910,"<sup>1</sup> Lenin stated that the Russian and Polish comrades tried in vain, through the mediation of Wurm, editor of the *Neue Zeit*, to retain the support of the left wing of the German delegation.

Wurm said: "My opinion on the co-operative question is quite different from that of von Elm; still, we shall probably all agree on a common resolution."

Lenin pointed out that the German delegation at world congresses was dominated by the opportunists because it consisted equally of party and trade union representatives, and the unions always sent opportunists,<sup>2</sup> adding:

"Wurm's powerlessness against Elm is only a recent illustration of the crisis in German Social Democracy, which is extending further and further and which will finally compel a complete break with the opportunists."

At this Congress the left wing felt itself to be so weak that Guesde, Lenin and the German lefts agreed not to carry on the

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Works*, Vol. XIV.

<sup>2</sup> An idea of the composition of the German delegation can be obtained from the fact that Legien and Ebert acted, as chairmen. The aged Bebel was prevented by the state of his health from attending the Congress.

fight in the plenary meeting, so that the commission resolution was passed unanimously.

Pacifist illusions dominated at the war commission. The demand for compulsory courts of arbitration, for general disarmament, for the cessation of secret diplomacy, was the new recipe thrust into the foreground. As representative of the Polish lefts, Radek strongly opposed these demands. There was no international force which could compel the imperialist states to undertake measures of disarmament. Naval disarmament, which the German Social Democrats advocated particularly warmly, even if it occurred temporarily, would only mean increased expenditure on armies. Radek pointed out how the English and German Social Democrats, in taking up the demand for disarmament put forward by bourgeois pacifists, were actually supporting the arguments of the imperialists who justified their own military preparations with reference to the armaments of other states.

Ledebour defended the attitude of the Reichstag S. D. group with the argument that purely socialist demands could not be put forward within the existing state, and that the struggle of the Social Democrats for a naval agreement had won adherents for their ideas in bourgeois circles.

Vaillant and Keir Hardie again demanded a general strike against war. The proposal, as usual, was rejected, Ledebour repeating the old argument that such a decision would result in the ruin of the organisations. They could not permit such things in Germany — Karl Liebknecht had already been sentenced to imprisonment because of his anti-militarist speech at Königsberg.

A proposal from a Russian delegate that the resolution should contain the obligation to carry on propaganda in the army was passed over as not arising on the agenda.

Sharp disagreement arose on the attitude of the Austrian Party to the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908. The Serbian Social Democrats charged the Austrian comrades with not having opposed the robber policy of Austria, while the German (Austrian) Social Democrats had discredited themselves by their failure to oppose with the necessary energy the robber policy



of the great states and to fight for the right of self determination of the small Balkan peoples.

Renner, leader of the Austrian reformists, replied that the party had opposed the robber policy both of Austria and of Serbia and Montenegro. A decision of the International could not exhaust the possibilities in every direction. The demand for disarmament should not result in making a state defenceless. A subsequent congress should draw up an anti-militarist programme. His speech showed clearly that the right wing in the Second International had no intention of allowing their patriotic policy to be influenced by international decisions.

At the Congress plenum Ledebour supported the pacifist demands contained in the commission's majority resolution. He bitterly attacked the general strike. Keir Hardie, in any case, had no moral right to suggest a general strike against war so long as his party voted for the military budget.

Keir Hardie, leader of the "Independent of Socialism" Party, replied that Ledebour should not interfere in the tactical problems of internal British policy. Only two English socialists, Blatchford and Hyndman, had opposed a reduction in English naval armaments because of the danger of German attack. Agreement to the budget as a whole had nothing to do with agreement to the naval armaments. The vote on the budget was not a question of principle, but merely a practical and tactical question. (The report here runs: "Lively applause from the French and English, with a counter demonstration from the German minority.") Ledebour's standpoint was a relic from the time when Social Democracy was still anti-parliamentary. The budget also contained the expenditure for social purposes. They had to go beyond the decision of the Stuttgart Congress; there was no question of a general strike; a strike in the war industries would be quite sufficient.

After Vaillant had pointed out that the Stuttgart resolution advocated the general strike as a possible method of struggle against war, and that in the event of war parliamentary action would be useless, the Congress decided to refer the proposal to

the International Socialist Bureau which was to report to the following Congress.

Then the commission resolution was passed with the usual unanimity which concealed all profound differences of opinion.

The revolution in Turkey and in Persia gave the International the opportunity, for the first time, of defining the principles of its attitude to the questions of colonial revolution. The result was most inadequate, consisting merely in general resolutions of sympathy. The resolution on the Turkish question contained a protest against the evil capitalist colonial policy of the European states, the demand for a democratic reform of the constitution in the Balkan countries and a condemnation of the reactionary measures taken by the Young Turkish government against trade union organisations and strikes.

The resolution on the Persian question condemned the imperialist activities of tsarism against the Persian democracy and called upon the socialist parties of Europe to fight against tsarism.

The conception of colonial revolutions as a powerful source of strength for the international revolutionary struggle against imperialism, a conception which Lenin had already developed, found no acknowledgment in these resolutions.

#### *4. The Discussion on Imperialism and the Oath of Basle*

1911—1913

In the fight against imperialist war, the menace of which drew closer and closer, the Socialist International seemed to be united. But behind this formal unity on the rejection of war were concealed the most profound differences of principle. It is not necessary to be a socialist in order to hate and be repelled by war. Before 1914 the majority of the proletarian and petty bourgeois masses in all countries were hostile to war; it was no accident that the bloody Tsar Nicholas sought to win popularity by means of the Hague Peace Conference. In France as in England the



policy of imperialist war preparations and alliances was carried on under the pacifist mask of securing the country from the danger of attack from German militarism.

In Germany the feeling of the masses against war was clearly demonstrated in the Social Democrats' great election victory of 1912. It was chiefly the party's resistance to armaments, to the tremendous growth in the system of defence, which won the masses against the imperialist united front of the bourgeois parties. In an election struggle in which the questions of the increased cost of living, of the burden of taxation and the tariff policy were closely bound up with the questions of imperialist policy, the Social Democratic vote increased from 3.25 to 4.25 millions and the number of its seats from 43 to 110.

Both in the Tripolitan war in 1911, clearly a war of robbery on the part of Italy against Turkey, and in the Balkan war in 1912, which began under the cloak of a national struggle for the emancipation of the Christian peoples of the Balkans from Turkish domination and which was soon transformed into a fight for the spoils among the small Balkan states acting as the agents of the imperialist powers, the socialist parties of the belligerent countries opposed the war decisively. The representatives of social-imperialism were expelled from the Italian Party; the socialists of Turkey and the Balkan countries unanimously condemned the war which, behind the mask of national emancipation, was really a preliminary encounter of the imperialist powers in the struggle for the redivision of the world.

At that time, immediately before the world war, it seemed unthinkable that on the outbreak of war the socialists' hostility to war should change into defence of the bourgeois fatherland. But the real weakness and disunity of the International was shown in the confusion on the question of imperialism and the consequent approach to bourgeois pacifism.

Bourgeois pacifists, however sincerely they may detest war, are incapable of carrying on a consistent struggle against imperialist war, which is characteristic of our epoch, for as bourgeois they align themselves with the bourgeois state and they cannot

attack and endanger it, once its existence is at stake in war time. It was not surprising that pacifists became defenders of the fatherland on the outbreak of war. The same was bound to happen with any "socialist" who, in his opposition to war, was not differentiated in principle from the bourgeois pacifists.

The Chemnitz Congress of the German Social Democratic Party in September 1912 discussed the question of imperialism and bourgeois pacifism. In the discussion the same grouping was apparent which had been characteristic of the internal party situation since the Mannheim Congress of 1908. The rights hid behind the centrists, who opposed them only very mildly, while their struggle against the lefts was very vigorous. The lefts were a comparatively small group as against this united front. The rights concealed their imperialism, which was particularly noticeable on the colonial question, behind pacifist phrases, and pacifism was the platform on which centre and right united.

The dispute between the left and the centre centred about the question whether imperialism, with its policy of armaments and its imperialist wars, was a necessary form of capitalism at the present time, or a policy of the capitalists or of a part of the capitalists which could, still within bourgeois society, be replaced by a pacifist policy.

The leaders of the centre, Kautsky, Haase, Ledebour, were of the opinion that there were tendencies within capitalism itself directed against imperialism which must be exploited in order to mitigate or to eliminate the danger of war by means of disarmament and courts of arbitration.

The left wing in which, in addition to Rosa Luxemburg, Radek, Pannekoek and Lensch played a leading part, contended that imperialism was the characteristic form of capitalism in the present stage of development and that competitive armaments, colonial policy and imperialist war were essential constituents of the capitalist order of society. They would recognise no tendencies counter to imperialism except the class struggle of the revolutionary proletariat and no means of preventing war except



the socialist revolution. Consequently the lefts were against disarmaments and courts of arbitration as being deceptive bourgeois pacifist slogans.

Haase, reporting for the Party Committee, referred to the fact that from time to time the English government had attempted to negotiate with the German government on the subject of naval disarmament. That proved that competitive armaments were not vital to capitalism; therefore the proposal of the Reichstag fraction for limitation of armaments was correct. He instanced the tendency towards international trustification as running counter to the warlike tendency peculiar to imperialism. If an Anglo-German war was inevitable, what was the point of these demonstrations of peace?

Lensch, who, since Rosa Luxemburg was prevented by ill health from attending the Congress, appeared as the principal speaker for the lefts, correctly contested this centrist argument: From time to time and to some extent, armament agreements between individual powers were certainly possible, but an international agreement on general limitation of armaments was impossible. Yes, there were tendencies against competitive armaments and against imperialism, but they were the tendencies which were opposed to capitalism altogether—socialism.

"These counter-tendencies are in their nature revolutionary, they go beyond the existing order of society. We have to place ourselves in their service. But they know nothing of disarmament...."

"Let us say to the masses that imperialism is the last word for existing society, that it opens all the sources of social revolution. By subjecting the whole earth to its rule it has opened the last reservoirs from which its life flows and has choked up the channels along which its tremendously increased productive forces find an outlet. But in the home country itself it drives every contradiction to a head; while the tables of the capitalist magnates groan under the weight of gold, the spectre of hunger stalks the streets of the working people. The class struggle is sharpening visibly and in the great modern struggles of the trade unions the organised classes confront each other so closely that each fighter looks directly into the eyes of his class enemy. We are approaching a time of great mass struggles and bitter conflicts which will make the greatest demands on the insight and the strength in action of proletarian organisations. For those struggles we must be armed."

The force of this argument could not entirely escape Haase; and perhaps the agreement of Bernstein, who had been enthusiastically in favour of disarmament and courts of arbitration, also influenced him. At any rate, in his reply he said that too great importance should not be attached to courts of arbitration and the party was one in its determination to exert the whole strength of the proletariat against the danger of war.

"Imperialism is the grave-digger of the capitalist system of production; at the height of its development capitalism is transformed into socialism."

The resolution, which was passed with three dissensions and two abstentions, contained that mixture of revolutionary acknowledgment of imperialism as the stage preceding socialism with pacifist illusions which is characteristic of centrism.

"Although imperialism, arising from the capitalist economic system, can only be completely overcome with the latter, nothing which can mitigate its dangerous effects must be overlooked.

"The Party Congress declares its resolute determination to do everything to bring about understanding among the nations and to preserve peace.

"The Party Congress demands that competitive armaments should be ended by international agreements as they threaten peace and are driving humanity forward to a dreadful catastrophe.

"In place of the present robber policy greedy for booty, the Congress demands freedom of world trade and the abolition of the protective system which only serves to enrich the capitalist magnates and the large landowners.

"The Party Congress expects that all party comrades will untiringly exert all their strength in building up the political, trade union and co-operative organisations of the class conscious proletariat, in order to fight with greater power against imperialism until it has been defeated. For it is the task of the proletariat to transform capitalism, which has reached its highest stage, into socialist society and thus to ensure enduring peace, independence and freedom to the peoples."

The attitude of friendly neighbourliness to bourgeois pacifism was not an isolated deviation from the line of proletarian class struggle; it had its counterpart in the attitude of the party in the election struggle. The German Party Committee not only agreed on an election pact with the "Progressive People's Party" — a party which, with all its democratic and liberal phrases, was completely imperialist — but also agreed to "damp down" the



election struggle in a number of constituencies where it was feared that a sharp election struggle would drive the progressives into the arms of the right wing parties. The plan for damping down was as follows: until the actual election no meetings were to be held, no leaflets distributed, no voting papers submitted to the electors and on election day itself there was to be no effort to take the electors to the poll. This agreement was a violation of the principles of the revolutionary class struggle as set forth in the resolution on tactics adopted by the Zurich Congress in 1893.

These damping down tactics, which were very sharply attacked by Rosa Luxemburg in the press,<sup>1</sup> and against which Wilhelm Pieck, on behalf of a great part of the Berlin organisation, protested, were endorsed by a large majority at the party congress.

It is clear that with such a policy of compromise towards imperialist parties, so long as they called themselves progressive, no real struggle against imperialism could be conducted. In fact in 1911 Molkenbuhr, on behalf of the Party Committee, opposed the organisation of mass demonstrations against German policy in Morocco on the ground that in the elections it would give the bourgeois parties a handle against the Social Democrats.

The extraordinary international Congress convened at Basle in November 1912 also took place under the banner, not of revolutionary class struggle, but of compromise with bourgeois pacifism. The accentuation of the international situation in consequence of the Balkan war was the occasion for the hasty convening of the congress. The Austrian government had ordered mobilisation and even then it was clear to every person with insight that an Austro-Serbian conflict was bound to ignite a great world conflagration.

All the external characteristics of the Congress, which should have been rather an international demonstration than an international deliberation, expressed the sentimental, pacifist nature of the Social Democratic anti-war policy. The meeting

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, Vol. III, p. 491.

was welcomed by a government councillor, on behalf of the Swiss. The government of the Canton of Basle extended to the Congress its warmest greetings and wishes. The church authorities placed the historic cathedral at the disposal of the anti-war assembly. In the demonstration to the cathedral marched a group of white-robed children waving palms bearing the touching inscription: "It is more glorious to dry your tears than to shed streams of blood." Behind the children marched Jaurès and Kautsky; the worthy greybeard certainly did not dream that a few years later he would become one of the most zealous advocates of war against a proletarian state.

Each country marched separately, and each sang its own song, a pointed symbol of the unity which was soon to be made apparent in the International!

In the demonstration there was also a carriage wreathed in flowers in which a white-robed queen of peace blew the trumpet of peace. Four comrades carried a large red book inscribed with the motto of the well known patron of peace, Bertha von Suttner: "Down with weapons!"

At the demonstration in the cathedral admiration was aroused by the Great Council, the Civic Council, the Synod and the Church Council. The celebration was ushered in to the sound of church bells. The Social Democratic President of the government, Blocher, who opened the meeting, praised the hospitality of the church authorities with the words: "The ideals of socialism have grown out of a world of thought and feeling which has left deep traces in the history of the Christian religion." Only the grey-haired Bebel protested against this base flattery of the church. It is true that he spoke of his joy at being able; as an atheist, to express his thanks to the church and expressed the opinion that if Christ came again, he would not stand with those who called themselves Christians, but in the ranks of the socialists, but he added the prophetic words:

"Peace on earth and good will to men — in the next few weeks those words will again echo from a hundred thousand pulpits in the Christian churches, and yet in truth it is the greatest hypocrisy. For the same men



who preach those words would mount the pulpit with perhaps even greater joy to spur on the people to murderous war, annihilating mankind and destroying everything."

The Swiss veteran of the working class movement, the old opportunist Hermann Greulich, celebrated the election victory in Germany as "a splendid guarantee of peace," and at the same time proclaimed the patriotic duty of the Swiss citizen: "You will not ask us to deny our duty as citizens."

Sakasov, representative of the Serbian Social Democrats, who had courageously opposed the government during the Balkan war, took the opportunity of emphasising that reforms must be carried out by peaceful means. "This peaceful reform policy is our strength." But apart from such frank acknowledgments of reformism, there was no lack of revolutionary speeches and in particular a number of speakers referred to the idea that formed the base of the Stuttgart resolution, that of utilising the crisis into which an imperialist war would thrust the capitalist system in order to bring about the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

The Swiss Social Democrat Blocher said:

"The European Social Democrats detest the war which looms over the horizon of Europe, but they do not fear it. If there is one power in Europe which has nothing to fear from a world war, but rather much to win, it is Social Democracy. In all probability a European war would liberate tremendous movements and upheavals which must accelerate the collapse of the economic system under which the working class today suffers."

Keir Hardie appealed to the power of fifteen million Social Democratic electors and cried triumphantly: "The fight for freedom and progress in the political sphere has to a large extent already been won." Democracy and war were irreconcilable contradictions. Should, however, a world war break out, then he hoped that the working class would make use of its economic weapons — of the international revolutionary strike against war.

Victor Adler expressed the hope that should war be unleashed by Austria, the punishment of history would follow upon this crime.

"We hope that if this crime is committed, then it will automatically — I say automatically! — mean the beginning of the end of the rule of the criminals."

Even if the emphasis on the automatic collapse of capitalism denied any thought of a violent revolution, the speech showed that even the opportunists who stood furthest to the right were clear as to the revolutionary consequences of an imperialist war.

Jaurès, whose revolutionary heart often went beyond his reformist head, announced that the International would everywhere develop its "legal or revolutionary activities" in order to prevent war or in order "to give the criminals the reward they had earned," closing with the words:

"Governments should remember, when they conjure up the danger of war, how easy it would be for the peoples to make the simple calculation that their own revolution would cost them less sacrifice than the war of others."

Vaillant emphasised that in the manifesto which had been accepted, *every* method of fighting against war was recommended.

"Neither insurrection against war nor the general strike is excluded!... But should capitalism to its own misfortune really bring about war, then it would itself have to bear full responsibility for all the consequences which the will of the proletariat would draw. Those consequences would be found in the social revolution!"

In the name of all socialist women, Clara Zetkin made a revolutionary speech which was sharply distinguished from the sentimentality of the anti-war demonstration. She said:

"If we mothers were to fill our children with the deepest detestation of war, if we were from their earliest youth to plant in them the feeling, the consciousness of socialist fraternity, then the time would come when even in the hour of gravest danger there would be no power on earth able to tear that ideal from their hearts... Then, in the times of most bitter conflict and danger, they would think first of all of their proletarian and human duty...."

"If we women and mothers rise against mass murder it is not because we, in our selfishness and weakness, are incapable of making great sacrifices for the sake of great objects and ideals; we have been through the hard school of life in capitalist society, and in that school we have become fighters..."



So we can bear to see our own fight and fall if that serves the cause of freedom. In that fight we shall see that the women of the masses are filled with the spirit of those mothers of old times who gave their sons their shields with the words: 'Return either with it, or upon it.' Our most urgent care should be the mental development of the growing generation, which will prevent our sons from being forced to murder their brothers for capitalist and dynastic interests, for the anti-cultural purposes of profits, for the greed for power, the ambition of a minority, but which will also make them strong and prepared voluntarily and consciously to give their whole existence to the struggle for freedom....

"For capitalism in its present stage of development armaments and wars are vital necessities by means of which it tries to maintain its rule... Therefore in its war against war the international proletariat can only be successful if it mobilises all its strength, uses every available means, in great mass action....

"The socialist women of all countries are rallying with passionate enthusiasm under our banner of war against war. They know that the more imperialism becomes the deciding policy of capitalist states, the more does this struggle become the central point of the entire work of proletarian emancipation. It will serve not only to rally the masses, but to train and to school them. The proletariat does not take up its work as a finished power, measurable and ponderable; its power arises and grows with its struggles. Therefore this war will be a living source for developing and maturing its forces, bringing nearer the hour when capitalism, exploiting, enslaving and murdering the people, must give way. Precisely because the future victory of socialism is prepared in the struggle against war do we women support that struggle. Even less than for the working men can the national states be for us women a true fatherland. We must ourselves create that fatherland in socialist society which alone guarantees the conditions for full human emancipation."

This basic idea was expressed in the manifesto unanimously accepted by the Congress as well as in the speeches. Fight against war by every possible means, but should it come, then it must be utilised to hasten the social revolution. The manifesto quoted the important passages from the Stuttgart resolution and referred to the unanimity of the socialist parties in the recent imperialist conflicts.

"The ruling classes' fear of a proletarian revolution as a result of a world war has proved to be an essential guarantee of peace."

The manifesto welcomed the admirable attitude of the Balkan socialists who had put forward the demand for a democratic

Balkan Federation and the protest strike of the Russian workers as the strongest safeguard against the criminal intrigues of tsarism. The working masses of Germany, France and England were called upon to force their governments to maintain neutrality in the Austro-Serbian conflict for access to the Adriatic. German and English socialists were to endeavour to get an agreement on the limitation of the construction of naval armaments and the abolition of the right of naval booty. Then to the capitalist governments the manifesto issued a solemn warning:

"Let the governments remember that with the present condition of Europe and the mood of the working class, they cannot unleash a war without danger to themselves; let them remember that the Franco-German War was followed by the revolutionary outbreak of the Commune, that the Russo-Japanese War set into motion the revolutionary energies of the peoples of the Russian Empire, that competition in military and naval armaments gave the class conflicts in England and on the continent an unheard-of sharpness, and unleashed an enormous wave of strikes. It would be insanity for the governments not to realise that the very idea of the monstrosity of a world war would inevitably call forth the indignation and the revolt of the working class. The workers consider it a crime to fire at each other for the profits of the capitalists, the ambitions of dynasties or the greater glory of secret diplomatic treaties."

The manifesto concluded with an appeal for mass demonstrations everywhere in favour of the fraternity of the peoples. Jaurès, who submitted the manifesto to the Congress, ended his speech in great agitation with the words:

"Not speaking lightly, no, but from the very depths of our being, we declare that we are ready for any sacrifice."

And in truth at that time the revolutionary proletariat was prepared to make any sacrifice in the fight against war. It was not only in Russia that the proletariat, after the shootings in the Lena strike of 1912, moved with new strength in a wave of great demonstrations and strikes. When a peace demonstration of the Hungarian workers in Budapest was beaten down by the clubs of the police, the working class united in defence. Revolutionary collisions between the working class and the armed forces of the bourgeoisie occurred in Italy, Spain, France and Austria.



But the strongest parties in the Second International, the German Social Democratic Party with its four and a quarter million voters, the French Social Democracy and the British Labour Party, in spite of their revolutionary vows at international congresses, sedulously avoided mass struggle and continued the policy of compromise with bourgeois parties.

On Whitsunday, 1913, a Franco-German Conference took place at Berne to which the parliamentary representatives of all parties were invited. It was an attempt to reach mutual understanding, and a permanent Franco-German commission for this purpose was set up of which, besides Jaurès and Haase, bourgeois pacifist members of parliament were also members. A resolution was unanimously accepted consisting of general phrases about disarmament and the Hague court of arbitration.

In the same year the Reichstag S. D. group decided by a majority of eight to vote for the defence estimates, on the ground that the costs of armaments, which they had tried in vain to eliminate, would thereby be transferred to the possessing classes. Actually this meant that the principle: "not a man, not a penny for this system," was already violated, and the first step taken along the road which led to the abyss of jingo socialism.

In 1913 Noske made his notorious Reichstag speech in which he described the Social Democrats' military programme as the best safeguard of the German fatherland.

After Bebel had died in 1913 the reins were held by narrow-minded bureaucrats of the type of Ebert and demagogues like Scheidemann, while the old principles were represented by hesitating figures such as Kautsky.

It is clear that with this opportunist decay in the German Party the attempt made at the last pre-war Party Congress at Jena by the left wing under Rosa Luxemburg's leadership to carry the mass strike was bound to fail. Although debates on the mass strike had again been conducted among the workers and a growing militancy in face of the acuteness of the internal and external situation was apparent, the Party Committee remained blind and deaf. Scheidemann, reporting for the Party Committee,

ignored the discontent of the masses and saw complete order prevailing everywhere. Noske quite understood that the "soul of the people" had not made too great a response to the military campaigns because during the Balkan crisis Russian troops had been standing in readiness on the eastern frontier.

Gustav Bauer, who was later to achieve a certain lamentable fame by his friendship with the speculator Barmat, declared that in Russian conditions it was quite right to be in favour of the mass strike, but that did not hold for Germany where the workers "had a very great deal to lose," the valuable results of the work of decades.

The International Socialist Bureau, which had never in the course of its existence attempted to put into operation the decisions of international congresses against the nationalist and opportunist saboteurs of proletarian solidarity, considered it necessary, shortly before its pitiful end in 1914, to assert its authority in order to get the Bolsheviks, in the name of unity, to unite unconditionally with the opportunists of all shades in Russia.

On the basis of information given by the unprincipled conciliator Trotsky and those Menshevik liquidators who wanted to model the Russian working class movement on the pattern of the reformist European parties, Vandervelde and Kautsky tried to induce the Bolsheviks to capitulate. Fortunately for the international proletariat these efforts failed. Thus there was at least one party in the Second International which, united and resolute, based on a firm organisation that did not fail under the terror of the military dictatorship, was capable of putting into practice the principles of proletarian internationalism.



## CHAPTER III

THE COLLAPSE OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL AND THE RISE OF  
THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL

1914—1918

1. *The Collapse of the International on the Outbreak of War; the  
Capitulation of the Centre; the Roots of Social-Imperialism*

What sensitive and thoughtful person who lived through that time can forget those fatal days from the Austrian ultimatum on July 23 to August 4, 1914, the Black Day of German Social Democracy and the International, when the socialist group in the Reichstag, 110 strong, unanimously voted for the war credits?

Since that time a new generation has grown up. The young men whom the imperialists would again send to rot in the trenches in the coming war were children at that time. It is impossible to tell too often to this young generation the story of that collapse; the whole working class should be constantly taught the lessons of that frightful time and should learn to draw the conclusions therefrom.

On June 28, 1914, Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, and his wife, were assassinated by a Serbian nationalist at Sarajevo, the capital of the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, annexed by Austria-Hungary. For the Austro-Hungarian imperialists and militarists this offered a welcome opportunity, on the pretext of punishing the guilty, of extending the power of Austro-Hungarian imperialism in the Balkans at the expense of Serbia and Russia. Berchtold, the Austrian foreign minister, addressed an ultimatum to the Serbian government on July 23,

demanding that an Austrian representative should take part in the investigation of the crime and the pronouncement of sentence, the dissolution of Serbian nationalist organisations and the prohibition of any press propaganda against Austria.

Compliance with those demands would in fact have placed Serbia under the control of the Austrian government. The German government, which was aware that an Austrian-Serbian war could not be localised, but must necessarily develop into a world war, encouraged its ally's frank provocation of war. Subsequently the German government maintained that it was unaware of the verbal text of the ultimatum before it was despatched; even if that were true, there is no doubt that the general contents of the ultimatum were known and approved by the German government.

On July 25 Austria declared war on Serbia; simultaneously with Austria, Russia began to mobilise; proposals of mediation from Grey, British foreign minister, were rejected both by Austria and Russia. On July 30, having received the report of general mobilisation in Russia, the German government presented an ultimatum to that country. Receiving no reply, Germany's declaration of war on Russia followed on August 1. On August 4 German troops marched into Belgium; the same day England declared war. The catastrophe of world war, for many years prophesied by Marxists, had become bloody reality.

What did the Socialist International do in that frightful crisis? What did the socialist parties do, which with solemn vows had threatened the imperialist war criminals with every weapon, up to that of insurrection?

On July 29 the International Socialist Bureau met at Brussels. A few weeks previously Victor Adler had declared that he did not believe in the imminence of war. Now the Austro-Serbian war was already being waged. The Bureau decided not to hold off the international Congress which was called for August 23 at Vienna, but to fix it for August 9. On the day that the Bureau met a great international mass demonstration against war was held in Brussels. The chairman of the German Party, Haase, spoke



at the meeting; he declared that Austria alone was responsible for the war. Thousands and millions of workers in Germany had protested against war. The rulers would have to take care, otherwise so much misery and oppression would arouse the people to such a pitch of indignation that they would overthrow the existing system and establish socialist society.

Jaurès said that it was not necessary to force a peaceful policy on the French government, for its intentions were just as peaceful as those of the English government. (At that very time the "peaceful" French ministry was in attendance at the Tsar's naval review in the Baltic Sea.) He sent greetings to the German Social Democracy, whose members had been thrown into prison for their anti-militarist agitation, and in particular to Rosa Luxemburg, who in February 1914 had been sentenced to a year's imprisonment. He threatened that the masses would rise in revolution and settle their accounts with the rulers in all countries for the blood that was shed.

On August 1 Hermann Müller — in 1928 the builder of armoured cruisers — went to Paris on behalf of the German Party, in order to discuss with the socialist members of the French Chamber their attitude in the event of war. The Belgian socialist Hendrik de Man, who accompanied Müller as interpreter, gave the following report of the negotiations:

Müller declared that the German Party would either vote against the war credits or refrain from voting: "I consider it impossible that our votes should be given for the credits."

A French member of the Chamber remarked that in the event of a German attack, the French socialists could not very well reject the credits. Thereupon Müller declared that in the opinion of the German Party the distinction between attackers and attacked was obsolete, war arising from imperialist capitalism and the responsibility for it falling upon the ruling classes of all the belligerent countries.

Finally it was agreed that abstention from voting in both countries would offer the best guarantee for united procedure. It was, however, stated that nobody could really bind themselves

and that each party was to take its decisions in complete independence, while striving for the greatest possible uniformity of attitude.

On July 1 a state of war was declared in Germany. Demonstrations and meetings of the Social Democrats in favour of peace, which had been arranged for the first days in August, were forbidden. On the same day the Party Committee issued an appeal to its members which ran:

"The working class movement is acutely affected by the strict regulations of martial law. At the present moment thoughtless actions, useless and ill-understood sacrifices injure not only the individual, but the whole cause."

On August 3 the Reichstag Social Democratic group met to decide on the question of their attitude to the war credits. By 78 votes against 14 it was agreed to vote for the credits. Kautsky, whose inherent lack of firmness was never more apparent than in those critical days, proposed that either their votes should be withheld or that they should be made dependent on a guarantee from the government as to the objects of the war. Nobody took the suggestion seriously, for they all knew that in the situation prevailing the government would not allow the objects of the war to be laid down by the Social Democrats. Later the Alsatian deputy and chauvinist Grumbach maintained that on the contrary the Reichstag fraction committee, taking into consideration the wishes of the Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, struck out from the original draft of the declaration on this question a sentence which ran:

"Should the war develop into a war of aggression, we shall oppose it with the utmost energy."<sup>1</sup>

Later it became known that the revisionist wing of the group had already decided to vote for the war credits, even if the majority were to oppose such a course.

The minority who had voted against approval of the war credits submitted to party discipline; Haase, a member of that minor-

<sup>1</sup> *The International and the World War*. A collection made by G. Grünberg, Vol. I, p. 301 (German).



ity, even allowed himself to be persuaded to read the declaration at the full meeting. At that time, too, Karl Liebknecht agreed to maintain discipline, in order to preserve the external unity of the party and in the hope that later, once the first war madness had passed, the majority would also be won for opposition to the war.

The important sections of this notorious declaration run as follows:

"The results of imperialist policy, which ushered in an era of competition in armaments and intensified hostility between the peoples, have broken over Europe like a tidal wave. The responsibility for this falls on those who conducted that policy — we reject it. Social Democracy has fought against this development with all its strength and up to the very last hour it worked for the maintenance of peace by mighty demonstrations in all countries and in close agreement with our French brothers. These efforts have been in vain.

"Now we are confronted by the iron fact of war. The terrors of hostile invasion threaten us. Today we have not to decide for or against war but on the question of the means necessary to the defence of the country.

"Now we have to think of the millions of our compatriots whom, without any fault on their part, this fate has overwhelmed. We consider it our urgent duty to stand by them, to alleviate their lot, to mitigate this immeasurable suffering.

"For our people and for their future freedom, a victory of Russian despotism, stained with the blood of the best of its own people, would place much, if not everything, at stake. This danger must be warded off, if the civilisation and the independence of our own country are to be assured. In so doing we are verifying what we have always emphasised: in the hour of danger we shall not desert the fatherland. In so doing we feel ourselves in harmony with the International which recognised the right of every people to independence and self defence, at the time that we, with the International, condemned every war of aggression.

"We demand that so soon as the object of security is achieved and the enemies of peace overcome, the war should be terminated by a peace which enables friendship to be maintained with the neighbouring peoples. We demand this not only in the interests of the German people.

"We hope that the cruel school of war will awaken in further millions the detestation of war and will win them for the ideals of socialism and of peace among the peoples. Guided by these principles, we approve the credits demanded."

This declaration gave the signal for the most contemptibly chauvinist utterances to flood the pages of the Social Democratic

press. The gospel of "holding out" was announced, civil peace replaced the class struggle. The Social Democratic leaders competed with the bourgeois leaders in orgies of patriotism. The Chemnitz *Volksstimme* wrote:

"Work for peace among peoples has ceased just now. Other cares press upon us.

"One question alone occupies us all: Shall we win? And our answer is: Yes. We have been outlawed and persecuted, we were called men without a fatherland, while we ardently and sincerely strove for the welfare of Germany.

"But whatever has been inflicted upon us we are all at this moment aware of our duty, which is, before all, to fight against Russian slavery."

The Hamburg *Echo* wrote:

"Now we must hold out... Now it is iron that decides. Now it is power that decides. The people of Germany must defend themselves."

And the Social Democratic comic paper, *Der Wahre Jakob*, wrote in true Wilhelmian style:

"Well, children, now there's nothing left for it but a thrashing."

The trade unions ceased to fight for better conditions for the workers and set their energies to eliminating any friction in the production of war materials. The trade union press declared proudly that trade union discipline made the best sort of soldiers out of the workers.

With a few notable exceptions the Social Democratic parties in other countries followed the shameful example of the German Party. In France the war credits were passed unanimously. On the day of the declaration of war Jaurès was assassinated by a nationalist. A much worse fate overtook Guesde and Vaillant. Both these old fighters against reformism fell together with the reformists into the bog of opportunism. Together with Millerand, Guesde entered the ministry of national defence.

In Belgium the entry of Vandervelde into the government was the first war measure. The Belgian Social Democrats were not content with general phrases about defence, they preached undying hatred against all Germans. The central socialist organ, *Le Peuple*, wrote on August 18:



"On the day of the inevitable victory of all the Allies this hatred, without mercy and without weakness, must place the Teuton race outside the pale of humanity. For several generations (!) this race will have to do penance for the fearful crime that it has committed."

In Austria the Social Democratic deputies were spared the decision on war credits, since the government did not consider it necessary to assemble parliament. In an appeal dated July 25, the German Social Democrats of Austria protested against this arbitrary measure and laid the responsibility for the war on the government. In the same appeal, however, they admitted the right of this reactionary government to demand guarantees from Serbia "that underground activities against the security and peace of the Austrian state should be prohibited."

On the day of the declaration of war the party leadership issued an appeal expressing the hope of a new Austria and warning party members to keep party activity within the narrow limits imposed by the emergency situation. Chauvinist frenzy was first exhibited in the Vienna *Arbeiterzeitung* on August 2. The war was described as a "world war of the Tsar," sabre-rattling Wilhelm appeared as the peace-maker and all the blame was thrust on to tsarism and "semi-barbaric Serbia."

On August 5, the German-Austrian social-patriot Austerlitz indulged in a passionate hymn of praise for the action of the German Social Democrats in approving the war credits. In an article entitled *The Day of the German Nation* he wrote:

"This day, August 4, we shall never forget. However the iron die may fall — and with the greatest ardour of our heart we hope that it will fall victoriously for the sacred cause of the German people — the picture given today by the German Reichstag, the representative of the nation, will be indelibly imprinted on the consciousness of all German humanity, will remain in history as a day of the proudest and most powerful exaltation of the German spirit."

"Man for man the German Social Democrats voted for the credits. Like the whole international Social Democracy, our German Party, that jewel of the organisation of the class conscious proletariat, is the most vigorous opponent of war, the most passionate adherent of the union and solidarity of the peoples. And it omitted to do nothing which might have prevented this war (which is now, above all, a war against the German system), it

omitted nothing that might have spared humanity this frightful upheaval of the whole earth. It is certainly not its fault that the German Empire and the whole of Europe are experiencing the scourge of war. But now that the German fatherland is in danger, now that the national independence of the people is threatened, the Social Democrats stand on guard before their homeland and the 'men without a country,' the 'red rabble,' as the Kaiser once said of us in abuse, dedicate to the state the life and blood of the working masses.

"So, united, the German people marches to the fight for the protection of its political and national existence. On the other side wretched speculators and hucksters, lacking any moral idea; here a united and powerfully moved people; world history would be moving backwards if the Germans were not to receive justice."

The national trade union commission of Austria issued a notice to shop stewards in which they were asked to come to the help of the state by rendering it support in their trade union activities and by keeping strictly within the legal limits imposed by the state of emergency.

"With regard to wage movements we feel compelled to express our opinion that the present time is most unfavourable to such activities and that consequently their initiation and conduct should as far as possible be discontinued."

The Italian Social Democrats in Austria, in their Trieste organ *Lavoratore*, answered these orgies of social-patriotism with the biting comment that, if the few Social Democrats in Belgium had managed to get one minister, then in Germany at least half a dozen socialist ministers must have been appointed.

In England the leader of the British Socialist Party, Hyndman, wrote in the party organ that Germany, as the disturber of peace, had to be decisively defeated and nothing should be done to hinder the efforts of the government to win a rapid victory. The declaration that the landlords and capitalists of Great Britain were still the worst enemies fitted rather badly among these social-patriotic slogans.

Even after the outbreak of war the Independent Labour Party — a rare exception — held on to its policy of pacifist objection to the war.

The Dutch Social Democrats under Troelstra's leadership maintained an attitude of neutrality and voted for the credits asked by the government in order to defend that neutrality.



In the articles of *Het Volk*, the central organ of Dutch Social Democrats, there was, however, evidence of the hostility of the masses towards Germany, aroused by the violation of Belgian neutrality. To the Dutch Social Democrats the greatest danger seemed to be the possibility of being forced on to the German side by any British violation of neutrality. They stated that it was impossible to fight against England and the reasons given betrayed the social-imperialist.

"It is extremely important to remember that a conflict with England would directly endanger our colonies so that, as things stand, such a conflict is to be avoided. The policy pursued by Germany is not worth any sacrifice on our part."

Those who took up the opposite stand were less numerous. In the Serbian *Skupchina* the deputies Lapchevich and Katzlerovich voted against the war credits and branded the government as being partly responsible for the war. A similar attitude was adopted by the Bulgarian "narrow" socialists.

The Italian socialists who at their congress at Regia Emilia in 1912 had, on the proposal of Mussolini, at that time still on the left wing, expelled the social-patriots from their party, were united in their opposition to Italy's participation in the war and continued to uphold their stand even after Italy's entry into the war. In Holland the Tribunists,<sup>1</sup> who had split off from the Social Democratic Party in 1906, defended the principles of proletarian internationalism. They declared that a civil war was preferable to a blood bath with their brothers of other countries.

But the revolutionary struggle against war, the civil war against the imperialist war, found its most conscious and resolute expression in the theory and practice of the Russian Bolsheviks. As early as July 1914 the proletariat in Petersburg was fighting on the barricades. In the first period of chauvinist frenzy the iron fist of the military dictatorship was able to keep down the revolutionary movement, but the Bolshevik group in the Duma made an open declaration of struggle against the crime of the tsarist government and placed themselves at the service of the

<sup>1</sup> Adherents of the paper *De Tribune*. — Ed.

organisation for carrying on illegal revolutionary work among the workers and soldiers; for this they were all exiled to Siberia.

Thus, in the time of greatest trial, it was shown that it was precisely the strongest parties, the parties of the most important imperialist countries, which failed most shamefully, and that in the war it was not the radical resolutions, passed unanimously or with overwhelming majorities, which determined the action of the parties, but the ideas of the reformists, a thousand times condemned and rejected at all party and international congresses. It was not the centre, but the frank and unashamed opportunists who took over the leadership. There were the decisions of International congresses imposing on all parties the duty of voting against military expenditure; for the German Party there was the decision of the Magdeburg Congress of 1910, condemning outright approval of the budget; there was the International's decision of 1904 which forbade the participation of socialists in bourgeois governments even more sharply than that of 1900, but in Germany as in France, in England as in Belgium, the Social Democrats voted for the war credits. In France, England and Belgium socialists entered the government and if they failed to do so in Germany and Austria it was because — as subsequent developments showed — the bourgeoisie in those countries did not consider it expedient at that time to take Social Democrats into the government. The Stuttgart and Basle resolutions, demanding revolutionary struggle against war and the utilisation of the crisis engendered by war for the overthrow of capitalism, were a dead letter to the leaders of those parties.

It is necessary to explain from the Marxist standpoint why, in that crisis, the centre surrendered so completely to reformism, why opportunism in its most repulsive form, in the form of social imperialism, triumphed.

The centrists were always trying to find a middle path between the revolutionaries and the reformists. Neither adaptation to the existing bourgeois order nor preparation of the masses for the revolutionary struggle, but opposition within the boundaries of legal parliamentary and trade union action — that, briefly, was



more or less the theory and practice of the Marxist centre in the peaceful period which preceded the world war.

So long as that comparatively peaceful period lasted, so long as great crises did not compel definite decisions and so long as the Social Democratic parties did not embody a power great enough to give great historical importance to their decisions, it was possible to adopt this middle position of "pure" opposition without revolutionary consequences.

But as the practice of a proletarian mass party this policy became impossible the moment that the outbreak of imperialist war placed the existence of all the belligerent states at stake. Kautsky's prudent proposal to refrain from voting on the war credits was quite rightly ignored by all the sections because such an expedient, the symbolical expression of the desire to avoid a decision, was impossible in such a situation. The war had to be fought, or fought against. A party with four and a quarter million adherents closely observing the attitude of their leaders could not simply protest in parliament and then quietly evade all responsibility. Against the mighty war machine of the bourgeoisie, against the raging chauvinism of the whole bourgeois world, against the terrorism of the military dictatorship, the workers' parties could only take up the fight if they were prepared to bear all the consequences of the struggle, that is, if they were guided by revolutionary perspective and by revolutionary determination.

Because the revolutionary perspective, the faith in the revolutionary strength of the masses, the will to revolutionary action was lacking in the centrists, they saw no other way in practice than that of consciously and consistently following the path of the reformists. In fact, for the South German opportunist Frank, who in Baden had been fighting for years to get approval of the budget, it was the obvious thing to vote for the war credits and to enlist as a volunteer.

For Hyndman, who regarded naval armaments in England as an essential defence against the German danger, it was nothing more than an act of consistency to proclaim war on Prussian militarism.

For the Jaurèsists, who had introduced a bill concerning the more effective defence of the country and who, even in the days of peace, had taken the road of government participation, it was, again, merely an act of consistency to accept posts in the ministry in time of war.

But what reasons did Kautsky, Friedrich Adler, Longuet and Co. adduce to justify the policy of defence of the bourgeois fatherland? In 1914-1915 Kautsky published in the *Neue Zeit* the notorious articles which later appeared in pamphlet form under the title *Internationalism and the War*.

In the pitiful rigmarole of which this complaisant purveyor of "Marxist" theories to justify the actions of the Party Committee showed himself to be a master — and never more so than at that moment — one thing was clear: without a revolutionary perspective, it is impossible to find any other way than that of social-patriotism.

Kautsky's philosophy ran on the following lines: In every past war Marx and Engels and their followers propounded this question: "Of which power, or group of powers, would the victory be more favourable for the international proletariat?"

"In peace the obvious position of the Social Democracy, as representative of the lowest ranks of the people, is that of opposition to any government — until it has itself won the strength to take over the government. In wartime it is placed in the unenviable situation of supporting a government, once it decides to take sides with one of the belligerent states. If that government is its own government, that implies voting the means to carry on war, complying with the demands of a government to whom, in peace time, not a man nor a penny would have been granted."

Thus, for Kautsky, there was only one question — whether the victory of the Central Powers or the Triple Entente was "in the interests of the proletariat," whether the German and Austrian, or the Russian, English and French governments should be supported. And since this is a question impossible to answer, Kautsky found it quite natural for the German Social Democrats to desire the victory of the German armies and the French socialists the victory of the French armies — of course, always in the interests of the proletariat.



The essence of the Stuttgart and Basle resolutions, that the proletariat is interested, not in the victory of one capitalist government, but in the overthrow of all capitalist governments, was completely forgotten.

The fear of revolutionary struggle, which actually lay at the basis of centrist theory, was expressed somewhat ingenuously by the representative of the Rumanian Party in the I.S.B., Rakovsky (who later went over to the left wing). Rakovsky asked what the Austrian Social Democrats should have done after the outbreak of war. "There would have been only one way—insurrection." But if there was no certainty of success, such a movement, whether it took the form of insurrection or strike, was bound to develop into civil war, to disorganise the machinery of government and further the interests, not of the Austrian Social Democrats, but the Serbian chauvinists. Consequently no Social Democratic party could begin such a movement, if hostile armies stood on the frontier, without the certainty of success.

This profound consideration, which left the international proletariat, as an independently acting factor, completely out of account, gave rise to the notorious Kautskyist thesis: "The International is not an effective instrument in war time, it is essentially an instrument of peace," and to Rosa Luxemburg's brilliant slogan in her *Junius Pamphlet*: "Fight for peace, class struggle in peace." Friedrich Adler wrote in similar strain in the *Vienna Kampf* in 1915: the only policy suitable for socialists in time of war is the policy of silence. Since the practical decision was between civil war against imperialist war and support of the imperialist war, the centrists were bound to surrender to social-imperialism. They who, during the debates on the mass strike which had occupied the preceding years, had opposed revolutionary action, they who were unable to draw from the Russian Revolution practical lessons for the conduct of the workers' struggle, they who were nervously anxious to continue in the old rut while gigantic new conflicts approached — they could do nothing, when the catastrophe happened, imperatively demanding revolutionary action, but supply "Marxist" arguments to justify the imperialist

actions of the openly reformist elements. If the centrists in the Independent Labour Party conducted themselves to some extent better than their comrades in Germany, France and Austria, it was only because they were comparatively so small and powerless; their rejection of war did not mean revolutionary action against war, their fight did not menace the security of the national frontiers.

How was it that opportunism had eaten so deeply into the socialist organisations of precisely the leading imperialist countries? For in fact it was a case not only of the treachery of the leaders, it was the complete failure of the great mass organisations together with their leading bodies, for at first, despite their shameful treachery, the leaders were able to maintain their influence over the organised workers.

The fact that this reformist decay had gone deeper in the countries with the most powerful imperialist position and the greatest imperialist super-profits showed where the causes of degeneration were to be sought. In the middle of the previous century Marx and Engels had explained the bourgeois development of the British labour movement, the formation of a corrupt leadership at the head of the trade unions, by the monopoly position of British capitalism, which meant that the upper section of the workers enjoyed a standard of life above the average and therefore entertained feelings of solidarity with the ruling classes against the exploited workers in other countries, particularly in the colonies from which the super-profits of imperialism were mainly drawn. We have already referred to this fact.

This also explains why it was first of all and particularly the trade unions which were affected by this reformist infection; why, for example, in Germany, the preponderant influence of the trade union leaders determined the victory of opportunism in the German working class movement.

In the trade unions the skilled workers outweighed the unskilled. The trade union organisations enabled the skilled workers to obtain by trade union methods, in the comparatively peaceful epoch of the advance of German imperialism at the begin-



ning of the twentieth century, a constant, if modest improvement in their standard of living. In addition there were the numerous state social institutions which persuaded the workers that the state to some extent assured their existence. Thus there arose the labour aristocracy, as represented by Bernstein when he said that the phrase "the workers have no fatherland" no longer applied to the modern state,<sup>1</sup> or by Gustav Bauer who declared that the workers with their organisations had a great deal to lose.<sup>2</sup>

The imperialist world war offered a frightful lesson of how the international proletariat had to pay for the illusion of a harmony of interest between itself and the imperialist states.

2. *The Bolsheviks Raise the Standard of the Third International; Zimmerwald and the Zimmerwald Left*

1914—1916

While the official leaders and the biggest parties in the Second International behaved treacherously, and while small groups of proletarian internationalists in all countries began to rally together, there was one party which with unswerving consistency drew conclusions from the bankruptcy of the Second International and clearly formulated the situation, the perspectives of development and the tasks of the international proletariat in the new epoch of war and revolution: that was the Bolshevik Party under Lenin's leadership.

As early as the first days of September 1914 Lenin, who had gone to Switzerland immediately after his release from prison in Galicia, submitted to a small group of party comrades his theses "The Tasks of the Revolutionary Social-Democracy in the European War," containing even then all the basic ideas of Bol-

<sup>1</sup> Bernstein, *Premises of Socialism and the Tasks of Social-Democracy*, p. 204 (German).

<sup>2</sup> We cannot enter more deeply into this question here; it has been thoroughly dealt with in Lenin's article "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism," *Against the Stream*, p. 510 (Russian), and his "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism," *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX.

shevik strategy and tactics in the struggle against imperialist war.<sup>1</sup> Assertion of the collapse of the International through the betrayal of socialism by its opportunist leaders, particularly the leaders of the centre; the demand for ruthless struggle against Great-Russian chauvinism and the tsarist monarchy; whose defeat would be the lesser evil; propaganda for the socialist revolution; the necessity for organising illegal groups and cells in all armies.

On November 1, there appeared the theses of the Central Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party on the war and Lenin's article "The Position and Tasks of the Socialist International,"<sup>2</sup> historic documents which clearly lay down the attitude of revolutionary Marxism to all the questions raised by the war.

The first thing to be realised was that the collapse of the Second International was not the accidental error of individual leaders, not a temporary deviation of individual parties, but the triumph of opportunism in the International. Even if, in the crisis of war, various regroupings took place, if individuals such as Guesde in France or Lensch in Germany, who had formerly stood close to the revolutionary Marxists, were seized by the wave of chauvinism, if individual reformists for the time being deserted the social-imperialists and took sides with the pacifist opposition, as MacDonald did in England or Bernstein in Germany, that did not change the essence of the position — the opportunists' support of the imperialist war and the revolutionaries' hostility to the war.

A Marxist cannot deal with the question of defence of the fatherland unless he starts from the question of the concrete historical character of the war. If it is an imperialist war — as all the socialist parties maintained on the very eve of its out-

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 61—64. The only slogan contained in these theses which was soon dropped was that for a "Republican United States of Europe." The incorrectness of such a slogan was pointed out by Lenin against Trotsky in an article which appeared in August, 1915 (*ibid.*, p. 269). He pointed to the inadequacy of the slogan of a republic for the advanced capitalist countries in his criticism of the *Junius Pamphlet*, *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX (1916).

<sup>2</sup> *Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 76 and 84.



break — if it is a war for the division of Asia and Africa, for the annexation of the iron ore deposits of Briey and Longwy, for the decision of the competitive struggle between German and English capital, for the Bagdad railway and Constantinople, then it is the most vile treachery to describe the capitalists' fight for profits as a fight for the defence of the fatherland. The proletariat must expose this treachery and issue the slogan of transforming the imperialist war into the civil war.

Does that mean, in the demagogic way in which Kautsky put it, that revolutionary socialists wanted immediately on the outbreak of war to replace imperialism by socialism? Lenin answered:

"Such a transformation, of course, is not easy, and cannot be accomplished by the individual parties at will. Such a transformation, however, is inherent in the objective conditions of capitalism in general, in the epoch of the final stage of capitalism in particular. In this, and only in this direction, must the socialists conduct their work. To refrain from voting for military appropriations, to refrain from aiding and abetting the chauvinism of 'our' country (and its allied nations), to fight, in the first place, against the chauvinism of 'our' bourgeoisie without being confined to the legal forms of struggle when the crisis has set in and the bourgeoisie itself has done away with the legality created by it — this is the *line* of work that leads to civil war and that will bring it about at this or that moment of the all-European conflagration."<sup>1</sup>

The slogan of the revolutionary worker is not "peace at any price," for the peace of the imperialists is merely an armistice, a preparation for new conflicts. "The fairy tale of the war to end all wars is an empty, harmful fable;" only in the struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie in all countries can the unity of the workers of different countries be restored. Therefore it is necessary to organise a new International.

"Overwhelmed by opportunism, the Second International has died. Down with opportunism, and long live the Third International, purged not only of deserters . . . but also of opportunism!"

"The Second International did its full share of useful preparatory work in the preliminary organisation of the proletarian masses during the long

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

'peaceful' epoch of most cruel capitalist slavery and most rapid capitalist progress in the last third of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The Third International is confronted with the task of organising the forces of the proletariat for a revolutionary onslaught on the capitalist governments, for civil war against the bourgeoisie of all countries, for political power, for the victory of Socialism."<sup>1</sup>

Lenin began a pitiless struggle for this revolutionary line. Not a mutual amnesty among the social-imperialist traitors, but their sharpest condemnation before the working masses; ruthless struggle against centrist attempts to gloss over that betrayal and the sharpest division from all those "socialists" who condemned the war from the standpoint of pacifism but were incapable of revolutionary action, united procedure with all sincere opponents of imperialism without making any concessions to confusion or hesitation — these were the principles on which the Bolsheviks laid the foundation of the new, the Communist International.

Under the iron fist of the military dictatorship in Germany the proletarian opposition against social-imperialism developed slowly, painfully slowly. On December 14, Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring and Clara Zetkin issued a declaration against Südekum and Richard Fischer who, in the party press of foreign neutral countries, had defended the policy of voting for the war credits. The declaration merely stated that the signatories entirely disagreed with this official policy. In the first months of the war Karl Liebknecht tried to influence the Party Committee to make a protest against the annexation campaign and to suppress the chauvinist excesses of the Social Democratic press. But he was soon convinced of the futility of all such efforts.

On December 2, 1914, the question of war credits came up for the second time in the Reichstag. This time Liebknecht was determined that nothing would induce him to place formal discipline higher than the principles of proletarian internationalism. In vain he went among the 14 members of the Reichstag group who had voted with him against the decision to

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 89.



approve the war appropriations, to find even one with the courage to make with himself an open protest. They all absented themselves from the session. Quite alone, amidst the howling of the patriotic pack, Liebknecht voted against the war credits.

The important sections of his speech ran as follows:

"Here are my reasons for voting as I do on today's motion:

"This war, which was desired by none of the peoples who are taking part in it, is not being waged in the interests of the German or any other people. It is an imperialist war, a war for the capitalist control of world markets, for the political control of important areas for industrial and banking capital...

"The German slogan 'Against tsarism' — just like the English and French slogan 'Against militarism' — serves the purpose of rousing the noblest instincts, the revolutionary traditions and hopes of the people in the interests of national hatred. Germany, equally to blame with tsarism, the model of political backwardness to the present day, has no calling as an emancipator of the peoples...

"A rapid peace, a peace that humiliates nobody, a peace without annexations, is to be desired; all efforts in that direction are to be welcomed. Only the strengthening of the tendencies in all belligerent states making for such a peace can stop the bloody carnage before the peoples taking part are completely exhausted. Only the peace that grows on the soil of the international solidarity of the working class and the freedom of all peoples can be an enduring peace. So even now, in war time, the proletariat of every country must work together in socialist work for peace.... Protesting against the war, its sponsors and directors, protesting against the capitalist policy which conjured it up and the capitalist objectives which it pursues, against the plans of annexation and the violation of Belgian and Luxemburgian neutrality, against the military dictatorship, against the social and political disloyalty of which the government and the ruling classes are still guilty, I record my vote against the war credits demanded."

The party majority carried on a furious campaign against this breach of discipline; in the bourgeois press Liebknecht was denounced as a fool and a criminal, but to the workers of all countries his vote was a signal that proletarian internationalism was not dead in Germany, that there were other socialists besides Südekum and Hänisch, Ebert and Scheidemann, the extollers of German imperialism. Liebknecht's speech, which the president of the Reichstag did not permit to be included in the official steno-

graphic records, was distributed in thousands among the German working class.

The first attempt to organise an international conference during the war was undertaken by Clara Zetkin as international women's secretary. In March 1915 an international women's conference met in Berne, at which Germany, France, Hungary, Russia, Poland, Italy, Holland and Switzerland were represented. Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, upheld the Bolshevik platform. Nevertheless a pacifist resolution, which failed to lay down a clear line on the decisive question of the class struggle, was accepted by a large majority. The manifesto was of such a general character that women representatives of the most frankly social-patriotic parties, such as the French and the Dutch, had no hesitation in subscribing to it in the name of their parties. It was a repetition of the old mistake of the Second International, the mistake of diplomacy in dealing with opportunism.<sup>1</sup>

At Easter 1915 the socialist youth organisations in Berne took a similar step. On this occasion the representatives of ten countries assembled together to protest against the war and the complete failure of the International Youth Secretariat which, following the example of the I. S. B., had ceased its activities on the outbreak of war. But neither did the decision of this conference contain any clear demarcation from social-pacifism. Shortly afterwards, however, the Youth Bureau set up at the conference, under Willi Münzenberg's leadership, decided to adhere to the left wing led by the Bolsheviks.

The inadequacy of a mere protest against war and of the slogan of an immediate democratic peace was particularly apparent when, in June 1915, Kautsky and Haase, the leaders of the German centre, published, together with Bernstein, a manifesto in favour of peace. A few months of war had sufficed to shake the masses free from their patriotic war madness. They were driven to resistance not only because Wilhelm's promise that "before the leaves fall you will be home again" had proved nothing but empty

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 192, and note.



words and the frightful mass murder seemed to have no end, but because, more and more clearly, the masses saw the social background of the war, the huge gains of the war profiteers, the unbridled appetite of the annexationists and, in contrast, the growing poverty of the hinterland. The centrists were aware of this mood when they opposed to the "hold out" slogan of the Party Committee their pacifist slogans of peace. But the slogans of social-pacifism did not point the way to a really enduring peace; they diverted the attention of the masses from the only correct road of revolutionary struggle.

In calling an international socialist conference the question immediately arising was the relationship to the social-pacifist centre. The Central Committee of the Bolsheviks insisted that only really revolutionary socialists should be invited. The leaders of the Italian and Swiss Social Democratic Parties, who were in charge of the preparations, decided to exclude from the invitation only those parties whose frankly social-patriotic character made their participation in an international conference virtually impossible.

In fact various attempts made by the socialists of neutral countries, such as Holland and America, to convene an international conference, had come to nought. The social-patriots divided according to the coalitions of the imperialists, the "Entente socialists" at a conference in London, the "Central Power socialists" at Vienna and the neutrals at Copenhagen. Naturally enough, none of these conferences could take up an international proletarian attitude, they could only accuse the Social Democrats in the other camp and defend their own sins.

In September 1915 the first international conference of revolutionary socialists met at Zimmerwald. The composition of the conference indicated the growth in the opposition to social-imperialism in all countries, but also the lack of clarity within that opposition. From Germany there came, not the official leaders of the centre, it is true, but Ledebour and Adolf Hoffmann, who were on the left wing of that group. For the "International" group whose leader, Rosa Luxemburg, was in prison, came Ernst

Meyer and Bertha Thalheimer and Julian Borchardt for the editorial board of the journal *Lichtstrahlen* which was at that time close to the left radical group led by Radek. The French metal workers' union was represented officially by Merrheim and the opposition in the socialist party and trade union federation was also represented; the Italian Party was officially represented as well as the Socialist Party of Rumania and the "narrow" Bulgarians. In England the I. L. P. and the anti-Hyndman opposition in the B. S. P. had decided to send delegates, but the British government prevented them from making the journey. The Russian delegation consisted not only of Lenin and Zinoviev for the Bolsheviks, but also those representatives of the Menshevik organisation committee, Martov and Axelrod, who were opposed to the social-patriotic wing of the liquidators, as well as Trotsky, who at that time hesitated between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks; there were also present representatives of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the Latvian Social Democrats and the Jewish *Bund*. The Polish revolutionary group was represented by Radek, Warski and Lapinski, the Dutch by Roland-Holst and the fairly strong Swedish and Norwegian organisations by Höglund and Nerman.

The conference voted unanimously in condemnation of the imperialist war and social-imperialism, but it was by no means united on the conclusions to be drawn therefrom. The majority of those present shrank from the idea of an organisational split and the foundation of a new International. The lefts, who lined up under the leadership of the Bolsheviks and to whom Radek, Höglund and Borchardt adhered, moved a resolution proclaiming the principles of Bolshevism. It branded not only imperialism as the cause of the war, but also official social-patriotism and the centrist social-pacifism of the Kautskyists. It called upon the proletariat, without giving up the struggle for any partial demands, to utilise the crisis unleashed by the war to attack the foundations of capitalism.

"The signal for this struggle is the struggle against the World War, for the speedy termination of the slaughter of nations. This struggle demands



the refusal of war credits, quitting the cabinets, the denunciation of the capitalist, anti-Socialist character of the war from the tribunes of the parliaments, in the columns of the legal and, where necessary, the illegal press, the sharpest struggle against social-patriotism, and the utilisation of every movement of the people caused by the results of the war (misery, great losses, etc.) for the organisation of street demonstrations against the governments, propaganda of international solidarity in the trenches, the encouragement of economic strikes, the effort to transform them into political strikes under favourable conditions. Civil war, not civil peace — that is the slogan!

"As against all illusions that it is possible to bring about the basis of a lasting peace, the beginning of disarmament, by any decisions of diplomats and the governments, the revolutionary Social-Democrats must repeatedly tell the masses of the people that only social revolutions can bring about a lasting peace and the emancipation of mankind."<sup>1</sup>

When the majority at the conference rejected this resolution a manifesto was unanimously accepted which was, in some essential points, more backward than the resolution of the Zimmerwald lefts. It was particularly characteristic that the right wing of the conference, led by Ledebour, would not at any cost accept the unconditional obligation to reject war credits. This social-pacifist group was not convinced of the necessity for a break with the opportunists, although disrespect for the discipline of the social-imperialist parties was bound to have this result.

Moreover they maintained no consistent attitude on the question of defence of the fatherland. Ledebour, for example, thought it correct at that time to vote against war credits because the German army was quartered on enemy ground. But he believed that the question would take on a different colour if enemy armies were in Germany and Germany had to defend itself. That implied making the principle of the attitude to imperialist war dependent on the situation in the arena of war and rejecting any mass action against war. For it is clear that once a proletarian party with its roots in the masses fights against the war, not with empty protests, but with real activities, with demonstrations and strikes, with fraternisation in the trenches, with illegal as well as legal propaganda against the belligerent governments, par-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 478.

ticularly in the army, such a struggle necessarily weakens the fighting strength of the army and makes the conduct of war more difficult. If such a struggle against war is successful, it must lead to military defeats, it must further the defeat of one's "own" government.

Whoever does not dare to draw this conclusion of furthering the defeat of "one's own fatherland," whoever shrinks from the reproach of "traitor to the fatherland," is incapable of carrying on the struggle against war, for whatever the occasion of the war may be, the possibility of hostile invasion exists, the existence of the belligerent states is placed at stake by a defeat.

Whoever does not believe in the possibility of revolution cannot find an answer to this question. For the contention that it is a matter of indifference whether the Russians rule in Germany or the Germans in France, as Hervé maintained, was best refuted by Hervé himself when he gave up his anti-militarism on the outbreak of war and volunteered for service like the best of chauvinists. Only the recognition that in the epoch of imperialism conditions are ripe for the proletarian revolution supplies an answer to the question: what will happen if the revolutionary struggle against war leads to the defeat of our own government?

For the proletarian party that seriously sets itself the task of utilising the crisis to overthrow capitalism, the answer is clear: every defeat weakens the power of the government, of the ruling classes. The more serious the defeat, the better for the revolutionary class. "A revolutionary class in a reactionary war cannot help wishing the defeat of its government,"<sup>1</sup> wrote Lenin in a polemic directed against Trotsky. If one sees, as at that time Trotsky and Kautsky saw, in the defeat of one's own country merely the victory of the imperialist enemy, then this revolutionary principle is incomprehensible. But the defeat of the reactionary government of one's own country creates the best conditions for the victory of the revolution in that country and consequently for the beginning of the revolution in all other countries.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 234.



Only when the proletarian revolution has triumphed and the revolutionary country is threatened by hostile powers, only then can and must the proletarian party take up the defence of the fatherland, organise it, place themselves at its head, as the heroic Paris proletariat did in 1871. In their theses published in 1915 the Bolsheviks saw this clearly. But such revolutionary ideas were strange to the Social Democrats who, like Ledebour, vacillated between Kautsky and Liebknecht. Lenin pointed out the most important mistake of the first Zimmerwald manifesto in refraining from an open admission of the necessity for the revolutionary struggle by a direct discussion of the methods, in not mentioning the maturity of conditions from the point of view of socialism, although that was essential to tactics directed towards the social revolution, in failing to condemn the dangerous and shameful lies of the social-chauvinists and particularly their "left" defenders, although these were more dangerous and more shameful than the imperialist lies of the bourgeoisie, against which the manifesto protested.<sup>1</sup> Finally, Lenin pointed out that it mentioned the violation of duty on the part of a number of socialist parties and the International Socialist Bureau but did not analyse the real cause and meaning of this collapse.

Nevertheless Lenin considered it correct to agree to this inconsistent manifesto for it was one step forward in the fight against opportunism and it would have been sectarian not to take that step together with those socialists who had not yet decided on resolute struggle; the lefts, however, were to continue frankly and clearly to express their own standpoint and to retain the right of criticism. These were the Bolshevik tactics at the time that the revolutionary forces were rallying: to proceed unitedly in every practical struggle against imperialism and social patriotism, but to criticise clearly and ruthlessly all the weaknesses and superficialities of the movement; to differentiate between the still confused tendencies, to win the left revolutionary elements for a consistent revolutionary policy, to expose the weak, hesitating

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 346.

elements doomed to fall back into reformism and to undermine their influence among the masses.

Thus, at the Zimmerwald Conference, Lenin and the Bolshevik Party laid the foundations of the principles, the organisation and the tactics of the Third International, the germ of which was represented by the Zimmerwald lefts.

The conference decided to set up an international socialist committee to maintain contact between the organisations represented.

With great joy the Bolsheviks greeted a letter from Karl Liebknecht and his slogan: "Civil war, not civil peace." In the revolutionary group in Germany, which in January 1916 was formed into the Spartakusbund, they saw the embodiment of revolutionary Marxism in that country, but the relatively low stage of revolutionary clarity reached in Germany was made abundantly clear by the attitude adopted by the German delegation at the conference. Zinoviev was speaking not only for himself when he wrote, after the conference:

"But the conference undoubtedly proved that the former role of the German Social Democracy is finally played out; the heritage of the past weighs too heavily even on the oppositional elements for them to be able to become leaders of the new International."

It is certainly true that the development of the German opposition and the crystallisation of its ideas were considerably impeded by the unprecedented terrorism of the state of siege. Karl Liebknecht had been conscripted into the army, Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin were in prison, revolutionary shop stewards were spied upon, not only by the police, but also by the reformists.

In addition they encountered the greatest difficulties in the publication and distribution of illegal revolutionary literature. All these factors made the formation of a revolutionary group more difficult, particularly in a party such as the German which, since the abolition of the anti-socialist laws, had become unused to illegal work. Thus Lenin explained the theoretical weaknesses of the *Junius Pamphlet* written by Rosa Luxemburg in prison



early in 1915, in saying that in the author one could trace the "individual person"

"...who has no comrades in the illegal organisation who are used to thinking revolutionary slogans out to their end and systematically training the masses in their spirit. But such a defect — and it would be wrong to forget this — is not the personal fault of Junius, but the result of the weaknesses of all the German lefts, who are bound on all sides to the opportunists by the closely woven net of Kautskyist hypocrisy, of pedantry and the 'love of peace.'"<sup>1</sup>

The *Junius Pamphlet* was a passionate indictment of imperialist crime and social-patriotic treachery. Therein lay its strength, its weakness in the confusion of the slogans and the perspectives. This was shown in the surrender to defeatism, in the formulation that victory or defeat would be equally fatal, and still more in the development of a national revolutionary programme for the Great German Republic for which the proletariat would declare itself ready to defend its country. In the environment of the arch-reactionary imperial Social Democracy, which could have competed with the professors for the title of bodyguard to the Hohenzollerns, it needed revolutionary courage merely to advance the programme of the bourgeois republic. Nevertheless it was a mistake not to carry on propaganda for the socialist republic, the real aim of the proletariat in the epoch of imperialism. With Rosa Luxemburg this formulation was only a temporary deviation, as her subsequent consistent struggle against the bourgeois republicans and for a soviet republic after November 1918 demonstrated.<sup>2</sup> But after the victory of the bourgeois revolution in Russia, after the proclamation of the bourgeois republic, the Mensheviks took up the position of "revolutionary" defence of the fatherland, thereby lining up with the French social-imperialists who also justified their social-patriotism by the necessity of defending the republic.

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX.

<sup>2</sup> It would have been unnecessary to deal with this question here had not Rosa Luxemburg's error, pointed out by Lenin in 1915, been used at the present time by "left" Social Democrats of the type of Levi to justify their social-patriotic programme of defence.

In January 1916 a national conference of the Spartakusbund drew up directions for the tasks of the international Social Democracy, containing the ideas of this group on the form and content of the new International which was to be created. The most important advance marked by these directions as against earlier indecision, was the recognition that the bankruptcy of the Second International made the creation of a new International necessary.

This new International was to have a fundamentally different character from the one disintegrated by the war.

"The centre of gravity of the class organisation of the proletariat lies in the International. In times of peace the International decides the tactics of the national sections on the questions of militarism, colonial policy, commercial policy, the May Day celebration and the tactics to be employed in time of war.

"The duty of carrying out the decisions of the International takes precedence of all other duties. National sections which act contrary to these decisions place themselves outside the International."

The proletarian internationalists of Germany recognised that the principle which the Second International had never put into practice, the principle of international discipline, of the unconditional execution of international decisions, must form the basis of the new International if it, too, was not to be a knife without a blade. It is true that complete clarity on the character of such an organisation was not achieved; if the carrying out of international decisions is to be really assured, the questions which are to be decided by the International cannot be limited, as was done in this instance, to a definite sphere of international policy; a complete break had to be made with the evil tradition of national autonomy. Less than ever in the age of imperialism can questions of international policy be separated from external problems. A party which, in times of peace, deviates from the line of irreconcilable class struggle in its fight against the bourgeoisie, will, in time of war, when the pressure of the class enemy is a thousand times greater, really be incapable of carrying out its international duty. A party which does not keep its ranks clear of opportunism before the decisive revolutionary crisis arrives will be unable,



when the decisive moment comes, to fulfil its obligations as leader of the revolution. Consequently the Third International had to go beyond the formulas of the "International" group.

The directions also contained the thesis refuted by Lenin in his criticism of the *Junius Pamphlet*.

"In the present era there can be no national wars. National interests can only be used as a deception in order to place the working masses at the service of their deadly enemy, imperialism."

This thesis takes account only of the imperialist states, whose wars of robbery can be justified by no national interest. But it leaves out of account that the suppression of the more backward nations by the great imperialist powers is an essential part of imperialism and that consequently national wars of liberation directed against imperialism, particularly in the colonies, are not only not impossible, but are in fact necessary. In actual fact the world war gave rise to a number of colonial revolutions and, in connection with them, national wars.

In February 1916 the International Socialist Committee set up at the Zimmerwald Conference instituted a discussion with several affiliated organisations, including representatives of the Bureau of the International Socialist Youth organisation which, under Willi Münzenberg's leadership, was taking up to an increasing extent the struggle against social-pacifism in addition to the struggle against social-patriotism. The result of the discussion was a circular which drew attention to the growth in the revolutionary movement: demonstrations in Germany against the increased cost of living, protests against conscription in England, political strikes in Russia, fraternisation in the trenches. The attitude of the German majority which, by a peace interpellation, had helped the pacifists to conceal the annexationist nature of the government's policy; the French Socialist Party which at its congress had again ratified the policy of the *union sacrée*, voting for war credits and a coalition policy and initiating a bitter struggle against the minority; the social-patriotism of the majority in Austria and England and the minority of the Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries in Russia — all these were sharply

condemned. The attitude of the centre was not criticised, upon which Lenin, Zinoviev and Radek, by whose efforts the passages which showed an advance on earlier documents of the Zimmerwald movement had been inserted, qualified their votes with the reservation that the appeal, though marking a step forward, was not adequate in all its sections.

It was again declared that since the outbreak of the war the I. S. B. had failed completely. Huysmans, the international secretary, had declared at the Dutch party congress that the duty of national defence had to be recognised, but that, notwithstanding, the International would arise "more alive than ever." On this point the circular read:

"Any attempt to re-establish the International by a mutual amnesty among the compromised opportunist leaders, while the policy of civil peace is recognised and continued, is in reality nothing but a pact against socialism and a blow directed against the reawakening of the revolutionary working class movement."

The necessity of united revolutionary action against imperialism was emphasised even more clearly than at Zimmerwald, the circular demanding a complete break with the policy of civil peace and the rejection of war credits without reference to the strategic situation.

A manifesto issued at about the same time by the French minority shows the same tendency towards growing enlightenment. The centrist preachers of reconciliation with the social-patriots were openly attacked.

"Between those who have remained true to the banner of social revolution and the social-patriots, the mercenaries, the prisoners or the willing slaves of imperialism, stand the adherents of a socialist armistice without principle and without clarity. In the name of socialist unity they ask the minority to disarm themselves in face of the social-patriots just as these latter, in the name of civil peace, have laid down their arms in face of our class enemies.

"We will not and we cannot recognise such an armistice, so long as the fate of socialism is at stake."

The French socialists also clearly realised the necessity for a new International, warning the workers against the attempts of the



"social-patriotic sentinels of the bourgeoisie to establish, with the help of the I.S.B., sham contacts between the official socialist parties," and added:

"A new International can be established only on the steadfast principles of socialism. The allies of the ruling classes, the ministers, the servile deputies, the advocates of imperialism, the agents of capitalist diplomacy, the grave-diggers of the Second International, can have no part in its creation."

So the second international conference, which met at Kiental in Switzerland in April 1916, encountered more favourable conditions for the development of the new proletarian International. In Germany particularly the struggle against social-patriotism had reached a new stage. The "International" group openly demanded the withdrawal of financial support from chauvinist party organisations. In March 1918 for the first time the centrist group of Haase and Ledebour dared to vote, 18 men strong, against the war credits, upon which the majority excluded the minority from the fraction and the latter constituted themselves as the Social Democratic Labour Group. Thus the logic of events forced the break from the social-patriots as an essential preliminary to the re-establishment of international unity.

At the Kiental Conference, however, the majority had not yet decided to draw this conclusion. The question arose practically on the subject of relations with the I.S.B. which had been transferred to the Hague and which, under the guidance of Belgian and Dutch social-chauvinists, was working as an agent of Entente imperialism, although it is true the Bureau had made some attempt to establish contact with the Kautskyists and the social-patriots of the Central Powers. In the Hague Bureau the Zimmerwald lefts saw, as Zinoviev put it, "the germ of the future international joint stock company for misleading the workers of all countries." Under the slogan of "unity and the re-establishment of the Second International this company will inaugurate the fight against the internationalists."

From such an estimation of the position followed the necessity for a sharp struggle against this institution. But the Menshevik

Axelrod proposed that a mass campaign for convening the I.S.B. should be undertaken.

Serrati, leader of the Italian Socialist Party, who lined up with the reformists on this question, together with Adolf Hoffmann and Hermann Fleissner, present as representatives of the Kautskyist opposition, suggested co-operation with the I.S.B. on the ground that it was there that the social-patriots must be attacked and exposed. After lengthy and violent discussion a compromise resolution, "The I.S.B. and the War," was agreed upon, which politically made great concessions to the left but was, from the organisational standpoint, a partial surrender to the centre. The social-patriotic activities of the I.S.B. were sharply condemned, the attempt to re-establish international connections by a mutual amnesty among the supporters of war credits described as a "separate peace among the social-patriots," the defeat of social-imperialism declared to be an essential preliminary to the rebirth of the International. In the event of the I.S.B.'s being convened, the representatives of the Zimmerwald organisations were to take part and to oppose to the social-patriots the revolutionary principles of the internationalist opposition. In addition the affiliated parties were given the right, in compliance with an ultimative demand from the Italians, to demand on their own initiative the convening of the I.S.B. At the same time however, on a motion from Zinoviev, the International Socialist Committee was instructed to convene a conference before the meeting of the I.S.B. in order to determine the procedure to be adopted there by the Zimmerwald comrades.

The resolution on the peace question, unanimously adopted, cleared up the relations to social-pacifism. The resolution declared that courts of arbitration, disarmament, democratic foreign policy could bring about no enduring peace within capitalism. The fight for a lasting peace must consist in the fight for socialism.

Annexations and war indemnities were denounced and the slogan issued that the economic consequences of the war were to the borne, not by the defeated people, that is, the working class, who were already bearing the burdens of the war, but by the



possessing classes through the cancellation of all state obligations arising from the war.

The Central Committee of the Bolsheviks put before the Kiental Conference a declaration expressing principles on which the Kiental Conference, because of the opposition of the centrists, could come to no clear statement of opinion. It exposed the social-patriots' talk against annexations; for annexation is not merely the military occupation of a country, but also forcibly retaining the given country within the state, against the wishes of the population. Every violation of the self-determination of nations is an act of annexation. Whoever is a sincere opponent of annexations must be in favour of freedom for the colonies and the oppressed peoples. Any programme of peace during an imperialist war is a piece of hypocrisy if it is not connected with an appeal to the masses to change the imperialist war into a civil war for socialism. But that means the frank admission that revolutionary action during war is impossible unless one's "own" government is threatened with defeat in war. It is impossible to carry on the revolutionary struggle against war without an illegal organisation. Members of parliament who only protest against the war in parliament but do nothing to lead the workers, together with the illegal organisation, into the struggle, are not carrying out their duty. The unavoidability of a split must be recognised, for in the attitude to war two irreconcilable positions are apparent.

"To re-establish the bankrupt I. S. B. is a task that may well be conceded to the social-chauvinists of all countries. The duty of socialists is to make clear to the masses the inevitability of separation from those who, under the banner of socialism, fall in with the policy of the bourgeoisie."

After the Kiental Conference Zinoviev wrote that it could not yet be said that Zimmerwald had become the germ of the Third International; it was still quite possible for the right wing of the Second International to return. But the slogan of the lefts remained unchanged: "For the Third International."

### 3. The Russian February Revolution and the Stockholm Conference

1917

The new International had to be an International of revolutionary mass action. The conditions for its establishment ripened in proportion with the growth in the revolutionary resistance of the masses to the imperialist war criminals. When, on May 1, 1916, Karl Liebknecht was arrested for organising a demonstration against war and against the government in the Potsdamer Platz, Berlin, and sentenced to four years' imprisonment and six years' loss of rights, a great wave of mass demonstrations and protest strikes spread over Germany.

With this growth in resistance the opposition within Social Democracy also increased; in close association with the military authorities the German Party Committee used the most despicable methods in its struggle against the opposition. Against the wishes of the membership, oppositional editors were excluded from the *Vorwärts*, the *Bremer Bürgerzeitung* and the *Schwäbischer Tagwacht*, oppositional shop stewards in the factories and trade unions were denounced to the military authorities and sent to a "heroic death for the fatherland."

In January 1917 the Central Committee of the German S.D.P. decided to exclude from the party the entire opposition, including the centrist *Arbeitsgemeinschaft*.

In Austria the organised revolutionary opposition was very weak, the pressure of the military dictatorship and mass impoverishment being even greater than in Germany. There was not even a scrap of that sham parliamentarianism which in Germany gave Liebknecht the opportunity of conducting revolutionary propaganda. Since the outbreak of war the prime minister, Count Stürgkh, had not convened parliament. In contrast to Germany, the "Hurrah" attitude had from the first been confined to a minority of the population, the Germans and Hungarians. The oppressed Slavic peoples and the Italians hated the war which in 1914 Bethmann-Hollweg had called a Germanic war.



Thousands of mutinous soldiers, thousands of Czechs, Ruthenians, Serbs, Croats and Italians, suspected of antipatriotic propaganda or espionage, were condemned to death by the military courts. But the Vienna *Arbeiterzeitung* indulged alternatively in the writings of the patriotic apostles of war Leuthner, Pernersdorfer and Renner and in the oppositional pacifist phrases of the reformists gathered about Bauer.

These were the conditions which in October 1916 drove Friedrich Adler to turn his revolver on the embodiment of the Austrian military dictatorship, Count Stürgkh, in order, as he said in court, "to create the psychological conditions for revolutionary mass action in Austria."

Friedrich Adler, who, at the beginning of the war, had taken up a position somewhat similar to Kautsky's, and never had any strong connections with the revolutionary opposition, did not find the way to revolutionary mass action, but even his act was an indication of the revolutionary crisis which followed in the wake of the war.

While the Bolsheviks expressed their complete solidarity with Friedrich Adler's revolutionary act, making clear at the same time that the tactics of revolutionary Marxists were not those of individual terrorism but of revolutionary mass action, *Vorwärts* proclaimed its sympathy and solidarity, not with the martyred and gagged Austrian proletariat, but with the time-honoured grey-beard on the throne in whose name hundreds were hanged daily.

"The grey-haired Austrian Emperor! He has lost brother, son, wife, nephew and heir. Now, in the most difficult hour, he has lost the man who was his constant adviser; every human feeling bows before the old man on the throne. Who has lived through and borne what he has lived through and borne?"

The Vienna *Arbeiterzeitung* expressed its sympathy for the dead man, "who always took his work seriously and was ever a straightforward and industrious worker."

There is no insult and humiliation which socialism at that time was not made to suffer at the hands of the official representatives of Social Democracy.

The opportunist "realist politicians" had nothing but scorn and disdain for the revolutionary socialists who, firmly believing in the strength of the masses, had from the first day of the war directed their propaganda to changing it from an imperialist into a civil war. But what the reformists of every tendency believed to be a mad utopia took on reality in Russia in March 1917. The imperialist war had not only again impressed on the consciousness of the masses the savagery and corruption of tsarism, it had so deeply undermined the tsarist machinery of government by serious defeats at the front, by growing indignation in the army and by the loss of confidence even among the bourgeoisie, that within a few days it gave way before the revolutionary onslaught of the workers and soldiers in March 1917. A large part of the troops went over to the side of the fighting workers in Petrograd and Moscow. The Tsar abdicated and workers' councils (Soviets) sprang up all over Russia. But the leadership of the revolutionary movement was not yet in the hands of the proletarian party; the great majority of the workers followed the petty-bourgeois peasant party of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the reformist Mensheviks. Consequently the first provisional government of the revolution was a coalition led by the liberal representatives of Russian capitalism and the Socialist-Revolutionary Kerensky. The Petrograd Workers' Soviet, under Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary leadership, actually supported the bourgeois government and merely retained the appearance of control over it.

From the first day of its existence, Lenin exposed the provisional government, in articles written in Switzerland, as a government of the capitalists, as an instrument of Entente imperialism that would, on its behalf, again incite the masses to death in the trenches of the imperialist war. That was why he sharply opposed the "revolutionary defence of the fatherland" preached by the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, which at first found some adherents among the Bolsheviks. Despite the triumph of the revolution, despite the establishment of a republic, Lenin explained, the character of the war had not changed; it was still an imperialist war so long as the Russian



government, in alliance with the French and English imperialists, fought for the objects laid down in the secret treaties of those imperialist powers.

On April 3, Lenin, with a number of revolutionary emigrants, returned to Russia. Ludendorff had permitted the Russian revolutionaries to travel through Germany in a sealed carriage. He hoped that the Bolshevik bacillus would pass Germany by but would disintegrate the Russian army. He did not dream that a year later Bolshevism, despite the sealed carriage, would have infected Germany so far that the national hero would find it convenient to make off to Sweden under the protection of blue spectacles and a false passport provided by an official of the government socialists.

Arriving in Petrograd, Lenin formulated his attitude to the Russian and the international revolution and to the proletarian International. It is given in detail in the famous "Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution," known under the name of the April Theses.<sup>1</sup>

The class character of the revolution in its first stage was indicated by the transference of the state power into the hands of the bourgeoisie. The representatives of the bourgeois parties who held all the influential positions in the government had not broken with the monarchists. The government did not in the slightest deserve the confidence of the masses. No support could be given to it. The government had ratified the secret treaties with the imperialist powers of England and France; it was continuing the imperialist war, it was incapable of bringing about a democratic peace.

But, besides this imperialist government of the bourgeoisie, there existed the Soviets. They embodied a form of the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants, but they voluntarily left the power to the bourgeoisie and its state force, being satisfied merely with the appearance of control over the government. Thus a double rule had arisen, characteristic of a transition stage, for

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XX, Book I, pp. 130—157.

two different classes cannot for any length of time rule side by side. The mass of workers were still followers of the petty bourgeoisie, not having clearly recognised the hostility of their class interests to the interests of the bourgeoisie. Thence it followed that the first tasks of the Bolsheviks were propaganda among the masses to destroy the illusions of the revolution, to destroy faith in the bourgeois government, to expose the imperialist character of the slogan of defence of the fatherland. The February Revolution was only the first step towards ending the war; to end it finally, a second step was necessary, the transference of state power to the proletariat.

In the Soviets, the revolution had begun to create a new type of state. The parliamentary republic is only one form of the rule of the bourgeoisie. To turn back from the Soviets to parliamentary democracy would be retrogression. It was necessary to create a new state of the type of the Paris Commune. That meant replacing the bureaucracy by the Soviets, replacing the police and the army by a proletarian militia; it meant nationalisation of the banks and syndicates, control of production by the workers, the immediate seizure of all manorial lands by the peasantry, the proclamation of the right to self-determination of the peoples suppressed by tsarism. These were to be the first steps of the revolution.

Lenin considered the tasks of the Russian Revolution within the framework of the international struggle against imperialism. Therefore one section of the April Theses was devoted specially to the position of the Socialist International.

Three tendencies were distinguished:

1. The social-chauvinists, *i. e.*, socialists in words, chauvinists in deeds. The adherents of defence of the fatherland in the imperialist war. These are class enemies, people who have gone over to the bourgeoisie (Plekhanov and Co. in Russia, the Scheidemanns in Germany, Guesde and Sembat in France, Bissolati and Co. in Italy, Hyndman, the Fabians and the official leaders of the Labour Party in England, Branting and Co. in Sweden. Troelstra's party in Holland, Stauning's in Denmark, etc.).



2. The centre, whose adherents vacillated between the social-chauvinists and the internationalists; they called themselves Marxists and internationalists, demanding peace without annexations, but also peace with the chauvinists; they were in favour of unity with the social-chauvinists and against a split.

"The 'centre' is a realm of sweet petty-bourgeois phrases, of internationalism in words, cowardly opportunism and fawning before the social-chauvinists in deeds.

"The gist of the matter is that the members of the 'centre' do not believe in the necessity of the revolution against their bourgeois governments; do not preach such revolution; do not carry on any determined revolutionary struggles, but in order to dodge such struggles resort to trite and most 'Marxist' sounding excuses.

"The social-chauvinists are our class enemies, they are bourgeois elements in the labour movement. Objectively they represent strata or groups of the working class bribed by the bourgeoisie (better wages, positions of honour, etc.) and helping their bourgeoisie to rob and oppress small and weak peoples, to fight for the division of capitalist spoils.

"The members of the 'centre' group are routine worshippers, slaves of rotten legality, corrupted by parliamentarianism, etc., bureaucrats accustomed to nice sinecures and 'peaceful' labours. Historically and economically they do not represent any special stratum of society; they only represent the transition from the earlier labour movement as it was between 1871 and 1914, from a period that had given much valuable experience to the proletariat, particularly in the indispensable art of slow, continued systematic organisation work on a large, very large scale, to the new period which has become objectively necessary since the first imperialist world war which has inaugurated the era of social revolution."<sup>1</sup>

Those he nominated as representatives of the centre were Kautsky, whom he described as the example of the complete collapse of Marxism, unparalleled spinelessness, miserable vacillations and betrayals ever since August, 1914, Haase, Ledebour and the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* in Germany, the Longuet group in France, in England MacDonald and other leaders of the I. L. P. and a part of the B. S. P., in America Hillquit, in Italy the right wing of the Socialist Party, Treves, Turati and Modigliani, Robert Grimm in Switzerland, Victor Adler in Austria, the Mensheviks

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XX, Book I, p. 146.

around Martov in Russia. Of course, individual persons drifted from one tendency to the other, but that did not make them any the less distinct tendencies.

3. The internationalists in deeds who, as Lenin said, were most nearly represented by the Zimmerwald lefts. Lenin, who carefully weighed every word that he wrote, thus implied that even the group which had been formed in the struggle against the centre at Zimmerwald did not embody complete clarity and unity in revolutionary theory and practice, so that they could not be identified without qualification with revolutionary internationalism. Subsequent development, the desertion to the right of part of the groups represented by the Zimmerwald left, confirmed this estimation of their position.

The distinguishing characteristic of this tendency was its complete break with both the social-chauvinists and the centrists. Their principle: the chief enemy is in the home country, the principle of undeviating revolutionary struggle against their "own" government.

The representatives of this tendency in Germany were the "International" group and the socialists gathered about the Bremen newspaper, the *Arbeiterpolitik*.

"Liebknecht alone represents socialism, the proletarian cause, the proletarian revolution. The rest of the German Social Democracy, to quote the apt words of Rosa Luxemburg, is a 'stinking corpse.'"

Among the French socialists, Guilbeaux and Lorient were named as those standing closest to the internationalists in deed; (Bourderon and Merrheim, representatives at the Zimmerwald Conference, had in the meantime deserted to social-pacifism); among the English, MacLean, who had been sentenced to hard labour because of his revolutionary fight, and the opposition in the I.L.P. and B.S.P.; in America the Socialist Labour Party under the leadership of Daniel de Leon who had been steeled against opportunism in his long fight against the social-imperialist trade union leaders of America, and a minority in the Socialist Party; the Tribunists in Holland led by Pannekoek, Gorter, Wynkoop and Roland-Holst, in Sweden the party of the "youth" under



Höglund's leadership, Trier in Denmark, the "narrow" socialists in Bulgaria, Serrati in Italy, Radek, Hanecki, Rosa Luxemburg and Tyszkö (better known by the name of Leo Jogiches, organiser of the Spartakusbund) in Poland, the "youth" and the "lefts" in Switzerland, and in Austria the lefts grouped around the "Karl Marx" Club.

"It is not a matter of shadings; these exist even among the 'lefts.' It is a matter of the entire tendency. The point is, that it is by no means easy to be an internationalist in deeds during a terrible imperialist war. Such people are rare, but it is on them alone that the future of socialism depends; they alone are the leaders of the masses, not the corrupters of the masses."

The April Theses already referred to the breakdown of the Zimmerwald International, pointing out that the centrist majority of the Zimmerwalders had already amalgamated in their own country with the social-pacifists.

"We can no longer stand this Zimmerwald mire. We must not, on account of the Zimmerwald 'Kautskians,' remain more or less allied with the chauvinist International of the Plekhanovs and Scheidemanns. We must break with this International immediately; we ought to remain in Zimmerwald only to gather information.

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

"Let us not wait, let rather our party found at once a third International, and hundreds of socialists imprisoned in England and in Germany will heave a sigh of relief; thousands upon thousands of German workers who are now organising strikes and demonstrations in an effort to frighten the scoundrel and murderer, Wilhelm, will read in illegal leaflets about our decision, about our fraternal confidence in Karl Liebknecht (and in him alone), about the decision to fight even now the revolutionary defencists; they will read and gain strength in their revolutionary internationalism."

Finally Lenin declared that it was necessary to change the name of the party to that of the Communist Party. The name Social Democracy is scientifically incorrect, for the object of the revolutionary proletariat is not socialism, the first stage of communist society, but complete communism.

Democracy is only one form of class rule; the object of the proletarian revolution is the abolition of all class rule by means

of the proletarian state, which is not a state in the real meaning of the word, for its object is to abolish itself. At the time the Second International arose Marx and Engels put up with the opportunist expression "Social Democracy," for at that time the order of the day was not the socialist revolution, the fight for communism, but the slow, patient work of organisation and education. But in the new revolutionary epoch the majority of the Social Democratic leaders and parties have gone over to the side of the bourgeoisie and therefore it would be assisting these treacherous leaders to continue in their work of betraying the masses if the old name were retained.

"And here we are," Lenin concluded, "afraid of our own shadow. Here we are keeping on our backs the same old soiled shirt . . . .

"It is high time to cast off the soiled shirt, it is high time to put on clean linen."

At the April Conference Zinoviev was not so sharply opposed to Zimmerwald as Lenin. Lenin's proposal to remain with the Zimmerwalders merely for the purposes of information did not get a majority.

In the resolution which was accepted it was declared to be the task of the party to carry on the tactics of the Zimmerwald left within the Zimmerwald bloc, but at the same time the Central Committee was commissioned to take steps immediately to found the Third International.

Nor did the resolution refer to the collapse of the Zimmerwald movement; it merely stated that that movement had been weakened by the influence of the centre and that in a few countries, it had become a brake on the revolutionary movement.

If Lenin's slogan, at once to found the Third International, was not immediately realised, if two years passed before its formal establishment, the reason is to be found in the comparatively slow development in Germany and the other capitalist countries. In Germany in April 1917 the centrists, having been expelled by the Party Committee, founded the Independent Social Democratic Party at a conference held at Gotha. The Spartakusbund affiliated to this organisation but expressly declared that it retained full



freedom of political action. The Bremen left radicals who, under Radek's influence, stood close to the Zimmerwald lefts, rejected affiliation. At the same time that Lenin was urging the immediate establishment of the Third International, the German internationalists still considered it necessary to maintain organisational unity with the centrists, in order not to lose contact with the Social Democratic workers.

In the "International" group, which found it very difficult to keep contact with their best members, at that time in prison, there was no understanding of the problems of the Russian Revolution, of the differences between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks; but both at Zimmerwald and Kiental their representatives had supported the Zimmerwald lefts.

This confusion of thought was also manifested in the disputes which arose on the question of calling an international socialist conference at Stockholm. The call for the conference had first been made by a Dutch-Scandinavian committee at the instance of the Scheidemann supporters, who had obviously been acting in this matter at the request of their government. They had communicated to the Danish social-patriot Borgbjerg, organiser of the conference, the conditions on which they, the German social-patriots, were prepared to make peace. Obviously the German government, which saw the prospect of a victorious peace fast disappearing and the revolutionary movement in the country growing, was putting out a "peace feeler."

The April conference branded this betrayal on the part of the social-imperialists who, under the mask of an international socialist conference, would, as agents of imperialism, haggle for an imperialist peace. Although this position was quite clear, the Petrograd Workers' Soviet, led by the Mensheviks, undertook to convene the conference. The Swiss centrist Grimm, secretary of the International Socialist Committee, in accordance with the decision at Kiental to hold a preliminary meeting, invited the Zimmerwald parties to Stockholm. This was preceded by a discussion between Grimm and Angelica Balabanova, representatives of the I. S. C. and representatives of the Russian parties, on the question of

participation in the Stockholm Conference, convened by the social-patriots.

Bitter disputes arose at this meeting. Since the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries had formed a coalition government with the bourgeois democrats and were jointly preparing the offensive in Galicia, the antagonism between the Bolsheviks and the reformist parties had become very much more acute. It was growing more and more clear that these parties embodied two classes and that by the logic of revolutionary development they would be driven to opposing sides of the barricades.

The Bolsheviks first demanded formal condemnation of the Mensheviks' coalition policy.

The majority of the conference was opposed to participation in the government but, on various pretexts, a decision on the matter was not taken. Nor could agreement be reached on the question of attendance at the Stockholm Conference. In accordance with the decision of their April Conference, the Bolsheviks were definitely opposed to attendance. The Mensheviks, and Grimm with them, maintained that the position was considerably changed by the fact that it was the Petrograd Soviet which was convening the conference. Finally it was agreed to make no decision but to call a Zimmerwald Conference, before the opening of the Stockholm Conference, which would decide the question.

Significant light was thrown on Grimm's attitude when it became known that he was, through the Swiss Embassy, in touch with the German government and wished to negotiate with the Kerensky government for a separate peace. When this scandal was discovered, Grimm was compelled to resign from his post as secretary of the I. S. C.

The "International" group was also definitely opposed to participation in the Stockholm Conference of social-patriots. Franz Mehring wrote a letter to Chkheidze, the president of the Petrograd Workers' Soviet, in which he declared that in no circumstances would the German internationalists take part in a conference with government socialists. That Chkheidze himself was nothing



but a government socialist, an ally of the bourgeois parties, a tool of imperialist policy, Mehring, of course, did not understand at that time.

The political character of the Menshevik "internationalists" was clearly revealed on the question of the conditions of admission to the Stockholm Conference. In the first invitation the Workers' and Soldiers' Soviet had wished to admit only those organisations which

(1) were working for a peace without annexations or indemnities, based on the right of nations to self-determination;

(2) wanted to bring about peace by means of the mass struggle of the proletariat;

(3) recognised the necessity of putting an end to civil peace.

Thereupon Vandervelde, "Minister of His Majesty the King of Belgium," who, both before and after the Russian Revolution, considered it his duty as an internationalist to induce the Russian socialists to carry on the war, and Albert Thomas who, as Minister for Munitions, gained the knowledge necessary for his subsequent sacred work as leader of the International Labour Office, replied that they did not know what was meant by "annexations" and that they were entirely in favour of the German Social Democrats' giving up civil peace, although there could be no talk of such action for the socialists of France, England and Belgium, the countries which had been attacked. The reply of the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary heroes of the Soviet came promptly—the renunciation of civil peace could not be made a condition of their participation in the conference.

Then the Bolsheviks declared that they would break with the Zimmerwalders if they were to take part in such a conference. The Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany, on the other hand, stated that they would attend. Only then did Angelica Balabanova, in the name of the I. S. C., inform the arrangements committee that she could not take part in the preparatory work and had to wait the final decision of the next Zimmerwald Conference. Thus in fact arrangements for the Stockholm Conference were made by the social-patriotic representatives of the

Workers' and Soldiers' Soviet and the Dutch-Scandinavian committee.

The Zimmerwald lefts published a sharp statement against the "peace conference" planned by the social-patriots. It made clear the role of the hesitating social-pacifist elements who, by their readiness to take part in a conference that would give the "socialist" agents for imperialism the appearance of acting as protagonists of peace, themselves became prisoners of the social-imperialists and helped the struggle against the revolutionary elements.

And after all these differences, the Stockholm Conference of the social-imperialists did not take place. The socialist gentlemen of the Entente countries did not yet consider it necessary to produce their comedy of peace. Encouraged by Thomas, Henderson and Vandervelde, Kerensky began in July the new offensive in Galicia. More bitter persecution of the revolutionary workers, the defeat of the July demonstration in Petrograd, during which the slogans of the workers had been Bolshevik slogans, represented the introduction to the offensive. At the same time the Kerensky government informed the British government that the conference called by the Soviet did not in any way involve the official Russian government.

The French social-patriots declared that they would have nothing to do with the German majority socialists until the question of war guilt had been cleared up. English social-imperialists asseverated that at Stockholm they would not be in favour of terminating the war until the just aims of the Allies had been accomplished. All these socialists took it for granted that they should discuss with their governments the expediency of the conference. Finally the Entente socialists decided to organise a meeting in London; the time for a peace conference had not yet come. That was in the thirty-seventh month of the war.

Some of these heroes, who were unwilling to bear the responsibility for the breakdown of the conference, excused themselves by saying that their governments would not grant them passports. This was the melancholy end of the social-patriots' peace comedy.



Early in August the Zimmerwald parties held their meeting. The question of participation in the social-patriots' conference was again discussed, for it was not yet clear that it would not take place. Only the Mensheviks and some of the Independents (Haase and Stadthagen) declared in favour of participation; all the rest were against. On behalf of the "International" group Käthe Duncker put forward a statement which showed that at that time the decisive representatives of the group were very far from understanding the problems of the Russian Revolution. The statement ran:

"The Russian proletariat, left to itself in the struggle for peace, will be forced, by the passivity of the workers in other countries, to take the road of military activity and consequently of co-operation with the bourgeois classes, thus diverging from the road of class struggle and the free development of revolutionary energy."

This recognises the principle of the Menshevik theory of revolutionary defence of the fatherland and even excuses Kerensky's offensive by the passivity of the working masses in other countries. In the face of such utter confusion of thought in the application of the principles of proletarian internationalism to the situation in Russia, the representatives of the Bolsheviks demanded a clear decision. They condemned Menshevik participation in the capitalist war government, by which the Mensheviks had made themselves jointly responsible for the re-introduction of the death penalty for revolutionary soldiers, for the shooting of workers who demonstrated and for the suppression of revolutionary organisations.

If the conference, because of the poor attendance, was unwilling to take organisational measures against the Mensheviks, it should at least have defined its political attitude to the Mensheviks' treachery to the principles proclaimed at Zimmerwald. The Bolsheviks made it clear that they would not take part in the discussions so long as the Zimmerwald movement failed to declare unambiguously with whom it proclaimed solidarity, with those who fought for the ideas of Zimmerwald or with the agents of the Russian Cavaignac.

Nevertheless the conference considered it admissible to concern itself with this question. A manifesto was accepted calling upon the workers of all countries to organise a united international mass strike for peace and the emancipation of the peoples. Since a number of important parties were not represented, it was decided to keep the manifesto secret until affiliated parties had declared their agreement.

It was indicative of the cowardice and lack of character among the leaders of the I. S. D. P. of Germany that shortly afterwards, in September, Luise Zietz appeared before the I. S. C. on behalf of the Party Committee with the request that the publication of the manifesto should be postponed. It was at that time that the revolutionary organisation of sailors in the North Sea fleet had been discovered and the leaders, Reichpietsch and Köbis, the first martyrs of the revolutionary struggle against the war, executed by order of the German military courts, had been accused of maintaining connections with the I. S. D. P. The leader of that party, that sorry hero Dittmann, had in the Reichstag dissociated himself from the revolutionary movement in the navy and declared himself a supporter of legality at any cost. Fearing government reprisals, the leaders of the I. S. D. P. were extremely anxious to prevent the publication of the manifesto.

Radek insisted upon immediate publication. The I. S. C. decided to wait. Meanwhile events were occurring which stirred the workers of all countries more profoundly than any appeal or manifesto.

#### *4. The October Revolution, the Beginning of the Proletarian World Revolution*

1917—1918

On November 7, (October 25, old style) the revolutionary proletariat of Petrograd, led by the Bolsheviks, rose in triumphant insurrection, overthrew the Kerensky government and established the Soviet power, the dictatorship of the proletariat. A wireless



message "To All" announced the victory of the proletariat, the beginning of the new epoch of proletarian world revolution, the resolute determination of the victorious proletariat to put an end to imperialist murder.

The Bolsheviks, whom for years the opportunist "realist" politicians had derided as sectarians and dreamers, demonstrated in action the correctness of their principles and their tactics. In the backward peasant country of Russia the proletariat for the first time placed itself successfully at the head of the exploited masses, driven to desperation by war, in order to seize power and to terminate the imperialist war.

The first act of the Soviet government was to take steps to realise in practice the peace programme of the proletarian internationalists. On November 8, the Soviet Congress issued the Decree on Peace, proposing to all belligerent peoples and governments the immediate conclusion of a democratic peace on the basis of the nations' right to self-determination, a peace without annexations or indemnities and an immediate three months' armistice. The Soviet government put forward no unconditional demands, it was ready to examine any proposal of peace. It decided to abolish secret diplomacy and to publish immediately all secret treaties and to annul all imperialist agreements. At the same time it appealed to the class conscious workers of the advanced countries, England, France and Germany, to remember their revolutionary traditions and to do all in their power for the cause of peace and the emancipation of the toiling and exploited masses from every form of serfdom and exploitation.<sup>1</sup>

In putting the decree forward Lenin said that as early as March 1917 the Petrograd Soviet had issued a peace appeal to the workers of all countries calling upon them to break the power of the kings, landlords and bankers. But at that time the Russian workers had not yet overthrown their own bankers; on the contrary, they were allied with them in the coalition government. Only now had the Russian proletariat overthrown their bankers.

<sup>1</sup> The decree is published in full in *Illustrated History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. II, pp. 433—434.

Although the governments of the imperialist countries did everything possible to stifle the voice of the proletarian revolution — Count Czernin, the Austrian prime minister, only allowed a badly mangled version of the manifesto to appear in the press, giving out that weather conditions had prevented the full text from being picked up — the workers grasped the significance of the world-historical transformation. The government of Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries had thrust the army into a new offensive. The Bolshevik government began its work with a universal offer of peace, followed a month later by the Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations. The Bolsheviks were well aware that a separate peace between a proletarian and an imperialist state cannot be a real democratic peace, but after the French and English governments had refused to take part in general peace negotiations, the Soviets sent their deputies to Brest-Litovsk with a double purpose in view: firstly, to expose by means of these negotiations the aggressive aims of the German and Austrian governments and, by opposing thereto their own proletarian policy of peace, to stir up the masses of those countries to struggle; secondly, to try, whatever the circumstances, to win a breathing space for the proletarian revolution, threatened both from within and from without, and for the masses of people, exhausted by the years of war.

As early as October 1915 the Bolsheviks had stated clearly and unambiguously that the proletariat, once it has won power, must be prepared to defend the proletarian fatherland against foreign capitalists. In putting forward the decree on peace, Lenin asserted the same principle. But at the same time he referred to the overwhelming war-weariness which obliged a government that really represented the interests of the masses of the people, to try first of all to put an end, at least for a time, to the murderous warfare.

The German and Austrian imperialists had declared their readiness to agree to a peace in accordance with the demands of the Soviet government. Their conception of such a peace was expressed with brutal frankness by General Hoffmann at Brest-



Litovsk, when, bringing his fist down on the table, he thundered: "We are the victors." The right of self-determination evidently meant that from the Baltic to the Black Sea, throughout the whole area occupied by the German troops, a chain of little thrones was to be created for the needy sons of German princes. Ruthenian, Polish and Ukrainian landowners were to produce their comedy of self-determination under the protection of German bayonets. The Bolsheviks refused to be a party to this act of treachery. As leader of the delegation, Trotsky refused to sign these conditions of peace, at the same time declaring that revolutionary Russia would not continue with the war. Thereupon the German troops began a new advance to the east.

For the masses of Germany and Austria, dying at the front and starving at home, the breakdown of the peace negotiations caused by the German and Austrian imperialists was a frightful disappointment. In January 1918 a mass strike of unparalleled fury broke out first in Austria and then in Germany. International solidarity, despite the shameful part played by the social-patriots, proved effective. But this was just the first onset of a revolutionary mass movement and the leadership of a revolutionary party, rooted among the masses and clear of purpose, was lacking.

The Victor Adlers in Austria and the Scheidemanns in Germany succeeded in gaining control of the movement. At the trial for treason held later in Magdeburg Scheidemann admitted that the war would have ended there and then had not the Social Democratic advocates of defence of the fatherland succeeded in placing themselves at the head of the movement in order to break it. The workers demanded that the conditions of peace put forward by the Russian representatives should be accepted and the state of siege declared at an end. Councils of workers began to be formed in Austria, but the reformists, who had managed to gain control of the movement, turned these revolutionary demands aside and stifled the movement with a few empty democratic promises from the imperial government. The influence of the Spartakusbund and the left wing of the I. S. D. P. was not strong enough to give the movement greater driving force. But the

January strike was the first answer to the appeal of the proletarian government in Russia: it was after all a turning point in the development in Germany and Austria; the spell was broken, the masses were again becoming conscious of their strength.

After the defeat of the January strike, however, the Soviet government could not count upon immediate relief through the action of the international proletariat; a revolutionary army to stem the tide of advancing German imperialism could not be raised in a few weeks. The peasants who formed by far the greater part of the army were anxious to get home in order to take over the land which the revolution had given them. In these circumstances the Bolshevik Party, guided by Lenin and against the wishes of a strong opposition within its own ranks, decided to accept the Brest-Litovsk peace in order to stay the advance of the German troops. The left opposition of that time, led by Trotsky and Bukharin, described this as treachery to socialism and an impermissible compromise with German imperialism.

Lenin rejected these ideas with determination. This was not a question of a voluntary alliance with the imperialists, like that concluded by the social-imperialists of all countries with their bourgeoisie, but an armistice with an enemy against whom at the moment they could not fight, an armistice concluded in order to win a breathing space so that, at a more suitable time, the battle could be carried on with greater strength.

The leaders of the Spartakusbund who, shut up within the prisons of German imperialism, could only base their judgment of events on bourgeois reports, also had the greatest misgivings on this point. They feared that the Russian Revolution would be broken by this compromise, but as internationalists they flung no reproaches at the leader of the Russian proletariat, fighting so heroically under the most difficult conditions; they appealed to the working class of Germany, whose passivity was to blame for the tragic position of the Russian Republic.

But the social-patriots sank lower and lower. When the Reichstag voted on the shameful Brest-Litovsk treaty, the most contemptible treaty in history, and doubly contemptible because



it was levelled against a people who had voluntarily laid down their arms, had refused to continue with the imperialist slaughter, these socialists refrained from voting, offering not the slightest opposition, not the least resistance to the fury of the German soldiery in Poland, in the Ukraine, in the Baltic countries and in Finland. In all these countries the German officers constituted themselves the guardians of the landowners against the workers and poor peasants. Even after the conclusion of the armistice and the peace treaty, they rendered active support to those who were opposing the Bolsheviks.

After the victory of the October Revolution the Zimmerwald I. S. C. exerted its influence to support the proletarian revolution. They appealed to the workers of all countries to follow the example of Russia, to set up workers' and soldiers' councils and to support the Soviet government's struggle for peace. They branded the shameful activities of the social-patriots who, in the entente countries, opposed the October Revolution because it worsened the prospects for the triumph of western "democracy," while in Germany and Austria they contented themselves with declarations of sympathy and did everything possible to prevent the spread of Bolshevik infection in their own country. Having at the beginning of the war justified their "defence of the fatherland" by proclaiming the necessity to fight against tsarism, they continued, even after the fall of tsarism, to vote the war credits, although the real character of the war as a brutal war of robbery had become clear to the blindest after the behaviour of the German delegation at Brest-Litovsk and the negotiations with Rumania at Bucharest. The attitude of the German social-patriots to the Finnish Revolution was particularly disgraceful. When, after the October Revolution, the Soviet government published the proclamation on the right of all peoples to self-determination, Finland seceded from Russia and set up an independent republic. The socialist party was extremely strong, having once gained a majority at the general elections, but this was lost in October 1917. There were powerful reformist and centrist tendencies in the party, which pursued no clear policy of struggle for power

but were ready to form a coalition with the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie, however, though weak in Finland, relied on the support of the Swedish and German bourgeoisie, and began the civil war. The proletariat answered with a general strike and formed a red guard. The proletarian revolution would certainly have triumphed had not the German troops marched in to save the class rule of the bourgeoisie by shooting thousands of workers.

This crime also was condoned by the German social-patriots. On April 24, 1918, *Vorwärts* wrote:

"However much, as Social Democrats, we may regret that we were forced to interfere in this internal confusion, caused to a large extent by the Russian Guards, we hope that Finland will live with us in friendship in the future."

Sirola, leader of the Finnish Social Democrats, wrote in an appeal to the international proletariat:

"We, Social Democrats of Finland, declare to the whole world that there is no villainous trick which the German social-patriots were not prepared to play."

In fact, to the extent that the imperialist war changed into a civil war, as foreseen by revolutionary Marxists, the functions of the social-patriots also changed. They were no longer satisfied with being the agents of imperialism, they became active collaborators in the civil war against the proletariat. By supporting the executioners of the proletarian revolution in the Ukraine, the Baltic countries and Finland, the German Social Democrats anticipated the part they were to play later in the German Revolution.

In August 1918 Kautsky wrote a pamphlet on the *Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, in which he showered the full measure of his counter-revolutionary venom over the Bolsheviks. In the name of pure democracy he protested against the revolutionary terror. This pitiful Marxist, who had discovered innumerable arguments to justify the slaughtering of millions of human beings, condemned the proletarian dictatorship because, in the midst of a world of counter-revolutionary enemies, it did not give the exploiters the right to organise resistance to the victorious working class, because it resolutely crushed any attempt at armed resistance.



In this pamphlet Kautsky wrote:

"The Bolshevik Revolution was built on the idea that it formed the starting point for a general European revolution. . . . That idea has not yet been realised."

Then, very diffusely, Kautsky proceeds to prove that Marxists should never base their tactics on the expectation of revolution at a fixed time and deduces from these profound arguments that the tactics of the Bolsheviks were "adventurist" and "un-Marxist."

In *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* Lenin replied that the Bolsheviks would never have been so stupid as to count upon the revolution at a fixed time, but based all their tactics on a recognition of the revolutionary situation in Europe and on the belief in the invincibility of the maturing world revolution.

In fact, on November 9, 1918, a few weeks after this dispute, the German monarchy, shaken to its very foundations by the defeats at the front (for its military power was its foundation), collapsed under the blows of the revolution. Seldom has philistine blindness before the approaching revolution been more rapidly exposed by facts themselves. But this did not prevent the wise heads of reformism continuing to console themselves at their congresses with disbelief in the world revolution.

The revolutionary sailors, workers and soldiers rose to overthrow the monarchy, to put a revolutionary termination to the war, although up to the last moment the Social Democrats did everything in their power to keep the masses back from action. In October 1918 Ebert and Scheidemann placed themselves at the disposal of the imperial government in the capacity of secretaries of state. But when the monarchy was lost, when the revolutionary mass movement grew to irresistible dimensions, they managed — just as in the January strike — to get at the head of the movement in order to betray it. Scheidemann proclaimed the republic and Ebert, the national saint of German reformism who had coined that famous phrase: "I hate the social revolution as I hate sin," was not a little indignant, but by their action at this

critical time Scheidemann and his companions proved the saviours of the German bourgeoisie.

It was not only the shameful counter-revolutionary treachery of the reformists which now became apparent, but also the weakness of the revolutionary movement in Germany. Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, recently released from prison under the pressure of the approaching revolution, threw themselves with all their energy and passion into the stream of the revolutionary movement. But the Spartakus movement was so weak among the masses that it could not gain the leadership of the workers' and soldiers' councils at any decisive point. The dominance of bourgeois-democratic illusions was inevitable at the beginning of the revolution. The same had happened in Russia. It needed some time and some experience for the masses to realise the necessity of going beyond bourgeois democracy to the proletarian dictatorship. But this step had to be taken under the leadership of a resolute revolutionary party deeply rooted among the masses, and such a party could not be created in a few weeks; its absence expressed the German working class's lack of revolutionary experience. The majority socialists were well aware of the weakness of the movement. In December, anxious to defeat the revolutionary movement before the mass of the proletariat had been drawn into the camp of proletarian revolution, they deliberately provoked struggles between the government troops and the armed workers and soldiers.

In this situation was held the inaugural congress of the Communist Party of Germany, December 1918. In the revolutionary struggles in Berlin the Spartakusbund had fought together with the I.S.D.P. At this time, however, this party as a whole showed by its indecisive vacillation between the Social Democratic counter-revolution and the revolutionary working class that in a revolutionary crisis a centrist party is the most serious obstacle to the revolutionary struggle. The Independents together with the followers of Scheidemann formed the first government of "people's deputies" which left the old bureaucrats at their posts, restored the power of the officers and continued with the occupation of the east and the war against Bolshevism; it limited as far as possible



the powers of the workers' and soldiers' councils and conceived its principal task in the economic sphere to be the suppression of the developing strike movement.

The Spartakusbund, which fought bitterly against this counter-revolutionary policy, could no longer remain in formal unity with the Independents. The formation of an independent party had become indispensable. But the inaugural congress of the C.P.G. showed the lack of clarity about the tasks of a revolutionary proletarian party which prevailed even among the most advanced section of the western European proletariat.

The congress accepted the programme drawn up by Rosa Luxemburg, under the title: *What Does the Spartakusbund Want?*

This programme marks a great step forward as against the Erfurt Programme of the German Social Democrats, which had for years been regarded as the last word in Marxism. It was no reform programme, but a programme of proletarian revolution, of civil war, of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The disarming of the bourgeoisie, the arming of the proletariat, the expropriation of the most important means of production, the taking over of power by the workers' councils — these were the most important demands contained in the programme. In her speech Rosa Luxemburg attacked the evil tradition of German Social Democracy which, by appealing to Engels' introduction to *Class Struggles in France*, had justified its rejection of armed struggle and limited itself to legal methods.

But on the essential questions of the relationship to the new International to be created, to the position of the socialist movement and the problem of organisation, clarity was wholly lacking from the programme, which on these points contained only the following sentence:

"The immediate establishment of connections with our brother parties, in order to place the socialist revolution on an international basis and to make and to assure peace by international fraternisation and the revolutionary rising of the world proletariat."

No word as to the necessity of a complete break with the Second International, no word as to the creation of the new Com-

munist International, no dissociation from centrism, no recognition of solidarity with the Bolsheviks. The congress, it is true, protested against the counter-revolutionary adventure undertaken by the Social Democratic government in the Baltic countries and urged defence of the Russian Revolution. It seemed as if the leaders of the Spartakusbund spoke on the question of the International less clearly at this congress than at previous meetings because they had misgivings about the tactics of the Bolsheviks but wished to avoid disputes with them at that time.

Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring and Clara Zetkin, the leaders of the Spartakusbund, had declared their unconditional and whole-hearted support of the proletarian revolution in November 1917. In the notes which she wrote in prison and in which she criticised the policy of the Bolsheviks, Rosa Luxemburg said:

"Whatever courage, energy, revolutionary vision and consistency a party can display at the historical moment has been displayed by Lenin, Trotsky and their comrades. All the revolutionary honour and capacity for action which was wanting in the Social Democracy in the west was represented in the Bolsheviks. Their October insurrection was not only the salvation of the Russian Revolution; it saved the honour of international socialism."<sup>1</sup>

In these same notes she opposed the fundamental principles of Bolshevik strategy and tactics, the distribution of the land among the peasants, the proclamation of the peoples' unfettered right to self-determination, the terrorist suppression of the counter-revolution and the abolition of bourgeois liberty.

In addition there was the long-standing difference between Rosa Luxemburg and the Bolsheviks on the organisation question. Lenin had built up the Bolshevik Party strictly on the principles of democratic centralism. For only a party that is based on iron discipline can lead the workers in the civil war.

A proletarian International that is established at the time when the civil war is on the order of the day in all countries must be

<sup>1</sup> "The Russian Revolution," in the *Literary Remains of Rosa Luxemburg* (German), published by Paul Levi in 1922, with an introduction by him. Levi uses Rosa's ideas to justify his own desertion; his anti-Bolshevik introduction has nothing in common with Rosa Luxemburg's attitude.



built up on this principle. But the inaugural congress of the Communist Party of Germany, at which anarcho-syndicalist tendencies were apparent in addition to the traditional left Social Democratic current, decisively rejected centralised organisation and wished to give the party a loose federalist form. It is idle to speculate how far Rosa would have overcome these false ideas in the practical experience of struggle. That they dominated the Spartakusbund at that time bears testimony to the weakness of the proletarian movement in Germany as in western Europe generally, a weakness which gave the reformists dominating power and caused the defeat of the first wave of the proletarian revolution outside Russia.

On the question of participation in the elections to the national assembly and of work in the reformist unions, the majority at the inaugural congress were opposed to Liebknecht and Luxemburg. This showed that the German revolutionary workers had not understood the tasks which Lenin placed in the foreground at the April Conference in 1917: first to win by patient and persistent propaganda the majority of the workers before taking up the decisive struggle for power.

The Social Democratic leaders of the counter-revolution saw this weakness. In January 1919 they provoked those struggles in which the finest protagonists of the German Revolution, Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Leo Jogiches and with them thousands of revolutionary workers, were murdered by the White Guards of the Social Democrat Noske.

In Austria, as in Germany, the job of checking and defeating the revolution was taken on by the reformists. Here the break-up of the empire that followed in the wake of military defeat led to a number of national revolutions in which the Social Democrats marched behind the bourgeoisie and exerted their influence to prevent the proletariat from going beyond the bourgeois-national revolution.

In 1918 the centrist leaders had formed a coalition with the bourgeois parties. By referring to Austria's powerlessness against the Entente they stifled every independent action of the proletariat.

Throughout western Europe, swept by the joy of victory and the prevalence of pacifist illusions about "the war to end all wars," believing that peace would be assured by Wilson's fourteen points, the soil was at first less favourable for the spread of the proletarian revolution.

Thus, outside Russia, the first impetus of the proletarian revolution led to no victory for the proletariat; nevertheless it meant an immediate and tremendous relief for the Russian Revolution. The greatest danger to the Soviet republic, the union of the two great capitalist coalitions for a joint attack on the proletarian revolution, was for the time being averted.



## CHAPTER IV

### GALVANISING THE CORPSE OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL; DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

1919—1923

#### 1. *The Reconciliation Feast of the Social-Patriots at Berne and the Foundation of the Communist International in Moscow*

1919

When thousands of proletarians were being murdered day after day in the trenches of the imperialist war, when international action, in the real meaning of the term, was a vital necessity for the working class, the leaders of the Second International could find no common meeting ground. But scarcely had the thunder of the cannon been silenced, scarcely had the imperialists met in Paris to divide the spoils, than the obedient slaves of the imperialist rulers decided to gather together in the servants' hall. Not the least important force driving these out-and-out nationalists to make a gesture of internationalism was the development of the revolutionary movement in all countries. The "socialist" lackeys of imperialism who were necessarily unable, during the imperialist war, to find a platform of joint struggle against imperialism, bestirred themselves to find a common platform of struggle against the proletarian revolution.

In Russia as in Germany it was already evident that, so soon as the class rule of the bourgeoisie was threatened, the reformists rallied the forces of the counter-revolution under the banner of "pure democracy." The proletarian revolution is directed against the existence of bourgeois society and consequently against the

existence of bourgeois labour parties. To the reformists, the re-establishment of their International was primarily a question of self defence against the proletarian revolution.

The reconciliation feast of the social-patriots took place in Berne in February 1919. A large number of parties — those which obeyed the decisions of the Zimmerwald Conference — were not represented. There were no delegates from Russia, Italy, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Rumania, Serbia, Finland, Latvia, Poland, the Youth International and the International Women's Secretariat. The German Independents and the French centrists, although they had been present at Zimmerwald, thought it expedient to howl with the social-patriotic pack. Nor did the Belgian Party take part. These chauvinists could not bring themselves to sit down at one table with men of their own sort from the camp of the "enemy."

The conference opened with a heated debate on the question of war guilt. The natural answer for a Marxist, that the capitalists of all countries were guilty of the world butchery, was not put forward. The socialists of the victorious entente wished to have their attitude in the war justified by a recognition of Germany as the aggressor, by a condemnation of the attitude of the German social-patriots and a vindication of their own attitude as justifiable defence of the fatherland. Had Germany been the victor, the German social-patriots would have demanded an admission of guilt from the "enemy socialists." Alfred Thomas in particular, the French minister for munitions, felt called upon to play the "irreconcilable." He hurled anathema on the majority socialists and asserted:

"At this moment I can think of nothing but the French soldiers who fought and fell for liberty and justice."

The German Independents took on the wretched job of excusing their companions in the majority party. Kurt Eisner rhapsodised about the future unity of Social Democracy. A small horde of "Prussian-mad militarists in Germany" were responsible for the war. They had all been mistaken at the beginning of the war, but now the German people was the most radical in the



world. Kautsky, too, preached unity, in which "the spirit of the Independents" would rule united Social Democracy; unity was essential against two dangers: Bolshevism and nationalism.

Longuet, the French centrist, preached justice for all sides. Neither the Bolsheviks (who had not the slightest intention of joining up with this organisation) nor the German majority were to be excluded. Friedrich Adler spoke in a similar strain. Finally the German majority, whose splendid isolation was thrown into sharper relief by the report which arrived early in the conference of the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg at the hands of the hired mercenaries of Noske, decided on a statement which contained the required admission of guilt.<sup>1</sup>

"By the revolution the German proletariat has overthrown and destroyed the old system responsible for the war. Whatever judgment may be made in detail of their policy during the war, the German Social Democrats have now proclaimed in deeds their resolute determination to devote all their strength to rebuilding the world shattered by the war and to fight in the League of Nations for socialism, together with the socialists of all countries, in the spirit and at the service of the International."

Thereupon the Berne Conference, in a resolution which was passed unanimously, decided that the "question of immediate responsibility" for the war was settled and agreed to leave to a future congress the "question of responsibility from the point of view of world history." The German Social Democrats had been condemned and amnestied. The social-imperialists of the Entente powers emerged as unspotted as their "attacked governments."

The discussion on the second point, which dealt with the pacifist swindle that was to keep the masses from revolutionary struggle, passed more peacefully. This was the real sphere of work for the Second International during the period of immediate revolutionary crisis at the end of the war. The masses still had weapons in their hands, they still burned with indignation over the four years of cruel suffering. In millions of hearts there had grown up the determination to put an end to the system that

<sup>1</sup> John de Kay, *The Spirit of the International in Berne*, p. 75 (German).

was to blame for those years. So the two groups of reformists, the social-imperialists and the social-pacifists, undertook together the task of holding the masses back from struggle, on the one hand by fine promises about the "war to end all wars" and the assurance of peace by means of the League of Nations, on the other by the bloody annihilation of the revolutionary vanguard.

The promises of President Wilson, the agent of American finance capital, to safeguard democracy and the right of self-determination by the victory of Allied arms in a League of Nations, became the gospel of the newly patched-up International. As the representatives of the Allied powers were in Paris at that time, haggling over the peace conditions, the socialists addressed to the imperialists all their requests in the matter of the League of Nations which was to be established. MacDonald declared that complete disarmament was necessary if peace was to be assured; and complete disarmament implied the abolition of the militia. The League of Nations should be composed of representatives of parliaments, not of governments, otherwise it would be nothing but a Holy Alliance. He even went so far as to compare the role that would be played by the League of Nations in relation to Russia with that played by the Holy Alliance in relation to the revolutionary movement in the early part of the last century.

The reproach levelled at the German Social Democrats, that they still held imperialist ideas, was answered by the man most fitted for the task, Hermann Müller, the future "armoured-cruiser Chancellor." He assured his hearers that German Social Democracy had always fought against militarism and a big navy, and particularly against naval competition. Standing armies should be replaced by peoples' armies, which would not be used for purposes of aggression. He concluded his speech with the vow:

"We Social Democrats will never be in a position to do anything that might in any way imply the re-establishment of militarism..." (!)

After the first broken vows had been pardoned, new ones could be made, and be broken at the very time that they were being



made. While Hermann Müller was making this speech, his party colleague Noske was at the head of the Reichswehr ministry which, led by monarchist generals, was again building up the "republic's defence force."

Finally the conference passed a resolution demanding that the League of Nations should arise from a just peace based on the principle of the peoples' right to self-determination, that it should consist of representatives, not of governments, but of parliaments and thereby of all parties. The right of self-determination, in its reformist interpretation, did not include the surrender of colonies; on this point a formula was found which the imperialists could use for a redistribution of the world:

"Peoples that have not yet reached the level required for self-determination should be protected by the League of Nations and their development furthered in such a manner as to fit them to become members of the League of Nations."<sup>1</sup>

Free trade and disarmament were recommended, but so long as the existence of an armed power was necessary, it should be under the control of the League of Nations.

Against whom was the League to use its armed forces? Obviously against the enemy of whom MacDonald had spoken, against Soviet Russia and the proletarian revolution.

The social-imperialists' conception of the right to self-determination was again indicated in the dispute on territorial questions. French and Germans fought each other on the question of Alsace-Lorraine, Czechs and German Bohemians on the question of the German settlements in Czecho-Slovakia. MacDonald quoted a memorandum of 1919 which proposed that the peace conference should proceed to re-divide colonies, the natives who were concerned to be represented. According to this resolution the African colonies should be placed under the control of the League of Nations. The resolution on the territorial question demanded plebiscites for the contested areas and rejected the determination of frontiers from the strategical point of view as well as annex-

<sup>1</sup> John de Kay, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

ations on historical or economic grounds. This magnificent resolution did not deter any of the parties represented at Berne from voting for the shameful treaties of Versailles, Trianon and Sévres.

The Russian question and the item on the agenda "Democracy and Dictatorship" gave rise to hot disputes. Two resolutions had been put forward on this point, one by the socialist minister Branting, and one by Adler and Longuet jointly. Branting's resolution ran:

"As all other congresses of the International, the Berne Congress takes its stand on the basis of democracy...The arbitrary seizure of individual factories by groups of workers is not socialism, but capitalism with more shareholders."

Since real socialist development was possible only in conjunction with democracy,

"... methods of socialisation which have no prospects of winning the majority of the people should not be adopted."<sup>1</sup>

The resolution was opposed to dictatorship, which was based on only a part of the proletariat and was bound to lead to civil war and reaction. A commission should be sent to Russia to investigate conditions there and a final decision on Bolshevism should be left to the next congress.

This frank anti-Bolshevism was too strong for the left wing of the conference, the centrists. Kautsky, it is true, moaned that Bolshevism had betrayed not only socialism, but the Russian Revolution as well, while Bernstein, the expert on questions of revolution, stated quite bluntly: Bolshevism is counter-revolution! But aware of the masses' sympathy for the Russian Revolution, MacDonald, Adler and Longuet considered it inexpedient to lay bare to such extent their counter-revolutionary souls.

The Adler-Longuet resolution, representing the centrist opposition against the social-imperialist majority, stated:

"The Berne Conference challenges criticism not because of the content of its decisions, but because these obvious resolutions were made too late, not during the war, but after its termination."

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82



These men who during the four years of the war had been unable to arrive at a common decision were now anxious to formulate a resolution which could not but increase the difficulties of the International.

"We are opposed to any condemnation of the situation in the Russian Soviet Republic, for the information that we have is not sufficient to enable us to form a judgment..."<sup>1</sup>

Without wishing to doubt the good faith of the Mensheviks present, they were compelled to ask for a hearing from both sides before a decision was taken. They voted against the resolution because certain sections of it could be used by the bourgeoisie against the Russian Revolution.

Loriot, the one delegate whose ideas were close to those of the Zimmerwald lefts, proclaimed his solidarity with the Soviet government and condemned the conference as a subsidiary concern of the Paris diplomatic conference.

Then, although no unity had been achieved on the most important questions, for or against the Russian Revolution, for the proletarian dictatorship or for bourgeois democracy, Branting announced triumphantly: "The International is again alive."

As to future work a decision was made which admitted in friendly fashion that the war "had created misunderstandings and grave differences of opinion" but it was hoped that the working masses would soon unite again on the principles of the International.

What those principles were was a mystery to the gentlemen who made the decision. The executive, consisting of Branting, Henderson and Huysmans, was commissioned to make preparations, in conjunction with the representatives of the affiliated parties, for a further conference. At its inaugural congress the Communist International described the Berne Conference as "an attempt to galvanise the corpse of the Second International" and the organisation which was to be called into life as a "yellow,

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

strike-breaking International which is and remains nothing but a tool of the bourgeoisie."

In fact, after four years of imperialist murder, after the unexampled treachery of the official leaders of Social Democracy, after the victory of the Russian Revolution and the beginning of civil war in Russia and in Germany, the re-establishment of the old Second International, as it existed before the war, was a ridiculous utopia. The two tendencies which could exist side by side in the time of peaceful preparation for the decisive struggle were now on opposite sides of the barricades. The revolutionary proletariat was creating its International of revolutionary action, the International of the traitors to socialism was bound to be an International of treachery to the proletariat.

Early in March 1919 the Inaugural Congress of the Third International was held in Moscow. Communist parties and revolutionary groups from nineteen countries were represented, some of them small propaganda groups, others parties which embraced a small minority of the organised proletariat. Nevertheless this congress embodied the greatest international power which the revolutionary proletariat had ever possessed. For one member of this International and its leading party was the Communist Party of Russia, the ruling party in a tremendous country. This International has at its disposal the power of a great proletarian state and is strong in the complete unity of its principles and tactics.

The different parties and groups which formed themselves into one organisation at Moscow were at different stages of development; they embodied varying degrees of maturity in revolutionary experience, they were burdened with different traditions from their Social Democratic past. This was particularly noticeable in the attitude of the German delegate Hugo Eberlein, who on behalf of the C. P. G. opposed the immediate foundation of a new International.

Not all the parties were from the beginning clear as to the character and tasks of the new International. Absolute unity on the principles of revolutionary Marxism was achieved not with-



out struggles and crises. But the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, tried in revolutionary struggle against tsarism, the bourgeoisie and the Mensheviks, offered the strongest safeguard against the development of opportunist tendencies, against any weakening in the revolutionary character of the Communist International.

The inaugural congress first set about clearing up the basic question of democracy and dictatorship, which the followers of Kautsky were particularly anxious to leave in confusion. The centrists put the question as democracy or dictatorship, as though we were not living in a class society, as though the class content of the state were not the decisive factor. Lenin's theses make it clear that

"... with the intensification of the class struggle which lies at the basis of capitalist society, there is no alternative but the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat."

Democracy under the rule of capital, so highly prized by the reformists, is nothing but the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, for the liberties and rights possessed by the working people are granted only in so far as they do not endanger the existence of bourgeois class rule. The dictatorship of the proletariat is not merely the abolition of that democracy, as the counter-revolutionaries maintain; it implies also the suppression by force of the resistance of the exploiters and the greatest possible extension of democracy for the workers.

The organisational form of the Third International was not at first definitely determined. Those present at Moscow who had taken part in the Zimmerwald conferences declared that, with the constitution of the Third International, the Zimmerwald movement was liquidated.

Because of the victory of the October Revolution the practical leadership of the international revolutionary movement had fallen to the Russian proletariat; the foundation of the Third International at Moscow gave it also the formal leadership. In his article "The Third International and Its Place in History," published in April 1919, Lenin explained why leadership in the proletarian

movement had for the time being fallen to Russia, after it had been held through the nineteenth century by England, France and Germany successively. It was easier for the Russian proletariat to begin the revolution because the extreme political backwardness of the tsarist monarchy had aroused correspondingly great strength in the revolutionary impact of the masses, because the proletarian revolution, precisely as a result of these backward conditions, found its most powerful support in the revolutionary peasantry, because the Revolution of 1905 had given the masses a rich store of revolutionary experience, and finally because Russia's geographical situation offered the victorious revolution the most favourable conditions for defending itself against counter-revolutionary intervention.

Leadership by the revolutionary proletariat of a backward country is therefore nothing peculiar; it can easily be explained by the concrete circumstances. It is only the chauvinists of the Social Democratic International who find it astonishing and howl about the "dictatorship of Moscow."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> After the Russian Revolution of 1905 Kautsky wrote that the Slavic peoples might win the leadership of the revolutionary movement. The favourable conditions offered by a backward country to the development of a revolutionary movement were indicated by Engels in 1894 in a letter to Victor Adler, in which he compared the situation in Germany and France with that in Austria.

"But in spite of all that, your position at the moment is more favourable—you are gaining ground step by step and every position that is won and occupied not only strengthens your position but brings you greater numbers; with your primitive constitutionalism the workers can still win at least a few positions and by legal means, that is, by means which train them politically—positions which the bourgeoisie should have won. With us, too, there are such positions to be won, but we shall get them only as a result of an external impulse, from impact with a country where the amalgamation of old feudal, bureaucratic police forms with comparatively modern bourgeois institutions leaves the former such preponderance that the situation becomes hopelessly confused. You are in this fortunate position, and are still more fortunate because your working class movement is great and strong enough to be decisive and I hope, to give Germany, France and Italy that impulse which is necessary there to blow up 'the reactionary mass' which is forming there much too prematurely, and to call into life, in the place of chronic reactionary



## 2. Geneva — Moscow — Vienna

1920—1921

The following months indicated the tremendous revolutionary strength behind the small groups which had united to form the Third International. Despite the bloody terror of Noske's troops, the revolutionary wave in Germany rose higher. Soviet Republics were established in Bavaria and Hungary. It is true that in Bavaria the Soviet Republic did not arise as the result of a movement clear as to its goal and led by Communists; it was the product of deliberate provocation on the part of the majority socialists which deceived the confused minds of the pacifists and anarchists. In Munich Schnepfenhorst, majority socialist, voted for the establishment of the Soviet Republic while in Nuremberg his party comrade Hoffmann was marshalling the white troops which were to defeat the proletariat.

Led by Eugen Leviné the Spartakusbund declined to participate in the sham Soviet government of Social Democrats and anarchists, since it was not based on real workers' councils and was not determined to carry on a ruthless struggle against the bourgeoisie.

But when the white troops marched on Munich, when the working class armed for the struggle and, having lost their trust in the pacifist talkers, turned to the Communists for leadership, the Spartakusbund placed itself at the head of the movement and organised revolutionary defence. But the vacillations of the I.S.D.P. leaders and the numerical superiority of the white troops brought defeat to red Munich. On May 1, 1919, Noske's soldiers entered Munich and established a rule of bloody terror. The majority socialist Hoffmann allowed the death sentence on Eugen

pressure, a few bourgeois reforms in the sense of freedom of movement for the masses. You should be the vanguard of the European proletariat, you should initiate the general offensive which we hope will not cease until we have won victory along the whole line..." (Victor Adler: *Speeches, Letters, etc.*, p. 103 (German)).

Leviné to be carried out and thousands of revolutionary workers were shot down or thrown into prison.

In Hungary, too, the weakness of the Soviet Republic arose from the absence of a Communist Party, tried in struggle and firmly rooted among the masses, to take the lead. The Soviet government came into being when Karolyi's bourgeois democratic government could see no way of escape from the frightful conditions of peace offered by the Entente powers; Karolyi approached the imprisoned Communist Bela Kun and asked him to take over the formation of a government. The Hungarian Social Democrats declared themselves ready to set up a Soviet Republic together with the Communists. The two parties united and the government was conducted by Communists and Social Democrats together. For four and a half months the Hungarian Soviet Republic defended itself heroically against the intervention of Czechs and Rumanians and against the counter-revolution at home. It was bound to break down, not only because the Russian Soviet Republic was prevented by intervention from coming to its assistance, but also because the amalgamation of Communists and Social Democrats meant that hesitation and symptoms of disintegration penetrated the leading ranks of the proletariat while an incorrect agrarian policy — the attempt to socialise agriculture immediately, before distributing the land among the poor peasants — deprived the proletarian dictatorship of its most important support in an agricultural country, the assistance of the poor peasants.

Despite these defeats, the years 1919 and 1920 marked a tremendous advance in the revolutionary wave. Soviet Russia had created its Red Army and in an unprecedented struggle carried on by badly-equipped and badly-fed troops, for which the Red Guard of the revolutionary proletariat provided the basis, had driven from the country the counter-revolutionary armies and the armies of intervention sent by the Entente powers. With increasing admiration and sympathy the working masses turned to Bolshevism. The flood of counter-revolutionary lies poured forth by the Social Democratic and bourgeois press could not



blind the class conscious workers of the world to the fact that the fight of the Russian Soviet Republic was their own fight. In France, England and America great demonstrations of sympathy with the Soviet and against counter-revolutionary intervention were held.

The pacifist-democratic illusions of the first months of demobilisation began to weaken; an economic crisis, following upon the post-war boom, set in for the victorious as well as for the defeated countries. In all the countries of Central Europe bourgeois democracy stood revealed as a reign of terrorism against the workers.

The peace for whose sake the workers had been persuaded, by reformist agitation that "Bolshevism is war," to refrain from struggle, turned out to be a contemptible treaty of robbery threatening the defeated countries with lasting ruin and embodying within itself the germs of future wars. Of Wilson's fourteen points nothing remained but the League of Nations, a league of the imperialist governments of the victorious powers which really resembled what MacDonald had said: a Holy Alliance of the capitalist nations.

These developments placed the centrist leaders in a difficult situation. The majority of the class conscious workers who in this period of crisis had rejected open reformism, had turned to them. These workers for the most part did not find their way straight to Communism, on the one hand because the Communist parties, brutally and severely repressed, could not with their weak and undeveloped organisations reach a large part of the masses, and on the other hand because the reformist traditions in which the working class movement had for decades grown up could not in so short a space of time be uprooted.

But in these masses there lived the sincere will to revolutionary struggle and to international solidarity in action. They began to see through the treachery of the social-patriots and rejected any alliance with the traitors. The pressure from below compelled the leader of the Independents in Germany, the followers of Longuet in France and the I.L.P. in England, to affirm their solidarity

with the Soviet Union, to sever relations with the patched-up International of social-patriots at Berne and to seek affiliation to the Communist International.

In August 1919 the association of social-patriots had assembled at Lucern, chiefly in order to define their attitude to the Versailles Treaty. The conclusion of the treaty offered another example of that internationalism which prevailed in the galvanised corpse of the Second International after the war. Among those who helped to draw up the treaty was Vandervelde, leader of the Belgian social-patriots. His German comrade Scheidemann, Chancellor, had exclaimed: "Let the land wither that signs this shameful treaty!" But a few weeks later another member of his party, Hermann Müller, signed the treaty as foreign minister of the German capitalist republic.

A resolution containing the following passage was passed by the majority at the Lucerne Conference:

"Only when all the treaties necessary to the termination of the war have been signed will the International be able to proceed to rectify the new acts of international injustice that follow from certain clauses of these treaties. The first and most important thing, however, is to get clear of the war."

That is, the socialists had first to work for the commission of international injustice, in order to be able later to rectify it. Thus in actual fact the imperialist treaties of peace became the basis for the policy of this International, which later acted as an auxiliary body to the League of Nations, established to defend the new division of the world brought about by the imperialists. The efforts to revise these treaties consisted, as is well known, in giving good advice to the governments which was not followed when the socialists themselves occupied the seats of office.

The centrists voted against the resolution and introduced a counter-resolution which condemned the treaties of Versailles and St. Germain as treaties of violence, and appealed for support for the Russian Revolution. The highly-principled heroes of the German majority party stated that it was possible to vote for both resolutions. And in fact on these questions there was no difference of principle between the German majority and the Independents.



dents, for even the majority party was against the peace treaty, just as was the German bourgeoisie, since it imposed extremely heavy burdens on the German capitalist fatherland; but both parties were one with the German bourgeoisie in agreeing that rejection of the treaty would have intensified the revolutionary crisis and that defence against western imperialism would have been possible only with the help of revolutionary methods and in alliance with the Soviet Republic.

At the next conference of the social-patriots, which was held from July 31 to August 4, 1920, at Geneva, the German, Austrian and French centrists were not represented. Since their aptitude for adorning counter-revolutionary decisions with revolutionary phrases was lacking, the discussions and decisions of this congress displayed the reactionary spirit of united international social-patriotism in all its frank brutality.

As the Versailles Treaty had made Germany's sole responsibility for the war the moral basis for the robbery entailed in its provisions, the social-chauvinists of the victorious countries categorically demanded from the German social-patriots an acknowledgment of guilt and regret exceeding that obtained at the Berne Conference. In a preliminary discussion Adolf Braun, the German majority socialist, had already agreed to a statement in which the German socialists admitted that they had committed the mistake of not having fought in time and with sufficient energy against the system of imperialism and militarism, that consequently the German Revolution, to the misfortune of the whole world and the German people itself, had come five years too late and that "in not having taken that road earlier lies the guilt of which German Social Democracy must accuse itself." But when Scheidemann, Stampfer, Wels and Co. arrived at Geneva, they declared that this admission of guilt went too far. Finally a resolution on the question of guilt was agreed upon, which ran:

"Considering that the German Social Democracy, in its memorandum, has itself declared that the German Revolution, to the great misfortune of the whole world and particularly of the German people itself, broke out five years too late and that it regrets that its struggle against imperialism and

militarism during the war was not conducted with sufficient success, particularly in regard to the conduct of foreign policy, which was withdrawn from the control of the people's representatives, and considering that the representatives of German Social Democracy have, in the commission, issued the following statements on the question of war guilt:

"1. Bismarckian Germany, as Marx and Engels recognised, struck a great blow at world peace by the forcible annexation of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871. For Germany there should no longer be an Alsace-Lorraine question.

"2. Imperial Germany committed a further crime against the rights of peoples by violating the independence and neutrality of Belgium in 1914 and by contravening the laws of humanity by mishandling the population of the occupied area.

"3. Republican Germany feels itself obliged to make up for the consequences of the attack launched by imperial Germany after it refused to explore the possibility of arbitration on the very eve of the outbreak of the conflict; therefore

"the Congress takes note of these statements and reaffirms the declaration of the Allied socialists made in 1915 that the capitalist system, by its rapacity and the intense pursuit of its own interests, was one of the most profound causes of the war..."

This resolution was not very palatable to the German delegation, so, in order to pacify them, Adolf Braun enunciated the fine principle of this magnificent International:

"There is truth in the conviction that a clear decision on a resolution which establishes peace in the International will remain deeply impressed on the mind of our working class, while the content of the resolution is easily forgotten, being therefore of relatively less importance than the fact of the acceptance of the resolution."<sup>1</sup>

The best thing to say of international resolutions is that they are quickly forgotten!

The German delegation declared their greater readiness to agree to the resolution as a second resolution on the Versailles Treaty was accepted, nearer to their heart's desire than that passed at Lucerne, which they had most unwillingly swallowed. It declared that together with the Russian, German and Austrian Empires the most pernicious originators of the war had disappeared,

<sup>1</sup> Adolf Braun: *The International Congress of Geneva*, p. 17 (German). The two following quotations from pp. 19 and 21.



but it also admitted that the war had been terminated by a peace that "leaves the world in a state of insecurity and disintegration."

The resolution even stated that:

"The spirit of imperialism which prevailed in the preparation for war and imbued the authors of the treaty of peace continues to exercise a fatal influence."

What, then, was to be done about these treaties, imbued with an imperialist spirit and rightly condemned as intolerable? The League of Nations would have to help. It should be made more democratic, its powers should be extended, the socialists would make it their representative.

"The League of Nations, thus supplemented and improved, will supply the natural instrument for the transformation of the Versailles peace into a just and enduring peace. Keeping firmly to the principle of reparation, it will enable that principle to be applied justly, so that the peoples of Central Europe will be given the means of recuperation in the common interests of the whole world. It will replace the frontiers arbitrarily fixed in the treaty by frontiers which correspond to the freely-expressed wishes of the nations."

This, then, was the attitude of reformism to the imperialist war and the imperialist peace. In one sentence the responsibility for the war was placed entirely on the defeated monarchies; in another capitalism was the most profound cause of the war; the conclusion was that the social-patriots who had co-operated with the guilty governments now complained of "the inadequate success" of their struggle against militarism and imperialism, a struggle which they had never conducted. But the social-patriots of the victorious countries in which capitalism was equally one of the most profound causes of the war were exalted above any reproach for their solidarity with their own imperialists.

The Versailles Treaty was filled with the spirit of imperialism, but the principle of reparation proclaimed therein, that is, the principle that the defeated nations and not the capitalists of all countries should pay the war indemnities, was recognised by the socialists. In so far as injustice had been done, it was to be set right, not by the action of the proletariat, but by the imperialists' League of Nations. This was a programme for justifying all the

social-imperialist crimes of the past, for sanctioning the imperialist peace of the present and licensing any treachery in the future.

In defining its attitude towards Russia, the Congress evinced truly masterly hypocrisy. While the Congress was sitting, the Red Army was harrying the Polish white troops, which had dared to attack the Soviet Union, up to the gates of Warsaw. The reformists assembled in the Congress, who all, like their master Ebert, hated the revolution as they did sin, considered it expedient to protest against "open and concealed" intervention in Russia by foreign governments but at the same time, in the name of justice, they protested against the Russian "occupation" of Azerbaijan and directed the attention of all sections of the International to the position of Poland, "whose existence was threatened." At the beginning of the Russo-Polish war the Amsterdam Trade Union International, founded in June 1919, had so far ceded to the pressure of mass sentiment that it appealed to the workers to prevent the transport of troops and munitions to the east. Now the Socialist International was already considering intervention in favour of the Polish white guards who were fighting the Russian proletariat by order of French imperialism, although it considered it advisable to exclude the Menshevik Alexinsky from participation in the Congress because he advocated military support for Kolchak. This, however, did not prevent the Socialist International from emitting a cry of pain whenever the proletarian dictatorship dealt with these "socialist" adherents of Kolchak in the manner merited by counter-revolutionaries.

The diplomatic manoeuvring between counter-revolutionary intervention and support for the proletarian state against intervention was likely to attract the masses as little as plans for socialisation without the expropriation of the capitalists. The centrists, too, tried in vain to win the masses with ambiguous panaceas. Hilferding had discovered the famous slogan of consolidating the workers' council system in the constitution, that is, of connecting the proletarian dictatorship with bourgeois democracy. The logic of the class struggle, which had reached the point of civil war in Germany, drove revolutionary workers and



the agents of government socialism to opposite sides of the barricades and tore to shreds the cobwebs of centrist ideology. The masses in the Independent S.D.P. and the French Socialist Party would have nothing further to do with the social-patriotic International and demanded affiliation to the Third International.

The Leipzig Congress of the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany, held in March 1919, had confessed platonic recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Soviet system and had demanded "the re-establishment of the International on the basis of a revolutionary socialist policy conducted in the spirit of the Zimmerwald and Kiental Conferences."

After the foundation of the Communist International, the left proletarian wing of the I.S.D.P. took up the fight for affiliation to the Comintern. The right wing, around Hilferding, Dittmann and Breitscheid, sabotaged affiliation, while continually expressing their friendship and sympathy. They were prepared to join the revolutionary International only on condition that they would be allowed to continue their former opportunist policy.

The Second Congress of the Communist International, held in July 1920, dealt first of all with this question: what should be the character of workers' parties and the workers' International in the epoch of world revolution, if they are to be able to lead the working class and the masses of the exploited and oppressed to victory? This was the historical significance of the Second Congress, that it formulated the Bolshevik conception of the role of the Party as a directive for the working class movement of the whole world.

The principles of organisation for which Lenin had fought against the Mensheviks in 1903, the principles of democratic centralism, of iron military discipline and the absolute unity of the Party, of irreconcilability with opportunism in any of its forms, of linking legal with illegal work — these were not specifically Russian principles, valid only for Russian conditions; they are the principles which are prescribed for a proletarian party by the very conditions of the civil war, by the task of the practical organisation of the revolution. These principles, which seemed

incomprehensible to the central and western European countries in the pre-revolutionary epoch, were proved to be the necessary and correct principles so soon as these countries also entered upon the period of revolution.

The consequences of retaining opportunist elements in the workers' parties had been sufficiently demonstrated by the collapse of the Second International. And the experience of the Hungarian and German Revolutions bore witness to the fact that the proletariat cannot triumph and cannot maintain its triumph if vacillating opportunist elements influence the leadership. The party, which should be, not a collection of sympathisers with socialism, but the vanguard, consisting of the most advanced, the most class conscious, the most unselfish and far-seeing workers, must not however isolate itself from the masses, but must be firmly entrenched in the factories and the mass organisations in order to assure, in all the struggles of the working class and in all sections of the working class movement, the unity of proletarian struggle, in order to defend the interests of the proletariat as a whole against all partial interests. The statutes of, and the conditions of admission into the Communist International, aim at building up the Communist International as the united organisation of all such parties, as a Bolshevik world party. The statutes run:

"The Communist International must really and in fact be a united party of the whole world. The parties which work in the different countries are only its individual sections."

The Comintern broke completely with the opportunist theory of national autonomy; there is no differentiation made between questions of national and international importance in virtue of which the former could be decided only by the national party, without any interference from the International.

The World Congresses and the Executive Committee, which leads the Comintern between Congresses, must take care that on all questions every section, on its own particular sector of the fighting front, fulfils its duty to the international proletariat. Thus, in the statutes, the Executive Committee is given the right to expel



persons, groups or parties which act against the decisions of the International. The reformists denounce this as a barbarous method of exercising the "Moscow dictatorship." But every worker who tries to think out how international unity of action can be realised will understand that there is no other way of safeguarding international discipline. The leadership of a party which is built on voluntary foundations has no method of compelling its members to observe its principles; it must thrust out of its ranks all those who neglect their duty, who do not carry out decisions, who violate international discipline. This is the only way of ensuring international unity of action.

The 21 conditions of admission, so roundly abused by the centrists, serve the same purpose of securing international discipline and the carrying out of international decisions. They demand the management and control of all organisations influenced by Communists and their press in the spirit of Communism, the creation of an illegal as well as a legal organisation, systematic propaganda in the army and throughout the countryside, systematic struggle against social-imperialism and social-pacifism, a complete organisational break with all centrist elements, who must be removed from the Communist Party, fraternal support for the revolutionary movement in the colonies, particularly by the parties of the motherland, systematic struggle in the trade unions, carried on by organised fractions, against the reformist Amsterdam International, control of the parliamentary fraction by the party leadership, the unconditional execution of all the decisions of the Communist International. Not one of these conditions was superfluous if the former Social Democratic parties were to become real Communist parties. The 21 conditions emphasised those points on which Social Democratic tradition would be most difficult to overcome; they established safeguards against the usual practice of the opportunists to agree to any decision when mass sentiment required agreement and to sabotage its fulfilment later on.

The right wing Independents, Crispin, Dittmann and Co. and the French and Italian centrists, raised particular objection to the

demand for the complete exclusion of all reformist leaders. "Kautsky has no influence anyhow," asserted the followers of Dittmann; "Turati will keep discipline," maintained Serrati, but the leaders of the Comintern had no intention of repeating the experiment which had ruined the parties of the Second International. Experience everywhere had demonstrated that opportunists, if they are given the chance of creeping into the mass organisations and into parliament, will prevent united and determined action at critical moments, when the bourgeoisie exerts its whole weight against revolutionary organisations, when the weakest sections of the party begin to hesitate.

Many delegates would not understand why particular mention was made of the establishment of illegal organisations. They considered it tactically unwise to speak about it. This was another expression of opportunist tradition. A revolutionary party should conceal neither from the bourgeoisie nor from the working class that its activities are not dependent on the permission of the police. Utilise every possibility of legal work among the masses, but make sure that the party apparatus will function when the bourgeois state power considers it necessary to resort to measures of violence against the party.

The 21 conditions of admission were laid down principally as a dam against the opportunist elements of the centre, but the Second Congress also drew the line against anarcho-syndicalist sectarians by making it the duty of all affiliated parties to exploit parliament and mass organisations for revolutionary propaganda.

The decisions on the colonial and agrarian questions contained the lessons on the strategy of the proletarian class struggle drawn by Marx and Lenin from the experience of the revolutionary struggles of a century. The struggle for the nations' complete right to self-determination, especially for the emancipation of the millions in the colonial countries, mobilises powerful reserve forces for the struggle against imperialism. The alliance of the proletariat and the small peasantry, the development of the class struggle in the village, give the proletariat the support without which it cannot win and maintain power.



When the centrists saw that their actions were subjected to ruthless criticism in Moscow, when they realised that there was no possibility of the Third International's continuing the treachery of the Second, they initiated a vigorous campaign against affiliation to the Comintern. Hilferding, whose book on finance capital had already revealed his complete lack of character — writing that socialist action did not follow from recognition of the correctness of Marxism — found all sorts of left arguments against Bolshevism. He perceived opportunism in the alliance of the proletariat with the national struggle for emancipation carried on by the backward peoples and in the division of the land among the poor peasants. He carried on propaganda for the future revolution, which was to be purely socialist, in which the pure industrial proletariat alone, without any alliance with other exploited sections of the population, would go over directly to socialism, an expression of radicalism whose only purpose was to evade the immediate revolutionary tasks with which the working class was confronted. At that time the centrists all "recognised" the dictatorship of the proletariat but they objected to the revolutionary terror, as though the proletariat, fighting for the emancipation of humanity, could be guided by the moral code of the bourgeoisie, which itself ruthlessly ignores that code when its own class interests are threatened. But, above all, they stormed against the "Moscow dictatorship," and in doing so revealed their national narrow-mindedness, their complete lack of understanding of international solidarity of action.

The workers who up till that time had followed the centrist parties decided by a great majority, at the Congress of the I.S.D.P. at Halle held in October, 1920, and at the French Socialist Congress at Tours in December, 1920, in favour of the 21 conditions, that is, in favour of entry into the Communist International.

In the Italian Socialist Party the 21 conditions gave rise to bitter struggles. This party, which had resolutely opposed the war and represented the Zimmerwald centrist tendency, had entered the Comintern immediately after its foundation. But Serrati, its most influential leader, refused to exclude the reformists from

the party. When, in September, 1920, the Italian workers proceeded to occupy the factories, it became evident that the Italian Socialist Party was still a centrist party, unable to lead the workers forward in the decisive struggle. While the masses were arming, the leaders negotiated for the termination of the struggle.

The struggle ceased with empty promises from the government. The bitter lessons of this defeat induced a considerable minority of the delegates to the congress at Bologna in January 1921 to rally round the left wing, which resolutely broke, not only with the reformists, but also with the centrists.

When the struggle concerning the 21 conditions had been fought out, the most important centrist parties, the I.L.P., the I.S.D.P., and the socialist parties of Switzerland and German Austria, decided at a conference held in Berne in December, 1920, to convene a congress of the parties which had left the Second International but had not joined up with the Third. At that time, in the period of revolutionary storm, even the centrists declared in favour of world revolution, of the defence of Soviet Russia and support for the revolutionary movements in the east, proclaiming the union of all revolutionary forces against imperialism. The manifesto of the Berne Conference declared: the world war has destroyed the Second International. What is left of it is only the "reformist and nationalist wing of the Second International." The Second International was only "an element that destroyed the unity of the proletarian class struggle." But as the righteous representatives of the golden mean these heroes of the centre also directed their criticism against the lefts. The Third International was only an amalgamation of Communist Parties, thrusting the Bolshevik mould on all parties, anxious to abolish completely their individual autonomy, to subject the trade unions to the party, to split the international working class movement.

In opposition to the Bolshevik model the wise men of the centre put forward the theory of Austro-Marxism: to act as far as possible on democratic lines, but if all else failed, then to turn to dictatorship, whether in the form of workers' councils or in any other form. Obviously the dictatorship recognised by the centrists.



was not the dictatorship of the proletariat, which Marx had described as the state form for the whole period of transition from capitalism to socialism; they had in mind a temporary emergency situation in the bourgeois state, when Social Democracy would dictate to both left and right.

This was the theoretical basis on which, for the first and last time, the International Centre was formed as an independent body at Vienna in February 1921. It is true that Friedrich Adler proclaimed from the first that there was no intention of founding a new International; their objective was to help the establishment of an all-embracing International. This was the special mission of the centre to which he paid allegiance, in the sense that "we are equally removed from ingenuous impatience and skeptical incredulity." Since there was nothing lacking in Noske, Vandervelde, Thomas and Co., but belief, Adler would not follow the example of the Comintern in swearing at that excellent company "like a barrack-room sergeant." To the Comintern, too, he used the language, not of the barracks, but of imperialist diplomacy. He denounced the Comintern as an instrument for the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Republic and added:

"Besides (!) this function the International has another *raison d'être* — for a defeat there would mean a victory for world reaction."

Adler therefore admitted that defence of the Soviet Republic is a duty of the International; he recognised that defeat of the Soviet power would mean the victory of world reaction and yet he could give no better reason for the foundation of an International which was bound to come into opposition to the proletarian state, than that there were other tasks to perform besides that of defending the proletarian state. As though that were ever disputed, as though there could be any contradiction between defence of the proletarian state and the tasks of the international proletarian revolution!

On every question the attitude of the centrists was distinguished by weak vacillation between mutually irreconcilable principles. As regards autonomy Adler declared that the International would be of value only if its decisions were binding, but that

would limit autonomy; on the other hand the International must be made as comprehensive as possible, which, translated into plain English, means that if decisions are to be binding they must be made as seldom as possible.

But even this modest formulation went too far for many representatives of this new body which, because of its position midway between the Second and the Third, was named the Two-and-a-Half International. Shinwell stated on behalf of the I.L.P.:

"With regard to methods and organisation, we demand autonomy from any International. We are ready to submit to the principles which this conference is to formulate, but we must ourselves adapt our methods and forms of organisation to the conditions of our own country. We refuse to allow anybody to prescribe them for us."

In the principles which were accepted a way out was found in the formulation that every decision of the international organisation signified "a self-willed limitation of the autonomy of the parties in the separate countries," which was a diplomatic way of saying that there was no need for the parties to limit their nationalism any more than they desired. This basic principle of the centrist International pleased the reformists so highly that it was later embodied in the statutes of the united reformist International.

The rules, which contained other such gems of wisdom, were accepted unanimously, although the Swiss delegate Grimm reminded the conference that the lack of a common outlook, particularly on the question of national defence, and an external show of unity while decisions were not made binding on all, had been the ruin of the Second International.

The middle road between dictatorship and democracy was thus defined in the rules:

"The International should neither limit the proletariat to the application of democratic methods, as the so-called Second International does at present,<sup>1</sup> nor prescribe imitation of the Russian workers' and peasants' revolution, as the Communist International would do."

<sup>1</sup>The French centrist Fauré asserted during the discussion that, contrary to the statement of the Geneva Congress, the Second International before the war had never insisted on the application of democratic methods only.



The Bolshevik example, cursed by so many but never objectively criticised, is nothing but the winning of power by armed insurrection and the retaining of power by the state by means of the proletarian dictatorship, which is based on the workers' councils and the armed proletariat. The centrists reject this example because, in the last analysis, the reason for their actions, or rather their failure to act, is fear of civil war. Their rules envisaged a hypothetical case in which the bourgeoisie is not in control of military forces and does not therefore dare to initiate civil warfare. In these idyllic countries "the proletariat is to win political power by democratic means."

Such countries have not yet been discovered. Meanwhile the centrists keep the proletariat back from armed struggle — no doubt in the pious hope that after all this unknown country with its friendly bourgeoisie will one day be discovered. But the Communists, who did not share this ingenuous credulity — to use Adler's words — were kept down not only with rational argument, but also by force, no doubt in order to instil into them belief in peaceful democracy.

Kunfi, who had been people's commissar for education in the Hungarian Soviet Republic, excused his co-operation with the Communists on the ground that their only choice was to go with the Communists or become Noskes. This was a wholly correct expression of the Communist thesis that at the present time there is only one alternative — the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat. But it was precisely this clear decision that the centrists were anxious to avoid.

Adler took up a position midway between "naive pacifism and the Bolshevik theory of violence." His interpretation of this theory was that "war is the correct lever" for launching the revolution. Our survey of the history of the Second International has shown that up to 1914 all socialist leaders saw in war a lever of revolution, as all the great wars of our epoch — those of 1870, 1905 and 1914 — have indeed shown it to be. That war is the "correct lever" of the revolution has, however, not been maintained. Revolutionary crises can arise from various causes and a revolutionary

party will utilise every such crisis. That the Communists see in war the only lever of revolution is a stupid invention designed to spread the belief that the only consistent fighters against imperialist war are anxious for war.

In spite of all the painful efforts of the congress of the Two-and-a-Half International to keep to the middle path, the proximity of the centrists to the Second International was visible on every question. Adler had stated that they were all agreed "that they could have no dealings with the Second International," that "the Moscow problem" had first to be solved. A suggestion from the Swiss that negotiations should be entered upon for a revision of the 21 conditions was turned down as offering no prospect of success. But apart from that no decision was made which might have signified an attempt towards a *rapprochement* with the Communists. The left Socialist-Revolutionaries, who were the only delegates to the conference frankly in favour of the Soviet system (naturally in their interpretation of the term, that is, without the leadership of a Communist Party) declared that the congress had receded further from the Third International and drawn closer to the Second. Subsequent development fully confirmed this opinion. The International Working Union of Socialist Parties — the official title of the Two-and-a-Half International — took only two years to find its way back to social-patriotism.

### 3. The Fight for the Proletarian United Front

In June, 1921, the Third Congress of the Comintern met at Moscow. After the series of grave defeats suffered by the working class in several European countries, it had to define its attitude to the world situation and the tasks of the international proletariat. In the autumn of 1920 the Red Army had been thrust back from Warsaw; in 1920 the heroic defensive struggle of the German workers against the Kapp *putsch*\* had been brought to an end, by the co-operation of the Social Democrat Severing and the

\* An adventurous attempt to seize power when conditions are not ripe.—Ed.



white troops, with the bloody defeat of the workers. In March 1921 the Social Democratic head of the government Hösing had sent police troops to central Germany to occupy the factories, with the intention of provoking insurrection there in order to be able to disarm that fortress of the revolutionary working class. The Communist Party overestimated the situation and called for a general strike and armed insurrection throughout the country, but the militant workers of central Germany remained isolated and were defeated.

With the help of the Social Democrats the bourgeoisie had overcome the acute crisis of 1918—1919 and had builded afresh their apparatus of power for carrying on civil warfare against the proletariat. But they had not succeeded in overcoming the economic and political crisis which resulted from the world war.

After the interventionists had been repulsed and the counter-revolution at home finally defeated, the proletarian state's principal task was that of economic reconstruction. The Russian proletariat could not count upon the immediate support of a proletarian revolution in a modern industrial state. The foundations of socialist construction had to be laid by their own work and with the resources available in their own country. This was the object of the change over to the New Economic Policy.

Systematically planned socialist economy, serving requirements, cannot be brought into being in one day, least of all in a backward country with hundreds of thousands of small, independent concerns, particularly in agriculture. The transference of the state power from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat, the proletarian revolution, by appropriating the most essential means of production at one blow, creates the conditions necessary for socialist construction. But this is accomplished by means of an obstinate political and economic struggle between the state-regulated economic elements, built up on the basis of large-scale industrial production, and the small, individual economic units. These latter cannot be destroyed by violence, but must be eliminated partly by the superiority of organised large scale production and partly by the co-operative amalgamation of the small-scale producers.

The Third World Congress approved the New Economic Policy as the correct road to socialism, indifferent to the howling of the Social Democrats that it signified a return to capitalism.

In the capitalist countries, too, the Communist Parties had to take heed of the consequences of the temporary slowing down in the rate of revolutionary development. In 1918 Lenin had refuted the stupid conception that Bolshevism had speculated on the world revolution as an event which would occur at a definite date. The world revolution is a whole epoch in the development of humanity, an epoch of civil wars and revolutionary wars, an epoch in which, despite temporary defeats, the victory of the proletariat is drawing nearer in every country. Although the revolution had been defeated in every country except Russia, the class struggle, after the war, had taken on new and higher forms in comparison with the pre-war period. Millions, hundreds of millions in Europe and Asia had been roused to a consciousness of their class position and had entered upon revolutionary struggle. The mere fact of the origin and development of mass Communist Parties in the most important countries, a process which reflects the revolutionary experience of the masses, proves that we have entered upon a new revolutionary age.

The Third Congress did not by any means give up the revolutionary perspective. Its task was to determine the tactics of the Communist Parties in the period of preparation for the revolution, a period that would probably last a long time. It was not the immediate struggle for power which now directly confronted them, but the creation of conditions essential to a successful struggle for power. These conditions consist in winning the majority of the working class, in winning its most decisive sections. "Forward to the masses!" was therefore the most important slogan of the Third Congress.

The Third Congress broke with such liquidatory elements as Paul Levi who, doubting in the revolution, deserted to the camp of reformism, but it rejected equally the *putsch*-ist conception that the struggle for power can be undertaken with a vanguard alone, without the support of the masses.



These general directives were more narrowly defined in the decisions of the enlarged Executive held in December 1921, dealing with the tactics of the proletarian united front. In face of the capitalist offensive, being initiated with greater force, in face of the danger of a new war and the economic upheaval in Europe arising from the contest over the question of reparations, the masses displayed a growing determination to struggle and a strong desire to establish unity within the ranks of the proletariat. It was the task of Communists to direct this elemental urge toward unity into the channel of proletarian class struggle; for unity on the soil of reformism means capitulation to the bourgeoisie. Unity on the basis of class struggle is the condition for successful struggle. The masses who had not found their way to Communism in the times of acute revolutionary crisis could not be won for the revolutionary struggle merely by agitation and propaganda. They had to be convinced by their own experience that their reformist and centrist leaders not only refused to take up the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship, but were also in consequence incapable, in the given conditions, of conducting a successful fight for improving the position of the workers. The Communist International is distinguished from the reformists, not in renouncing the struggle for reforms, for the partial demands of the workers, but in regarding reforms as a by-product of the revolutionary class struggle. The reformists, on the other hand, who give up the class struggle, who promise to obtain improvements for the working class by agreements with the bourgeoisie, cannot get concessions for the working class at a time when class contradictions are very acute, when capitalism is suffering from a crisis.

Consequently, in that period the Communist Parties had to place in the foreground the struggle for partial demands, to declare themselves ready to proceed jointly in favour of these demands with all workers' organisations, to negotiate occasionally with reformist leaders and reach agreement on the joint struggle, in order to prove to the working masses in practice that the Communists are the only representatives of the workers'

interests, while the reformists put obstacles in the way of the united struggle of the working class and thereby prevent the fulfilment of the workers' demands. This was the essence of the united front tactics. It was never to be taken to mean reconciliation with the reformist traitors; no Communist would think of liquidating the independent Communist organisations, the greatest achievement of the working class movement. The tactics of the united front are rather a means of mobilising the masses for struggle and of drawing them away from reformism.

These tactics were above all a test for the centrist leaders. They had raised a pitiful howl about the Communists splitting the labour movement when they were not permitted to penetrate the organisation of the Communist vanguard. Now they had an opportunity of showing whether they really wished to fight, united with the revolutionary proletariat, for the demands of the working class, as they had sworn for years. They showed the contrary; the greater the necessity for working class unity in struggle, the nearer the centrist leaders drew to the social-patriotic counter-revolutionaries, in order to carry on jointly with them the struggle against the revolutionary proletariat.

In February 1922 representatives of the Second and the Two-and-a-Half Internationals entered into negotiations at Paris and at Frankfort-on-the-Main. The Two-and-a-Half International suggested a joint conference with the Third International. The representatives of the Second International put forward certain conditions for such a conference. It was decided that first of all there should be a joint sitting of the executives of the three Internationals to examine the possibility of an international conference of all workers' parties. With regard to the reparations question, it was decided to recommend the cancellation of all international war debts. Germany's obligation to rebuild the devastated areas was again emphasised and the only recommendation made in this respect was for Germany's liberation from the burden of having to pay the war pensions of the Allies. This conference revealed no contradiction between the Second and the Two-and-a-Half Internationals. There was hostility between the



social-imperialists of the different countries. In so far as these socialists, as members of governments, had to make practical decisions on the question of reparations, they completely ignored the decisions of their International. This has recently been confirmed by Vandervelde in relation to Snowden's attitude at the Hague Conference in August 1929.

Since, in that period of profound economic crisis and menacing revolutionary outbreaks, even the capitalists found it expedient, not only to negotiate with each other, but even to invite representatives of the thrice-cursed Soviet government to a joint conference at Genoa, the lackeys of the bourgeoisie could not behave in a more reactionary manner than their masters. After some hesitation the Executive of the Second International accepted an invitation from the Two and-a-Half International to a joint conference with the Third International. The Executive of the Third International had immediately and unconditionally agreed, for it was not only worth doing everything to bring about united international action on the part of the working class, it was also necessary to show the workers who was to blame if such action was not achieved.

The conference met in Berlin in April 1922. As president Friedrich Adler from the outset laid it down that there was no question of organisational amalgamation, but first of all, of bringing about united international action. Therefore, on behalf of the Comintern delegation, Clara Zetkin proposed that only questions of current political importance should be dealt with. She enumerated the following questions as coming under this head: defence against the capitalist offensive; the fight against reaction; preparation for the struggle against a new imperialist war; assistance in re-establishing the Soviet Republic, whose economic development was at that time seriously threatened by a famine in the Volga area; the question of the Versailles Treaty and the reconstruction of the devastated areas.

Vandervelde, the shrewd diplomat of the Second International, who, as the foreign minister of His Majesty the King of the Belgians, had acquired the practice necessary for conducting inter-

national negotiations, immediately and vigorously opposed this suggestion. First of all he pronounced his misgivings about discussing the struggle against reparations burdens:

"I do not dispute that such proposals would be welcome to the German proletariat, nor that it would give satisfaction to Herr Stinnes, but I am less convinced of the revolutionary enthusiasm with which these proposals would be met by the proletariat of those countries which suffered the greatest damage."

After this magnificent demonstration of international sentiment he demanded the following guarantees from the Communists as a condition of joint international action:

Cessation of the formation of cells in the Amsterdam trade unions, the guarantee of the right of self-determination for Georgia and free defence for the right Socialist-Revolutionaries, who were to answer to the revolutionary tribunal at Moscow for their participation in counter-revolutionary *putsches* and conspiracies.

Paul Fauré, for the Two-and-a-Half International, seconded his colleague. The creation of a real proletarian united front implied that the differences between the socialist parties should be fought out with intellectual weapons only and not poisoned by terrorist methods of struggle. Consequently he would not demand the exclusion from the German Party of Noske, Hörsing and Severing or the condemnation of Socialist-Revolutionaries who had organised attempts on the lives of the leaders of the proletarian revolution: he was in favour of "equality of political rights for all the socialist parties" in Russia. He protested against the death sentence in the trial of the S.-R.'s although he admitted that in many capitalist countries, where right wing socialists were in the government, left wing and Communist Parties were subjected to brutal persecution.

To Vandervelde's friendly appeal that they should restore the confidence which had been destroyed, by accepting the conditions of the Second International, Radek replied that as far as confidence went, he would not trust citizen Vandervelde with a farthing. Still, he left open the possibility of a certain rapproche-



ment as a result of joint action. They should therefore discuss joint action against the bourgeoisie.

Serrati, representing the Italian Socialist Party, which was not then affiliated to any international organisation, turned to Vanderelde with the remark that in proceeding jointly with the bourgeoisie the parties of the Second International had not evinced so many misgivings about bourgeois poison as they displayed now, when they might be infected with Bolshevik poison by joint action with revolutionaries. Otto Bauer declared that the conditions put forward by the Second International contained nothing to which serious objection could be taken, but it was inexpedient to put them forward at that time.

Radek reminded the enthusiastic champions of the right of self-determination for Georgia that the parties of the Second International had never taken up the struggle for the independence of the colonies oppressed by their fatherlands. Georgia under the Menshevik government was not an independent country, but a bulwark of British imperialism against the Soviet Republic. There had been peasants' and workers' insurrections against the Menshevik government; it was the right and the duty of the proletarian state to support them. Nevertheless, on behalf of the Russian Party, Radek declared their readiness to permit a commission composed of representatives of socialist parties to investigate the situation in Georgia. But then they should also deal with the question of the right of self-determination for other countries, which the Second International helped to oppress. Moreover, the representatives of the "socialist" counter-revolution would be given the opportunity of defending their comrades, the Socialist-Revolutionary counter-revolutionaries, before the Soviet court.

Finally, the following joint statement of the three Executives was agreed upon:

A commission of nine was to be set up, consisting of three representatives of each of the three Internationals, in order to make preparations for a world workers' congress of all socialist parties and organisations. The commission was to convene a

joint conference of the Amsterdam and the Red Trade Union Internationals to discuss the question of re-establishing trade union unity. Notice was taken of a declaration of the Comintern representatives, that representatives of socialist parties would be admitted to the trial of the S.-R.'s, that the proceedings would take place publicly and that there would be no death sentence.

The Georgian question was to be examined from all sides. The representatives of the Second International had declared that it was impossible to hold a conference during the session at Genoa, but all the parties represented should as far as possible organise united mass demonstrations during the conference under the following slogans:

For the united action of the proletariat against the capitalist offensive.

For the Russian Revolution.

For the establishment of the proletarian united front in every country and in the International.

In addition to this joint declaration the Second International issued a separate statement that they must insist on a written answer to their conditions. The Comintern delegation added a protocol containing their scruples about the agreement reached. The Second International had refused to agree to the slogan of annulling the Versailles peace treaty, thereby demonstrating that they were unwilling to fight against the capitalist offensive.

After the conference Lenin published an article entitled: "We Have Paid Too Dear"<sup>1</sup> in which he criticised the attitude of the Comintern delegation. The promise not to pronounce the death sentence on the S.-R.'s would afford encouragement to counter-revolutionaries who would now believe that they could count upon the support of the socialist representatives of the bourgeoisie. In a struggle between proletarian revolution and bourgeois counter-revolution the representatives of the proletariat had retreated without cause. No bourgeois state would permit representatives of the proletarian International to exercise control over

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Works*, Vol. XXVII. — *Ed.*



its juridical proceedings, as the Comintern delegation had permitted the socialist agents of imperialism. On the other hand no concession had been won from the representatives of the bourgeoisie, consequently the easier access to reformist workers — the only result of the conference — had been too dearly bought. Nevertheless Lenin was in favour of ratifying the agreement.

And indeed the results of this first attempt to establish the united front on an international scale were small. It is true that the negotiations made it easier for the Communists to prove that it was not they, but the reformists, who were splitting the labour movement. In a few countries there were great mass demonstrations for the slogans agreed upon at the Berlin conference, but as a result of persistent sabotage on the part of the Second International the world workers' congress was not held. At the end of May 1922 the representatives of the Communist International withdrew from the commission of nine, stating that the failure of the attempt to convene a world congress was due to the Second International.

The Fourth Congress of the Comintern, which was held in November and December 1922, drew the lessons of the results of the first application of united front tactics. It was again emphasised that in negotiations and agreements with reformist leaders Communists should never renounce complete liberty of criticism, as had happened to some extent in Germany in the joint demonstrations which were held after the murder of Rathenau, the democratic Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In December 1922 the reformists convened at the Hague a world congress of struggle against the war danger, to which the representatives of revolutionary proletariat were not invited, although an invitation was extended to every possible bourgeois-pacifist organisation. However, the Russian trade unions were invited and were represented by Losovsky, Radek and Rothstein.

When the conference opened on December 10, the struggle between France and Germany on the reparations question was so acute that the danger of war seemed imminent. Under the pressure of the anti-war sentiments of the masses the social-patriots were most zealous in proclaiming their hostility to war.

Jouhaux, leader of the reformist French unions, demanded that the workers should bind themselves not to produce any more munitions. Henderson spoke of the failure of all disarmament conferences and stormed against the very Versailles Treaty which his International had accepted as its basis. The German pacifist Hellmut von Gerlach welcomed the united action of workers' organisations and bourgeois pacifists and exhorted the workers not to put forward any specific workers' demands.

Fimmen, at that time secretary of the Transport Workers' International, recalled the decision reached by the international trade union congress held shortly before at Rome, to answer the declaration of war with a general strike:

"Rather than enter a new war let the working class, if things have gone so far, go out on the streets and by insurrection overthrow the bourgeoisie."

The allies of the bourgeoisie listened to such speeches without their tranquillity's being disturbed. Had they not heard such speeches before the war, and not only heard them but themselves made similar ones, without its preventing them from supporting their own bourgeoisie "once things had gone so far"?

Losovsky and Radek exposed this shameful hypocrisy. If they were going to decide on a general strike against war, they had first to reject defence of the bourgeois fatherland and break with their policy of coalition; if they were seriously thinking of insurrection against war, they had to carry revolutionary propaganda into the army; instead of mouthing fine words, let them begin with concrete measures. The Russian delegation proposed an agitation week against imperialism, and an international 24-hour protest strike against the Versailles Treaty and the threatening war.

The defence of social-patriotism was undertaken by Vandervelde, the man who, correctly enough, felt the accusation most keenly. He repeated his old song of self-determination for Georgia and of the trial of the S.-R.'s and then declared:

"No country should be forbidden to defend itself against an unjust military attack."

This admission of social-patriotism was emphasised by Huysmans who stated at a commission sitting that, in similar circum-



stances, he would act exactly as he did in 1914. The congress passed over the concrete proposals of the Russian delegation with a wave of the hand. A resolution of the usual character was adopted, binding nobody to anything.

The resolution contained an appeal to work for the aims contained in the Rome general strike resolution and a demand for revision of the peace treaty, for control of armaments by the League of Nations and the transformation of war industries on to a peace basis (as though it were not equally simple, if it suited the capitalists, to retransform peace production into war production!), Germany's admission to the League of Nations and the annulment of secret treaties.

This conference made quite clear the complete political agreement between the Second and the Two-and-a-Half Internationals. At the German Party Congress held in Nuremberg in October 1922 the S.D.P. and the I.S.D.P. had amalgamated. After a thousand solemn vows given by the Independents during the civil war, that they would never unite with the party of working class murder, the entire leadership, which had just aspired to membership in the Third International, went over to Noske's camp. Only a small group under Ledebour's leadership refused to unite. Friedrich Adler, the leader of the Two-and-a-Half International, expressed at the Hague Conference his satisfaction with the agreement reached with the representatives of the Second International on the question of the struggle against war.

The value of the Hague peace decision could be estimated a month later when, in January 1923, the French troops entered the Ruhr area. The Social Democratic parties and trade unions showed themselves incapable of reaching a joint decision, let alone joint action, against this act of war in the midst of peace.

The Communist Parties of the countries concerned organised an international conference at Essen on January 6, the eve of the Ruhr occupation, and laid down a common line of struggle against the occupation, French imperialism and German capitalism.

When the French troops were already in occupation a factory council committee of Rhineland-Westphalia, under Communist

leadership, convened a conference at Frankfurt to which workers' parties of all tendencies were invited. At the conference, which met in March 1923, the Communist International, the Young Communist International and the Communist Parties of all European countries were represented. The Second and the Amsterdam International and their affiliated organisations had refused to participate. The Two-and-a-Half International was equally unwilling to take part, but gave permission to its affiliated parties to do so. Only Ledebour's group in Germany and the left S.-R.'s made use of the permission.

The line of united revolutionary struggle under the leadership of the Communist International was expressed not only in the conference's resolutions, but also in the practical struggle of the Communist Parties.

Because of their intrepid struggle against the occupation of the Ruhr German and French Communists were thrown into prison, young Communist workers were brought before the military courts and sentenced for anti-militarist propaganda among the army of occupation. The German and French police and courts worked harmoniously together against the revolutionary movement.

The occupation of the Ruhr was in fact the first general rehearsal for the second imperialist world war. It showed that the international proletariat was no longer defenceless, as in 1914, against the murder of the peoples; in the Communist International they had an organisation which, unlike the Second International, will not fail as an "instrument of peace" when international action is most urgently necessary but which, precisely at critical moments, is capable of leading the workers of all countries in united struggle.

It was again Vandervelde who most completely expressed the attitude of social-imperialism. On the day of the occupation of the Ruhr he declared in the Belgian Chamber:

"We are all united as one man in affirming that our demands are as sacred as those of France or Italy and those demands must be met by Germany . . . German heavy industry remains a standing menace to peace."



At a meeting of the Central Committee of the Belgian Socialist Party Georg Hubin declared:

"I deeply regret that *Vorwärts* recommended the Ruhr workers to strike in protest. German Social Democracy, which has done nothing to avoid a situation in which the German proletariat enriches Stinnes, recommends a strike when it is a question of working for the payment of reparations... We need reparations; socialism is not only peace, but also justice."

On their part the German Social Democrats again concluded civil peace with the bourgeoisie and the reactionary Cuno government. In joint demonstrations with bourgeois parties and organisations they appealed for national resistance. But they remained equally faithful to the bourgeoisie and its government when these latter found it expedient to cease resistance and to reach an understanding with the French imperialists at the expense of the working class.

## CHAPTER V

### THE INTERNATIONAL OF CAPITALIST REACTION AND THE INTERNATIONAL OF PROLETARIAN WORLD REVOLUTION

1923—1929

#### 1. *The Reconciliation Feast of the Reformists in Hamburg*

1923

During the Ruhr occupation the amalgamation of the Second and the Two-and-a-Half Internationals was completed. In May 1923 the Unity Congress met at Hamburg. The centrists, who had never been distinguished from the avowed reformists by any differences of principle, but had only separated temporarily from their comrades under the pressure of mass indignation against the war policy and the actions of Noske, returned to the bosom of the Second International after two years of independent existence.

On the occasion of the Hague Congress a joint committee of the two Internationals had been set up which in January 1923 issued an appeal pointing out that the dismemberment of the labour movement was having the most serious consequences:

"It is, however, clear that the goal of a socialist workers' International which is both all-embracing and has a united programme, cannot be attained at one stroke; it can only be the result of long and tireless work."

According to this interpretation the international workers' organisation is not the result of agreement on principles among the workers of all countries, but the condition for bringing about, in time, a certain measure of agreement.



The same leaders who had rejected and sabotaged united action of the proletariat in the class struggle now proclaimed themselves the apostles of unity against the "Communist splitters," in order to create a sham organisation which lacked any unity of outlook, any unity in policy, which could only act in united fashion in the struggle against the revolutionary movement. The conditions of admission required recognition of the aim of abolishing the capitalist system of production and the class struggle as the means of emancipating the working class, agreement with the Amsterdam Trade Union International, adherence to the peace resolutions of the Hague Congress and finally recognition of the International:

"... not only as an instrument for carrying out the tasks of peace, but also as an indispensable instrument in any war."

As though this oblique blow at the time-honoured Kautsky, who was of course one of the most prominent members of the new International to be founded, could change the nature of the organisation! As though the pious wish, not to fail in war time, could help an International which admittedly lacked any unity of thought and whose leaders, despite all the radical resolutions against war, had at the Hague Congress again paid allegiance to the defence of the imperialist fatherland!

Before the union was celebrated, a farewell feast to the Two-and-a-Half International was given at Hamburg. Union was agreed upon by 99 votes, against six votes cast by the Ledebour group, the left Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Swiss delegates. Ledebour was most telling in his condemnation of the lack of principle displayed by his friends of yesterday.

"You think you can achieve unity by the formal amalgamation of traitors. The speeches from Poland and German Czecho-Slovakia have revealed facts which show that you want to unite with real fascist organisations. In Germany amalgamation has already brought with it governmental coalitions with bourgeois parties. Social Democrats are sitting in the governments which lend support to the efforts of fascists, as Severing has done by his prohibition of proletarian defence organisations. Whatever may separate us from the Communists, we are indissolubly bound to them by the sacred

blood-brotherhood of common revolutionary struggles, the same blood that has made us hostile to the German S. D. P."

When some of those whom Ledebour had attacked wished to prevent him from speaking, the cynical renegade Hilferding called out: "Let the old man speak; after all, it's for the last time."

These gentlemen made great haste to get rid of an organisation in which there was the least danger of revolutionary thought. At the unity celebrations there was no dispute between the different shades of reformism within the two Internationals, but disputes arose—and sometimes became very heated—reflecting the national hostilities of the different bourgeoisies. Irreconcilable enmity was apparent between the Czech and the German members of Czecho-Slovakian Social Democracy. The former were members of a government, together with bourgeois parties, which was brutally suppressing the German minorities, while the latter acted together with German bourgeois parties in a national opposition. Each party cursed the other as nationalist, and both were right.

In vain the representatives of the other parties tried to smooth things over; they were finally reduced to setting up an arbitration commission.

Despite these conflicts, the reformists succeeded, as usual, in carrying unanimous resolutions. There are three time-honoured principles of which opportunists avail themselves in this matter:

(1) One may vote for a resolution, even if he does not agree with it; (2) resolutions must be so formulated that each can place on them the interpretation which is most convenient; (3) there is no need to carry out what has been agreed upon.

Noske's companion, Wels, put the matter in this way:

"Tactics vary from country to country, but the goal is the same everywhere."

And Huysmans:

"In any case nobody will approve of every single word of the proposed resolution."



The actual extent of the unity that was achieved was indicated clearly in the debate on the peace treaties. The resolutions unanimously accepted looked to the League of Nations to revise the peace treaties and protested against the occupation of the Ruhr, because it was not calculated to guarantee reparation payments. Germany's obligation to pay reparations was not of course questioned in this resolution.

"...It is incontestable that the burdens of reconstruction must be borne by Germany, for reconstruction is for Germany a moral duty which has been voluntarily (!) recognised by the German trade union and socialist organisations."

This unity on the basis of the Versailles Treaty — to be revised, of course — was reflected in the speeches of the different representatives of imperialist interests in the following way.

While Webb, on behalf of the English, sharply attacked the peace treaty as "an instrument for prolonging war" and Hilferding on behalf of the Germans declared reparations to be the cause of the intensification of the economic crisis, the French delegate Blum sang a hymn of praise to the treaties, in which he discovered an embodiment of the principle of self-determination; the treaties did not represent a step backward, but a mixture of Wilsonian idealism with the old traditions of diplomacy. In any case the Versailles Treaty provided for the establishment of the League of Nations and the International Labour Office. With regard to the paragraph concerning "Germany's sole responsibility for the war" he would only object that it was wrung from Germany by force. "Such an admission would be of moral value only if it were made voluntarily." "In itself," continued this French patriot, "the principle of reparation embodies an ideal conception." This principle, that the state feels itself responsible to individual persons for injuries inflicted in war time, is an emanation of justice. The same principle that the socialists of the countries which were to pay reparations described as a means of transferring the burdens of the war from the capitalists to the workers, was welcomed by him, the socialist representative of the bour-

geoisie that would profit from reparations, as an "emanation of justice."

Blum went on to defend his fatherland against the reproach of imperialism.

"A great deal is said about French imperialism. It has already become a catchword. It is true that there is a certain militarism in France... But imperialism, in the sense of a desire to annex foreign territory, does not exist in the overwhelming majority of the French people."

As though imperialism were ever the affair of the majority of the people! Then he treated the conference to a repetition of all the ideas spread among the masses by the French imperialists with the help of the Social Democrats: German capitalism was flourishing and did not want to pay and consequently there was arising among the mass of the French people a feeling that they were not receiving what they had a just claim to. There was also the question of security. After having faithfully retailed all the arguments of French imperialism, Blum concluded with the profound remark:

"I am not saying all this in order to put France in the right. It is quite false always to pretend that one's own country is wrong, simply because it is one's own country. That is merely the stupid reverse of stupid nationalism."

The second advocate for the Versailles Treaty was one of its authors, Vandervelde. He declared that the purpose of his speech was to vindicate his signature to the Versailles Treaty.

"In agreement with the entire Belgian working class and the Labour Party, I placed my signature to this treaty, and if anything consoles me it is the thought that my name is not the sole socialist signature thereto. For on the other side there are the names of Hermann Müller and Karl Renner. (Indignant interjection from the two referred to: "That isn't the same thing!") For us, too, at that time, the signing was a serious question of conscience, but if I had to repeat it today, I would do so, for to us Belgian socialists, apart from everything else, the treaty meant one thing: the emancipation of our territory, our country, from foreign military occupation and the determination of our claim to recompense."

Worthless arguments for a worthless cause! Nobody imagines that after Germany's defeat Belgium would not have been evac-



uated, even if Vandervelde had not put his name to that shameful document.

Like Blum and Vandervelde on behalf of their fatherlands, Wels arose to defend his country. In moving tones he complained that Germany was often misunderstood. He attempted to prove, in the sweat of his brow, that the German republic was something quite different from imperial Germany, but he could only adduce in favour of his argument the banner of black-red-gold and the contentment of the citizens with the republic. "The republic is peace," proclaimed the man who, standing side by side with Noske, had helped to found the republic in civil warfare against the workers.

If, on the agenda item "The Imperialist Peace," hostile imperialist interests became clearly apparent, there were merely fine shades of difference in the intensity and candour of the delegates' counter-revolutionary attitude when it came to a discussion on the Russian question. It was a question of the greatest immediate importance. While the Congress was in session, the British Foreign Minister Curzon sent a threatening note to the Soviet government. In England a mass movement against menacing intervention was developing; everywhere the sympathy of the masses was on the side of the attacked Soviet Republic. Under the pressure exerted by these sentiments all the speakers were compelled to declare against intervention, MacDonald and Abramovich, Otto Bauer and Crispian. Bauer put forward the famous argument of the Two-and-a-Half International: "On the one hand..., but on the other..." He recalled the blood-guilt of Austro-Hungarian and German militarism which had begun the policy of intervention in Russia and the Ukraine, merely forgetting to mention that German Social Democracy had supported that policy. On the other hand he maintained that "the Bolshevik phase of the Russian Revolution had offered many excuses for this policy of intervention against Russia."

The Menshevik Abramovich was even more shameless. He deduced from the New Economic Policy that private capitalism had been restored; the revolution was of a typically bourgeois

character, it was a peasant revolution. He prophesied that private industry was bound to develop more rapidly than state industry. The Red Army was already a danger, as Georgia had shown. If capitalism grew stronger, the danger would be even greater and in the same breath he said that the development of capitalism in Russia was "a natural necessity." As a way out he recommended a return to democracy, to democratic capitalism. Democracy alone could make Russia again a refuge of freedom, while today Russia was a great menace to the democracy and freedom of the whole world.

All the protests against intervention and the stirring-up of revolts could not make this speech anything but an encouragement to capitalist "democracy" to destroy "Communist despotism." It is significant that a Social Democratic group, "Zarya," which had partly left the Menshevik Party and partly been excluded because of its support of intervention against Soviet Russia, was not accepted in the International; but the reason given was not that the International wished to have nothing in common with such counter-revolutionaries, but that their policy was "adventurist." It was left open to the members to return to their Menshevik mother party.

This provides a standard for measuring the sincerity of the moral indignation of these heroes of the Second International when socialists were condemned by the Soviet Republic for participation in counter-revolutionary activities. With 39 delegates abstaining (including the English and Swiss) and against two negative votes, the resolution on Russia was accepted which advocated the "moral action of the International" as against the armed intervention of imperialism, impudently demanded the liberation "of all persons condemned, arrested or exiled for propaganda on behalf of their political convictions" and urged the adoption of democracy.

Condemnation of the socialists who had taken part in counter-revolutionary risings was not, of course, even considered.

On the not unimportant question of war nothing of any importance was said. The resolution on the imperialist peace



stated that the International adopted the basis of the Hague World Peace Congress and

"... recognises the necessity of attaining complete clarity on the attitude of proletarian parties during war. The International will make it its duty to study this question...."

"It is the primary requirement of this struggle that labour parties in all countries should refuse to give any support to an imperialist war and that their parliamentary representatives should reject military and war credits serving imperialist purposes."

There is little prospect of these gentlemen having finished their studies before war breaks out; meanwhile they calmly vote the military budgets, for their researches have not yet made clear precisely which credits serve imperialist purposes.

The statutes accepted at Hamburg put the character of this International in the correct light. Are the affiliated parties bound to carry out international decisions or not? Paragraph 3 of the statutes replies diplomatically:

"The Labour and Socialist International is a living reality only in so far as its decisions on all international questions are binding on all its sections. Every decision of the international organisation therefore implies a self-willed limitation of the autonomy of the parties in the different countries."

If, therefore, the parties take no notice of such decisions, the International is to that extent not a living reality and there the matter ends. If the national organisations do not wish to limit their autonomy, that is all there is to it.

Of this tender-hearted society paragraph 4 declares:

"The L. S. I. is not merely an instrument for carrying out the tasks of peace, it is an equally indispensable instrument in war time."

"In conflicts between nations the L. S. I. is to be recognised by the affiliated parties as the highest authority."

What this indispensable instrument can and should do in time of war remains in darkness.

This rule concerning conflicts between nations is a copy of the League of Nations statutes. That the various nations, *i. e.*, the national sections of this International, should represent antagonistic ideas was taken as a matter of course.

But the purest pearl in the statutes is surely paragraph 15:

"If an executive member becomes a member of a government, his membership in the executive automatically ceases. On leaving the government he may immediately be re-elected to the executive."

During the disputes on the Millerand case French opportunists discovered the phrase "socialists on holiday." That socialist ministers cease to be socialists while they are members of governments was here admitted by the International of ministers and ministerial candidates to be a natural thing. If the minister is put out of the government his socialist virginity is restored to him and he can again become a leader of the International.

These were the principles on which the firm of socialist labour treachery was founded in Hamburg. London was agreed upon as the seat of the secretariat and Friedrich Adler as secretary. It was unanimously agreed that this was a new International, for which the decisions of former international workers' organisations were not valid; and, indeed, why should these gentlemen remember the unpalatable resolutions of Stuttgart and Basle, which they had never had the intention of carrying out!

The newly-formed International was immediately presented by the Ruhr war with an opportunity of demonstrating its indispensability in war time. A report published after the Hamburg Congress reveals clearly how the occasion was met.

"The complicated political situation, which is again reaching a stage of catastrophic acuteness, made it necessary to examine whether mass action was suitable."

"It seemed, however, to the Secretariat, the Business Commission and the Bureau that the continual changes in the situation precluded the possibility of directly effective interference."

## *2. Proletarian Defeats and the Relative Stabilisation of Capitalism; the Fifth World Congress of the Comintern and the Marseilles Congress of the Social-Patriotic International*

1923—1925

The year 1923 was a year of heavy defeats for the international proletariat. It not only again bore witness to the fatal role of the reformist parties as the saviours of capitalism in its periods of crisis, it also showed that even the most experienced parties



of the Communist International had not yet attained the firmness, clarity and maturity necessary to be able to follow in practice the example set by the Bolshevik Party in 1917. The occupation of the Ruhr and the violent currency depreciation which followed, transforming the workers' wages in a few hours into worthless scraps of paper, gave rise to a profound economic, social and political crisis. The masses of the workers began to rebel against these intolerable conditions and turned away from the Social Democrats, whom they regarded as jointly responsible for the catastrophe.

In August 1923 Cuno's inflation government, the obedient tool of heavy industry, was swept away by a mass strike. The Social Democrats entered the lists to save bourgeois society and a grand coalition government including Hilferding, Sollmann and Radbruch, with Stresemann as Chancellor at the head, succeeded Cuno.

It was the task of this government to break the passive resistance in the Ruhr district and to reach an understanding with French imperialism, in order by these means to stabilise the currency and capitalist economy, shaken to its very foundations.

The leaders of the German bourgeoisie were fully aware that if the burdens of stabilisation were to be placed on the workers, and if adequate foreign loans were to be secured, it was essential to ward off the threatening danger of social revolution, to defeat the German working class. With its legal and extra-legal civil war guards, the bourgeoisie armed for the decisive conflict.

The inevitability of a decisive struggle was also recognised by the Communist International. At a meeting of the Executive Committee the attention of the German Party leadership was directed to this situation and it was decided to mobilise the working class. In the state parliaments of Saxony and Thuringia the Communists and left Social Democrats together had the majority. Under the pressure of the revolutionary sentiments of the masses the centrist leaders were forced to tolerate various forms of united front organisations, proletarian defence corps and control committees, etc. In those states the parliamentary existence of the

Social Democratic governments depended on the Communists. The plan of struggle approved by the executive consisted in the Communists in those states working together with the left Social Democrats in the government and using this step to disorganise the bourgeois state apparatus, to stir up the masses and to launch the struggle.

This plan did not succeed because the leadership of the C. P. G. at that time had a fundamentally false conception of the role of the left Social Democrats and accordingly misunderstood the strategic plan and carried it out incorrectly. They interpreted their entry into the government as an alliance with the left Social Democrats to exploit the bourgeois machinery of power and to defend the position of the working class within bourgeois democracy against the dangers of fascism. The national government, which included leaders of the Social Democracy, answered the formation of the Social Democratic-Communist governments by decreeing a state of siege, by proclaiming the dictatorship of the Reichswehr generals and by despatching Reichswehr troops to Saxony and Thuringia.

A factory council conference at Chemnitz advocated a general strike and armed defence against the counter-revolution. The left Social Democratic leaders pronounced against any measures of struggle. For Brandler, at that time leader of the C. P. G., this was a reason for abandoning the fight. It was believed to be impossible to dare the struggle against the opposition of the Social Democratic leaders, although the working class all over the country was awaiting the signal.

The resolute militancy of the proletariat was demonstrated in the heroic insurrection of the Hamburg workers who, for several days, though completely isolated, defended themselves against the overwhelming superiority of the government troops. But after Saxony had capitulated the defeat of the German proletariat was assured without a struggle. The Communist Party was declared illegal, an emergency act to which the Social Democratic Party gave its votes, the eight hour day abolished, the unemployed were subjected to task work and the so-called deflation law



legalised the robbery which inflation had meant for the small saver.

In other circumstances, and as a consequence of different mistakes, the Bulgarian proletariat was also defeated. Since 1920 Bulgaria had been ruled by Stambulinski's peasant government which, supported by the landowning peasantry, had tried to further the interests of the peasant against those of both the urban bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In June 1923 the bourgeoisie, assisted by a clique of officers and foreign imperialists, instigated a *putsch* against this government; the Communist Party remained passive. In the struggle between the fascist bourgeoisie and the peasant party it saw only a struggle between two sections of the possessing classes, instead of taking the opportunity of establishing the alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry against the reactionary bourgeoisie and of asserting, during the course of the struggle, the leadership of the proletariat over the working masses and against the reactionary peasant leaders. Thus Tsankov's white government seized power and the Social Democrats gave it active support. The Social Democrat Kasassov became a member of the government. A rising of peasants and workers in December 1923, in which the Communist Party took the lead, was suppressed by bloody terrorism.

The Fifth Congress of the Comintern, which met in 1924, had to define its attitude to these defeats and to determine, by the strictest self-criticism, the mistakes made by the Communist Parties in these struggles.

"The attitude of a political party to its mistakes," said Lenin, "is one of the most important and surest criteria of the seriousness with which a party carries out its duty towards its class and the working masses. To admit mistakes frankly, to discover their cause, to analyse the circumstances which gave rise to them and to discuss thoroughly the means by which they may be repaired — this is the sign of a party which is to be taken seriously, this is fulfilment of duty, this is training and teaching the class and therewith the mass."

There cannot be parties which do not make any mistakes. The difference between Communist and reformist parties is not that the former do not make mistakes and the latter do, but that the

Communists consistently represent the class interests of the proletariat, while the Social Democrats systematically betray them.

If a Communist Party deviates from the correct road of proletarian class struggle in making opportunist mistakes, does that mean that it protects the interests of the proletariat just as little as the Social Democratic parties? By no means! Such a conclusion would only be justified if these deviations were tolerated and approved by Communism and made into a consistent line of policy. It was precisely by subjecting the activities of its sections to systematic and strict criticism, by trying to reduce unavoidable errors to a minimum and correcting them as quickly as possible, that the Comintern proved itself to be the leader of the world proletariat.

The Fifth World Congress came to the conclusion that the C.P.G. and a number of other parties had made serious opportunist mistakes. The cowardly diplomacy of a mutual amnesty for all sins, the principle on which the Second International is based, does not exist within the Third International. The Fifth World Congress declared that the opportunist Brandler-Thalheimer leadership in Germany had interpreted the united front as an alliance with the left reformists and had therefore surrendered the independent leading role of the C.P. and was in part to blame for the defeat, suffered without a struggle, of the German proletariat. This opportunist mistake also showed how heavily the Communist Parties outside Russia were still burdened with the cursed heritage of Social Democratic tradition, how far they still lacked that Bolshevik determination which had led the Russian Party to victory.

The Bolshevisation of the Communist Parties, the course agreed upon as a result of the lessons of the defeats in Germany, Bulgaria and other countries, signified the complete elimination of the opportunist traditions of the past and the realisation of complete political unity within the Comintern on a Marxist-Leninist foundation.

This internal consolidation of the Communist Parties was the more necessary since, in 1924, a partial and temporary relative



stabilisation of European capitalism was noticeable, made possible by the defeat of the working class and the support of American capital. This period was characterised by the strengthening of democratic-pacifist illusions among the masses. In January 1924 MacDonald's labour government began its short rule in England. On May 2, the left bloc in France, of which the Socialist Party formed an essential part, won a great election victory and Herriot replaced Poincaré. In Sweden and Denmark too, so-called labour governments were formed about that time, directly or indirectly dependent on bourgeois parties. Thus the Social Democrats of the different countries were again able to play an active part in imperialist politics, and while they disseminated pacifist illusions, their real job consisted in promoting an understanding among the imperialists, not for the purposes of peace, but in order to prepare jointly for war on the common foe, the proletarian state.

The continued existence, in undiminished measure, of imperialist conditions, the lack of unity on any question except that of struggle against the proletarian revolution, were again clearly reflected in the Second Congress of the social-patriotic International, held at Marseilles in August 1925.

The Congress agreed not to determine its attitude to one of the most vital questions of the day, the Dawes treaty, concluded a year previously; that treaty meant international financial control of Germany, in order that 2.5 milliard marks might be squeezed out of the German workers annually.

While the Comintern, united in all its sections, conducted a resolute fight against this plan of robbery, the reformists of the different countries could not agree upon a common outlook.

The German Social Democracy had carried on a lively agitation in favour of this treaty and celebrated it as their victory when, in August 1924, the Reichstag, by a two-thirds majority attained with the support of half the National Party group, ratified the treaty.

English trade unionists, on the other hand, were for the most part sharply opposed to the treaty, for they realised clearly that the impoverishment of the German proletariat would mean

competition from Germany which would affect the labour conditions of the British proletariat and increase unemployment.

Before the acceptance of the Dawes plan the executive of the L.S.I. at its meeting in Luxemburg, issued the following statement:

"If burdens are to be laid upon the German working class which can only be borne by lengthening the working day beyond eight hours and by a considerable decrease in the real wages of the German workers, the mechanism of capitalist competition would exert upon other countries pressure towards longer hours and lower wages. Thus reparations would actually be paid, not by those responsible for the war, not by the capitalist class of Germany, enriched by the consequences of the war, but by the workers of all countries."

But when the Dawes plan, with all its provisions, aimed at the working class, about the reduction of staff on the railways and the increase of indirect taxation, became a fact, a joint meeting of the bureaux of the L.S.I. and the International Federation of Trade Unions held in June 1924 declared that the Dawes plan

"... imposed on the German working class disproportionately heavy burdens in comparison with the capitalist classes of Germany and exposed the German national railway administration to foreign capitalist influence."

but that, since that was the case, the only immediate possible solution was to carry out the experts' plan. It was then noted

"... that the experts' plan precluded any attack on the eight hour day in Germany."

This deterred the German capitalists from abolishing the legal eight hour day, in order to carry out the Dawes plan, just as little as it prevented the German Social Democrats from voting for the emergency laws which made those measures possible.

With these "achievements" to its credit, the Marseilles Congress of the L.S.I. poured scorn on the workers in a resolution which ran:

"The Congress congratulates the socialist workers' organisations which have won the legal eight hour day and expresses the hope that our comrades will not slacken their efforts until, by factory inspection, administration and workers' control, the eight hour day will be actually, and not merely theoretically achieved."



In the commission to discuss this resolution, the English delegation moved an amendment which was directed against reparations in general. The majority of the commission agreed to its insertion, but it was turned down at the plenary meeting, because the Belgians and French would at no price give up reparations.

The Dawes plan, so highly esteemed by the German Social Democrats, was one of the achievements of the British labour government in the realm of foreign policy. It was followed by the Geneva Protocol, an agreement among the imperialist powers of the League of Nations to settle their differences by arbitration. After the fall of the labour government their conservative successors refused to ratify the Protocol. Then negotiations were initiated between France and Germany for a guarantee treaty according to which Germany would make no claim to the revision of her western frontier and would in return be guaranteed the earlier evacuation of the Rhine and her acceptance into the League of Nations.

German imperialism, fortified by the reconstruction of German capitalism and the rise of powerful trusts, attempted to draw nearer to the imperialist powers of the west in order to make sure of its share in the redivision of the world which was to begin with the defeat of proletarian Russia. For Germany, partially disarmed and economically controlled by British and American capitalists, a war of revenge against the victors of Versailles is quite hopeless in the present situation. In spite of the irreconcilable contradiction of interests between German imperialism on the one side and the British, French and Polish on the other side, the German bourgeoisie seeks to reach an understanding with these powers because it believes that only by taking part in the war of intervention being prepared by them can German armaments be increased and her imperialist hopes realised during the further development of hostilities.

Entry into the League of Nations obviously implies inclusion in the imperialist alliance directed against the proletarian state. Articles 15 and 16 of the League of Nations statutes require that

members of the League shall provide military and economic assistance in the event of one League member's being attacked. Since the imperialists will have no difficulty in representing themselves as the attacked, this means that in a Russian-Polish or a Russian-English war, members of the League of Nations would give help against Russia.

The significance of this pact as bartering for Germany's help in the anti-Soviet front did not in the least prevent the German Social Democrats from being its most zealous advocates, although this candid hostility to the Soviet Union met with some resistance among certain sections of the English reformists. In England the sympathy of the workers for Soviet Russia was extremely strong and the official British trade union delegation which visited the Soviet Union in 1924 had testified to the tremendous successes of socialist construction. In particular the statement of Purcell, chairman of the I.F.T.U. on the situation in Georgia, his protest against the lying reports of the Mensheviks about Bolshevik terror, his assertion that the great majority of the Georgian population did not want to hear anything about "liberation" by the heroes of the Second International, elicited a solemn reply from the leaders of the anti-Bolshevik International.

These differences in the attitude to Russia and to the guarantee pact were expressed at the Marseilles Congress in the discussion on "international socialist peace policy."

Buxton, an Englishman, spoke of a general strike against war and in his vigorous attack on the Communists proved that he had not the slightest understanding of what they wanted:

"You know that the Communists want to organise cells within the armies, that they want to persuade the soldiers to desert and that they would make use of colonial wars to create a better world. We believe that these hopes are childish, that they lack any scientific or historical basis and that the experience of the past proves their impossibility."

He had not the faintest conception that revolutionaries in the army have something else to do than desert and that the hopes of the Bolsheviks have at any rate just as much scientific and historical foundation as the victorious Russian Revolution.



Opinions about the security pact differed, said Buxton. Some saw in it the guarantee of peace on the Rhine, others feared "that the states of Europe would divide into two camps, and that the group around the pact would be directed against Russia."

Moreover the pact had nothing whatever to do with disarmament; it admitted warfare and was a ratification of the peace treaties which were a denial of justice. Consequently Buxton put forward the valuable proposal that, since opinions differed within the socialist camp, it should be left to the individual parties to decide upon their attitude.

Hilferding announced his new theory that the old saying "Capitalism is war, socialism is peace," was no longer correct. His reason was straightforward and simple: we do not want to wait until socialism is established before putting an end to war. Instead of socialism for which he did not want to wait, Hilferding suggested "real pacifism" based on an appraisal of the League of Nations as a security for peace.

"From now on there can only be the need of the whole to defend itself against the individual who breaks the peace of the whole; consequently we demand that the League of Nations should no longer remain incomplete. We want Germany's entry into the League, and we want it unconditionally, without any limitations."

That let the cat out of the bag. If there are some pacifists who believe, in honest ignorance, that peace can be assured by agreements between the imperialist robbers, that cannot apply to such an expert agent of finance capital as Hilferding, who knows quite well whose cause he is serving by this pacifist swindle.

He must know that a proletarian state cannot subject itself to its enemies' arbitration court and that the new principle of solidarity among states, which he admires, is nothing but the solidarity of the counter-revolution against the proletarian revolution.

The League of Nations, which did not raise a finger when Mussolini attacked Corfu in peacetime, which has refrained from any action in the numerous colonial wars which have occurred since 1919, cannot possibly play the part of mediator and arbitrator for peace in any serious conflict between the leading

imperialist powers. But if the imperialist powers were agreed on joint intervention against the proletarian state, the League of Nations would give this crime its moral sanction. The Hilferdings of all countries are today engaged as the most zealous propagandists of the pacifist swindle which is to serve as justification for the most reactionary of all wars.

That was why the German Social Democrats were most emphatic in their demand for Germany's entry into the League and for the conclusion of the guarantee pact.

The leader of the French social-patriots, Blum, also advocated support for the pact.

"England cannot say no, if France and Germany are agreed on yes, and we cannot accept Comrade Buxton's proposal and leave each individual nation and each socialist parliamentary group free to decide its attitude. The Congress is called upon to answer this question positively, one way or another. Look at the Communist International. It is true we maintain the attitude that we for our part answer all questions as though there were no Communists, that we have to make our decisions without reference to the existence or non-existence of that party. But whatever objections we may have to the tactics and the policy of the Communists, and although we do not approve and will not employ their stupid and slavish discipline, we must recognise that which, to a large extent, constitutes the strength of this movement: in international questions its policy is incorrect and fatal, but it is a united policy."

This was a frank appeal for solidarity among the counter-revolutionary socialists against the solidarity of the revolutionary proletariat. If possible Blum was more candid in his opposition to Russia than Hilferding. With regard to Article 16 of the League of Nations Statutes, which obliges Germany to afford free passage for interventionist troops against the Soviet Union, he said:

"We do not ignore the difficulties which Article 16 implies for Germany, but even these difficulties, with good will, are not insurmountable and it is the task of the Socialist Party of Germany to see that the German government does not adopt the attitude of demanding privileges which are not granted to other members of the League."

That is, according to the opinion of these socialists, Germany should not evade the duty of joint warfare on the Soviet Union.



It is true that in 1922, by the Treaty of Rapallo, Germany undertook not to take part in any action hostile to Soviet Russia, but Blum found a way out of this dilemma — Russia was also to enter the League of Nations. The Socialist State was to enter the League of imperialist powers to ensure imperialist peace, to plunder the colonies. Since revolutionary Russia has no intention of doing so, the socialist friend of peace discovered that the war danger existed because of the autocratic governments in Russia, Italy and Spain.

As a specialist in the eastern question, Otto Bauer was more adept in disguising the war campaign against the proletarian state. Quite correctly, he visualised the danger of war as one between the imperialist powers of the West and the Bolshevik power of the East. "Bolshevism," he said, "is in its essence the military variety of socialism" — obviously in contrast to the heroes of peace who voted the war credits for four years and earned further laurels in the civil war against the proletariat.

On the one hand Bauer saw a danger to peace in the desire of the western imperialist powers to send Poland and Rumania forth against Russia, with the further object in view of safeguarding their rule in the colonial areas of the East:

"And on the other hand the same danger: that the Soviet government will determine, as developments in Asia accentuate existing contradictions, to prepare for the new states on her western frontiers the same fate as Georgia."

This learned and righteous judge also sought the golden mean between two other extremes — on the one hand "the socialists of the East" (the Menshevik emigrants) who were deeply concerned about the uncritical attitude of the English workers towards Bolshevism, and on the other hand the great anxiety of the English about "one-sided nothing-but-anti-Bolshevism."

"... The commission should not come to a one-sided judgment determined by one or the other outlook; it must try to find the real international estimate..."

And Bauer found it in the twofold policy of saying to the imperialist governments: "Hands off Soviet Russia," while demanding from Bolshevism the re-establishment of democracy!

At the plenary meeting both the resolution on peace policy and that on the war danger in the east were unanimously accepted. The latter is a product of Bauerist dialectics. It referred first of all to the forces in imperialist countries which, frightened by national revolution in the east, were urging an aggressive policy against the U.S.S.R. Then it was the turn of militarist Bolshevism:

"The Communist International nourishes the illusion that the bayonets of the victorious Red Armies can bring emancipation to the workers and that a new world war is necessary to accomplish the world revolution. It encourages the revolutionary movements in Asia and Africa in the hope, with their support, of dealing capitalism its deathblow in war."

This contradiction is the source of the war danger and of the peculiar position in which it places the states bordering on the Soviet Union.

"On the one hand these states are exposed to *putsches* organised, under the influence of the Communist International, to serve as a pretext for subjecting these countries to the fate of Georgia and Armenia; on the other hand the capitalist-imperialist powers can misuse these states as battering rams against Soviet Russia."

From this alternative it follows that the Socialist International has on the one hand to fight against any policy directed against the Soviet Union, on the other to appeal to the Russian people:

"... to aim at the establishment of complete political and trade union liberty in the Soviet Union and to oppose any aggressive or annexationist policy of their own government which involves interference by force in the internal affairs of other countries."

This last sentence might have emanated from Chamberlain. The Socialist International is just as anxious as the representatives of imperialism to forbid a socialist state from conducting socialist propaganda. The resolution contains no appeal for the overthrow of the dictatorship of capital, but it does contain a warning against the dictatorship of the proletariat as a danger to peace.

"The L.S.I. is convinced that the danger of war would be sensibly lessened if the decisions as to war and peace in the Soviet Union were in the hands, not of a dictatorial power, but of the people of the Soviet Union themselves. Consequently the International emphatically supports the efforts of the



socialist parties within the Soviet Federation to establish a democratic regime and political liberty within the Soviet Union."

Despite the unambiguously counter-revolutionary anti-Bolshevik character of this resolution, de Brouckère in the name of the French, Polish, Latvian, Esthonian, Armenian, Bulgarian, Yugoslavian, Georgian, Hungarian, Belgian and Swedish parties, for the most part directly guilty of acts of terrorism against the revolutionary proletariat, expressed their doubts as to the adequacy of its anti-Bolshevism. They would have preferred a more downright condemnation of Bolshevism.

Recognition of Soviet Russia was to be dependent on her entry into the League of Nations. The minister of a government which, for example, maintains slavery in the literal meaning of the word, in the Congo, waxed enthusiastic over "the sacred duty of the workers" to exert all their strength for the emancipation of all oppressed peoples. He was aware of only two — the Georgians and the Armenians.

The rights protested against the resolution on the east, the lefts were opposed to the general resolution on peace. This contained an explicit sanction of war, and precisely of that war which is of immediate interest today, a war of intervention against the Soviet Union carried on by the League of Nations powers. The resolution ran:

"The workers demand that any government which, under whatsoever pretext, rejects arbitration or the decision of a court of arbitration and proceeds to war, shall be regarded as an aggressor and as the enemy of its people and of humanity.

"They demand that no hostility should be permitted, except in the case of resistance to attack or in agreement with a decision of the Council or the Assembly of the League of Nations."

This pacifist formula means, firstly, that the proletarian state, if it does not submit to the arbitration court of the imperialist robbers, is to be branded as the enemy of humanity; secondly, that the social-patriots in principle regard the question of defence against attack just as they did in 1914 and, finally, that it is left to the executive committee of the imperialist powers, the Council

of the League of Nations, to decide when hostilities shall be permitted.

The section on separate treaties expresses the same frank approval of warfare by the League of Nations. The opposition of the English prevented explicit approval of the proposed guarantee pact; it was decided to postpone the adoption of a definitive attitude until the final text was made known. Meanwhile the resolution put forward the following demands in relation to future imperialist treaties:

"They should never be directed against another power or another group of powers; they should not be designed to re-establish a false balance of power. It should not be left to any power to apply sanctions automatically. Sanctions can be applied only under the conditions provided in the League of Nations pact."

If the imperialists conclude treaties, they must not be directed against other powers! But what other implication can treaties between imperialists have, and what other meaning can there be in a guarantee pact in which the right of the League of Nations to apply sanctions, that is, to take warlike measures, is recognised?

The resolution expressly mentions that according to the League of Nations pact no single power can decide whether a treaty has been violated, "apart from the case of war regulated by Article 16."

This regulated case of war refers to a so-called attack, an event which any imperialist state can fabricate at any time that it finds suitable. In Germany in 1914 reports were spread about Russian frontier attacks and French bombs on Nuremberg even before hostilities had begun. On this point of a war envisaged by Article 16, the Congress declared:

"... that the fear of public opinion in Germany and Russia as to the manner in which Article 16 would be applied, in the event of a war in which Russia was concerned, would to a large extent be without foundation if Russia herself entered the League of Nations."

It can therefore be said without any exaggeration, that this resolution on peace is one which favours war against the Soviet Union directed by the League of Nations. Turati, in the name of the Italian, Austrian and a few other small parties, relics of the



Two-and-a-Half International, now peacefully laid to rest, declared that they

"... would rather have a briefer resolution and one more imbued with a frankly socialist and Marxist spirit... that the resolution should have been drawn up in a less diplomatic and abstract fashion, that it should have contained a clear and open appeal to proletarian forces... Why was there no protest in the resolution against militarism, why were the peace treaties as such not condemned?"

But of course these minor deficiencies did not prevent these left wingers from voting for the resolution.

Breitscheid, Stresemann's errand boy, discovered the most delicate diplomatic excuses for all these defects.

"If we are not thoroughly explicit about final aims and the methods of reaching them, that is because, for us, these things are becoming more and more a matter of course, because all the parties affiliated to the International have become internally stronger and more resolute, because these principles which we used to consider it necessary to emphasise, have now become part of our flesh and blood. There is also another reason, of which mention has already been made at this Congress, and that is that the parties affiliated to the International were inclined, and are on the point of again becoming inclined, to assume political responsibility for the State in which they live. Some were in the government yesterday, others are in the government today, and there are few parties among us which are absolved from the necessity of conducting their policy with an eye to the moment when they will again be called upon to take up the responsibility of government."

The principles are so obvious that they do not even require mentioning, although when responsibility for bourgeois government is assumed, nothing is done to put those principles into practice!

During the time in which the Congress was sitting, these socialists were given an opportunity of demonstrating their attitude to war by the colonial war of French imperialism against the Riffs, who were fighting for their independence. Their attitude in this case was somewhat similar to that displayed during the occupation of the Ruhr.

The French Communists resolutely opposed this act of imperialist aggression, demanded the immediate evacuation of Mo-

rocco, expressed their solidarity with the "enemy's" struggle for liberty and were sentenced and imprisoned by the hundred for anti-militarist propaganda. But the French reformists, the Renaudels and Jouhaux, spoke of the Riffs' attack on the French fatherland and placed their confidence in the "left" government which was conducting this slaveholders' war.

It did not occur to the Congress of social-patriots to tax their French colleagues with their shameful behaviour. Piérard, a Belgian delegate, declared, and his words found no contradiction:

"On the question of Morocco, there is nobody here who will regard the question in the primitive and simple fashion of the Communists, whose solution is nothing more nor less than the immediate evacuation of that area."

The resolution on the Moroccan war which was drawn up by the Congress could be interpreted either as a protest against the Riffs' struggle for liberty or as a protest against the aggression of the French and Spanish imperialists. The resolution demanded that the dispute should be referred to arbitration by the League of Nations and recommended a League of Nations mandate for Morocco. This was a practical example of that solidarity with the oppressed peoples of which the reformists spoke so warmly when it was a question of Georgia.

The Marseilles Congress completely revealed the chief function of the International, its role as an auxiliary force and a propaganda detachment of the League of Nations in the preparations for a war of intervention against the workers' state. If there were still any doubts on that point, Kautsky eliminated them in his *The International and Soviet Russia*, published shortly before the Marseilles Congress. It is true that a few socialist leaders, such as Otto Bauer, opposed this all-too-frank advocacy of intervention, but the International cannot reject responsibility for the utterances of its foremost theoretician. Their attitude to Kautsky's statements was similar to that of the reformists towards Bernstein at an earlier date:

"You can do that, Ede, but you mustn't say it!"



In the first place Kautsky favours an economic boycott of the workers' state.

"Soviet Russia can no longer manage without large foreign loans. But the government of the country in which such a loan is raised has a great influence on such transactions, and in most capitalist countries where such a loan is possible, the workers either control the government — as they did a short while ago in England — or are able to influence it.

"The question then arises — shall the socialist parties affiliated to the International smile or frown upon loans to Soviet Russia?

"We consider that it is not merely a question of a simple yes or no. To guarantee a loan to Soviet Russia unconditionally means to give its despots further powers to suppress the masses of the people over whom they rule and whom they can only keep down by force.

"On the other hand, unconditionally to reject any loan to Soviet Russia means surrendering a powerful instrument of pressure which can be used to force the present rulers in Moscow to make concessions in the direction of democracy.

"Loans should not be rejected, but only guaranteed on conditions which imply an amelioration of the frightful pressure which is bearing down the Russian people.

"Every such condition can be justified in the interests of the lender, so that the Bolsheviks cannot reject it as undue foreign interference in internal Russian affairs.

"...Democratic concessions, however strange it may appear, serve the interests not only of the Russian proletariat but also of capitalists outside Russia, who want to invest money in Russia either by way of loans or by the purchase of concessions."

Thus the common interests of socialists and capitalists require that loans should be granted only on conditions that involve a weakening of the proletarian dictatorship.

Secondly Kautsky is in favour of support for armed insurrections against the Soviet power. He utters a warning against an organised armed *putsch* but recommends spontaneous popular risings. There was no danger of a rising against the Soviet Union serving reactionary interests:

"At the present time, in Russia itself, the danger that a socialist insurrection against Bolshevism would promote reaction has disappeared. And for the simple reason that everything reactionary that was possible in Russia

has already been practised by the Bolsheviks to an extent which cannot be surpassed.

"...The fear of an armed rising in Russia promoting reaction need no longer be entertained. There is rather the growing possibility of such a rising, were it successful, increasing liberty in Russia; the few achievements of the revolution which still exist would not be endangered, they would be awakened into new life and the interests of the masses and the proletariat would be considerably furthered."

Kautsky recommends the Mensheviks to support such a spontaneous rising:

"But it might be fatal for our International, because it rejects organised revolt against Bolshevism, to condemn from the outset any rising against Bolshevism as counter-revolutionary and to prohibit its members in Russia from taking part in such an insurrection.

"It is impossible for Social Democrats to attempt to save the Bolshevik system. But neutrality in the event of a general mass rising would be political suicide. Of course it is not impossible that reactionary elements will seek to exploit such a rising in their own interests. But it is precisely this danger which really makes it necessary for the Social Democrats to exert all their strength to gain decisive influence upon the insurrection and not to sabotage it."

Thirdly Kautsky favours foreign capitalist intervention. It is true he starts out with a general condemnation of all armed intervention and expressly limits his advocacy to "peaceful economic intervention," but he adds that although a bloodless road to the overthrow of the Soviet power is preferable, at the moment it is not visible. Consequently his hopes are based on the bloody road. What can this road be if he considers organised armed insurrection to be hopeless? It is a spontaneous popular rising to which Kautsky looks forward in the event of a military defeat of the Soviet government.

"Where a despotic regime, resting upon military force, comes into more and more open opposition to the masses of the people, thrusting them ever deeper into misery, reducing to ruin the entire social organism, then the time may come when the whole people, moved by a powerful impulse, will rise up, and this rising can assume such dimensions that military force is powerless against it and may itself, or at least a part of it, be drawn along in the tide of general indignation. This is most likely to occur as the result of a great military catastrophe."



The theoretician of the Second International would have nothing to do with exploiting the imperialist war to overthrow the bourgeoisie, but he recommends using a war of intervention to overthrow the proletarian dictatorship.

This clearly indicates the part which international Social Democracy will play in the international war of intervention.

3. *Capitalist Rationalisation and the Advance of the New Revolutionary Wave; the Brussels Congress*  
1926—1928

Just as the basis for relative stabilisation in 1923 was created only by the reformists rendering active assistance to the counter-revolution, so again, in the period 1924 to 1926, stabilisation was possible of achievement only with their help.

The reformist trade union leaders, first of all in Germany and later in France and other countries, advocated and supported capitalist rationalisation, the method by which the bourgeoisie accomplished, at the expense of the workers, the stabilisation of their economy. The reformists praised rationalisation as a means of restoring competitive capacity and thereby eliminating unemployment, assuring higher wages and a shorter working day. They derided the Communists as machine-wreckers for calling upon the workers to fight against the rationalisation offensive.

Experience, however, confirmed the Communist analysis that, on the question of rationalisation, as on any other social question, there is no harmony of interest between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. A transformation of industry that is rational, i. e., reasonable, for the bourgeoisie, is most unreasonable for the proletariat. Capitalist rationalisation is designed to reduce as much as possible industrial costs of production, to increase as much as possible profits and capitalist accumulation and thereby increase the capacity to compete on the world market. This was a question of life or death for German capitalism, which had fallen

behind its competitors during the crisis of inflation and deflation. Technical and organisational improvements in the processes of production are also included in the term rationalisation but, under capitalist conditions, they are not more important than measures taken to reduce wages, lengthen the working day, increase the intensity of labour, economise labour power, replace skilled by unskilled labour and the labour of men by the cheaper labour of women and juveniles.

Proceeding from the general conditions of capitalist development, Marx demonstrated that under capitalism the accumulation of wealth at the one extreme of society implies the accumulation of wretchedness at the other, and this is doubly and trebly true of the present period, when monopoly capital rules and capitalism has entered upon the period of decline. Under monopoly domination a reduction in the cost of production is not followed by a corresponding fall in prices; the workers are adversely affected both by wage reductions and higher prices. Consequently the market for capitalist industry cannot extend in proportion to the greater productive capacity and this gives rise to an artificial and violent limitation of production by cartels and trusts, which in its turn means that millions of workers are permanently thrust out of the productive process.

It is not, as the reformists maintain, the wickedness or stupidity of individual capitalists that makes capitalist rationalisation result in mass impoverishment and unemployment, while those remaining at work are exploited to the utmost—it is the laws governing the development of capitalism in its present stage. At the same time this tremendous contradiction between increased productive capacity and a shrinking world market greatly intensifies the competitive struggle and increases the danger of imperialist war.

From the beginning the Comintern emphasised the temporary character of capitalist stabilisation and pointed out that the contradictions of capitalism were being reproduced on a higher level. The reformists on the other hand sang enthusiastic praises of the new period of "organised capitalism," in which the socialist



principle of planning had already superseded the capitalist principle of anarchy.<sup>1</sup>

The opportunists, whatever their individual variations, did not realise that new wars and conflicts were being prepared within this period of partial stabilisation. When, in the autumn of 1925, the Comintern first spoke of relative stabilisation, the central organ of German Social Democracy, *Vorwärts*, scoffed, "It's all over with the world revolution." But the events which occurred in the same year proved that the world revolution, as a tremendous process which embraces all countries, does not come to a standstill but leads to violent upheavals in imperialist society, now in one, now in another part of the world.

In 1925 the national revolution in China began to advance anew. In the first phase of that revolution, characterised by the advance to Shanghai of the Kuomintang armies under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, the national bourgeoisie and the revolutionary proletariat fought together in a united front against imperialism for China's emancipation from the military dictatorship of the reactionary generals, dependent on foreign imperialism, against special privileges for foreigners in China and for national emancipation and unity. But within this national movement, within the national-revolutionary party of the Kuomintang, there began a struggle for the leadership, for the decisive role in the revolution, for the leadership, above all, of the millions of peasants, the determining driving force of revolution in a backward agrarian country. The Chinese proletariat, led by the Communist Party then growing up in the course of the struggle, demonstrated its tremendous power in a number of great strikes and boycotts against the imperialists, which came to a head in the heroic Shanghai insurrection of March 1927. The action of the revolutionary proletariat brought home to the imperialists the extent of the danger and British imperialism began armed intervention and at the same time increased its efforts to win over the Chinese bourgeoisie for a compromise. The latter, intimidated by the pres-

<sup>1</sup> As stated by Hilferding at the Kiel Congress of the German S.D.P. in 1927.

sure of the imperialists and frightened by the revolutionary energy of the masses, particularly when the peasants rose against the landowners, deserted the national-revolutionary front and, led by Chiang Kai-shek, initiated a bloody campaign against the Chinese workers.

The Chinese C. P. was slow in making the necessary preparations for the struggle against bourgeois treachery. Within the national front it had failed to establish the organisational and political independence of the Communist Party. Therefore, when the national bourgeoisie deserted, it was unable to assume the position of leader of the working and peasant masses, to guide the national movement forward to victory against the united front of the renegade bourgeoisie and the imperialists.

The Comintern and the Chinese C. P. learned the lessons of this defeat. Opportunist elements were rooted out of the party leadership and preparations were made for the armed insurrection of the workers and peasants, for the formation of soviets as organs of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.

In December 1927, the revolutionary workers of Canton, led by Communists, organised a heroic insurrection under the slogans of soviet power, but owing to insufficient preparation and lack of contact with the peasants, they were defeated by the united forces of counter-revolution. But this first colonial insurrection to take place under soviet slogans shows that colonial revolutions have entered upon a new and higher stage of development and that, despite temporary setbacks, they have become a grave danger to the existence of capitalism.

While all the sections of the Comintern mobilised their forces in support of the Chinese Revolution and for its defence against British imperialism, while English revolutionary workers conducted anti-militarist propaganda among the crews of the warships bound for China, the reformists furnished further proof of their social-imperialist character.

In the House of Commons a Labour member of parliament spoke of the necessity to protect European women and children



in China. Henderson said that if ships were being sent to China, it was necessary to send an adequate number of troops.

A section of the "left" reformists and their like-minded colleagues of the Trotskyist tendency pursued another line. Trotsky, who had joined the Bolshevik Party in 1917 but who had displayed fatal hesitation at every critical situation, landing finally in the camp of the enemies of the proletarian revolution, and Otto Bauer, attacked the Comintern from the "left." They declared that the Comintern was responsible for the defeat of the Chinese workers by the Chinese counter-revolution because it had advocated a national united front with the bourgeoisie instead of organising the independent class struggle of the proletariat. The demagogic mendacity of such arguments from the lips of left Social Democrats, who in every country enter into alliances with the imperialist bourgeoisie, needs no emphasis.

Trotsky's criticism followed from his theory of permanent revolution which, as early as the first Russian Revolution, had led him into opposition to the Bolsheviks and into the company of the Mensheviks. Trotsky denied the decisive revolutionary part played by the peasantry, under proletarian leadership, in a backward agrarian country. In colonial countries, where imperialist pressure forces the bourgeoisie to take part for a time in the national-revolutionary struggle, the proletariat can only win the leadership of the peasant and petty-bourgeois masses in the revolution if first of all, in the struggle against imperialism, it drives the bourgeoisie forward and then, when the moment for the latter's inevitable desertion from the national revolution has come, exposes it to the view of all and isolates it from the revolutionary masses.

The mistake made by the Chinese Communists was not that, for a time, they fought together with the bourgeoisie while it was still in the camp of national revolution against imperialism. Their mistake was that, in doing so, they failed to establish the independent role of the proletariat, failed adequately to mobilise the peasant masses, thus becoming dependent upon bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements so that, when the decisive turning point

arrived, they were unable to lead the masses in the struggle against the bourgeoisie.

The tremendous accentuation of class contradictions and class struggles developing on the basis of the relative stabilisation of capitalism, was reflected not only in the Far East. In that country of Europe where reformist traditions were most firmly embedded, where the C. P. embraced only a very small minority of the working class, England, the radicalisation of the workers and the capitalist offensive resulted in a general strike and in a miners' dispute which lasted six months. This struggle again demonstrated who were the real internationalists.

In England and all over the world the Communists exerted their strength to the utmost in support of the movement. The Russian workers, who were tightening their belts in order to carry out the rapid industrialisation of their country, collected thousands of rubles to support their English class brothers. Smith and Cook, the reformist leaders of the miners' federation, had to admit publicly that the support given by the workers and trade unions of the Soviet Union was of enormous importance in their struggle. And if despite their courageous endurance, the miners were defeated and the bourgeoisie again triumphed, lengthening the working day and reducing wages, the reason lay in the failure of the reformist organisations to carry out their duty of proletarian solidarity.

The treachery began in the General Council of the Trade Union Congress. In that body the majority was held by leaders like Purcell and Hicks who, under mass pressure, had adopted a very left wing attitude and had aroused the extreme hostility of the reformist leaders of the I. F. T. U. by founding the Anglo-Russian Committee for Trade Union Unity. Once again these people confirmed the experience of the past that, at critical moments, the centrists become the most dangerous tools of the avowed reformists because they possess and can therefore betray the confidence of the workers.

The general strike was conducted with the greatest strength and determination, and when the leaders stopped it after a few



days without having achieved any success, it was only because they flinched before the threats of the reactionary government, because they feared the consequences of the struggle, because they were anxious to avoid coming into conflict with the state power. This struggle proved once more that a general strike can be conducted successfully only if the working class is resolved to resist military action by the bourgeoisie.

The calling off of the strike without the consent of the miners represented the most shameful betrayal of their struggle. But it was still more shameful that the miners, left in the lurch after the strike was called off, received so little support from the English unions or from the unions of any other country except Russia.

In vain the German Communists tried to organise a sympathetic movement in the Ruhr to prevent the transport of coal to England. Under the pressure of unemployment following upon rationalisation, the German miners were persuaded by their reformist leaders to become strike-breakers. The I. F. T. U. made not the slightest attempt to organise an international solidarity movement. Together with the bureau of the L.S.I. this worthy institution sang from time to time its wonted melody about reducing miners' hours, but when a historic struggle for the shorter working day was in progress, neither of these "Internationals" found it necessary to take action.

The traitors on the General Council rejected the appeal of the Russian unions to initiate international action by means of the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee, and these gentlemen considered that they had been deeply insulted when the leaders of the Russian unions branded them as the Judases of the working class movement.

The unprincipled character of these leaders, who protested their sympathy for revolutionary Russia when it cost them nothing, was again made manifest when in the spring of 1927 the British conservative government carried the threat of war against the Soviet Union as far as a rupture of relations. British imperialism, whose existence is being shaken by the revolutionary

movement in the East and by the radicalisation of the English working class, seeks salvation in the destruction of the Soviet proletarian dictatorship, which by its example develops and strengthens every revolutionary force in the world. Hence the raid on the Russian Trade Delegation in London, the rupture of relations and increased efforts to establish an economic boycott of the Soviet Union and to make diplomatic and military preparations for joint intervention by the imperialist powers.

Immediately after the raid on Arcos, such a shameless provocation that it aroused protest from several liberal and pacifist elements, the leaders of the General Council and the I.L.P. entered a protest, although, like the reformists of all other countries, they sabotaged the mobilisation of the masses against the war danger. But when, after the murder of Voikov, Russian ambassador to Poland, after several bomb outrages had been committed in Moscow and Leningrad, after counter-revolutionary plots organised from England had been discovered, the proletarian dictatorship took measures of defence and executed a few counter-revolutionaries, the left wing friends of Russia in the British Labour Party, Lansbury, Maxton and Brockway, warned the Soviet government against alienating the friendly Labour Party by such acts of terrorism. These heroes are ready to shed sympathetic tears for the victims of the white as of the red terror, but in the life and death struggle between the capitalist and socialist world they will never unambiguously and unconditionally support the proletarian power, and when it comes to a decision they are frankly on the side of the bourgeoisie. The slaughter of Indian workers and peasants by the agents of the Labour government does not disturb the friendship entertained by these left wingers for MacDonald, but when the Soviet government shoots twenty counter-revolutionary bandits, their deepest sympathy is aroused.

The General Council of the T.U.C. refused to convene a meeting of the Anglo-Russian Committee and contented itself with a resolution of protest against the shooting of the counter-revolutionaries; that meant the break-up of the Unity Committee. The international Social Democratic press split incomparably more



ink in false humanitarianism about the execution of the white guards in the Soviet Union than for all the thousands of workers and peasants murdered by imperialism and the counter-revolution in the course of the Chinese revolution.

The Austro-Marxists are the second pillar of left reformism. They were soon given the opportunity of proving that, in treachery to the working class, they ran a close second to the strike breakers of the General Council. On July 15, 1927, a tremendous mass demonstration broke out spontaneously in Vienna against the acquittal of fascist murderers by class justice. The crowd, irritated beyond endurance by police provocation, assumed the offensive, set fire to the citadel of Austrian class justice and put the police to flight. The police answered with civil warfare against the unarmed crowd. Machine guns, armoured cars and all the latest achievements of modern "realist pacifism" were brought into play and 80 men and women fell in the streets of Vienna. The Austrian proletariat organised a general strike and demanded arms in order to deal with the fascist Heimwehr and their patrons in the government.

The Austrian left Social Democrats set their defence organisation, the *Schutzbund*, into action—not for the workers against the police but for the police against the workers. Otto Bauer employed all his eloquence to explain to the workers' representatives that a continuation of the struggle was bound to lead to hunger, civil war, intervention; in short, to every possible horror. Since the Austrian Communist Party is very weak, because of the demagogy of the Austro-Marxists and the difficult conditions for struggle in a small country dependent upon the imperialist powers, the Social Democrats succeeded in breaking up the struggle and persuading the workers to surrender to the pro-fascist government.

When the defeat of the working class had been accomplished and the fascists were becoming day by day more insolent, the Austrian Social Democratic Party swung sharply to the right, steadily retreating before the bourgeoisie and continually making offers of coalition to the Christian-Socialist protectors of fascism.

This chain of violent class struggles, this extraordinary accentuation of international contradictions, characterised the situation to which, in August, 1928, the Congress of the Second International at Brussels and the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International at Moscow had respectively to define their attitudes.

At this time, when the working class was being greatly impoverished as the result of capitalist rationalisation, the reformist trade unions were drawing very close to the employers' organisations and the reformist bureaucracy was becoming an integral part of the capitalist state. In England the General Council of the T.U.C. was conducting negotiations on industrial peace with the chemical king Mond. In Germany the system of state arbitration meant that the employers and the trade union leaders, together with the representatives of the capitalist state (usually Social Democrats), stifled all the workers' struggles to improve their conditions of labour.

The increased control by the state over conditions of labour, the general tendency toward state capitalism and the transformation of the trade unions into subsidiary bodies of the capitalist state, into executive organs of capitalist society, was lauded by the theoreticians of reformism as economic democracy and an approach to socialism.

Hilferding had enunciated this theory at the Kiel Party Congress in 1927; it was elaborated at Brussels by Naphtali, the theoretician of the German trade union federation, and is embodied in the resolution of the Brussels Congress on the economic situation. Control by the democratic state of capitalist economy and workers' influence over the state—that is, co-operation between the reformist bureaucrats and the organs of the capitalist state going as far as participation in the government and in any institution designed to promote peace in industry—this was to be the road by which society would gain control of the fruits of industry and by which economic democracy and socialism would be realised. Naphtali raved about the vitality of capitalism and discovered elements of socialism in the arbitration system and the economic conference of the League of Nations.



Otto Bauer indulged in a timid protest against this neo-revisionist theory

"... which postpones the winning of political power by the working class to a remote historical epoch and implies that the working class, throughout the present economic epoch, can do nothing but seek to obtain a share in political power; the theory which does not derive, from the development of capitalist monopoly, hope in the nearness of the hour when the expropriators will be expropriated, but is contented, for an entire epoch of history, with the minor task of establishing democratic state control of capitalist monopoly and co-operation between the trade unions and the capitalist monopolies in order to promote the technical and social development of industry."

In fact this neo-revisionist theory is in line with the actions of the reformists in all countries and consequently is expressed in the practical demands contained in the resolution on the industrial policy of the working class:

"The working class of every country must learn to utilise their power in politics, the trade unions and the co-operatives with the object of subjecting capitalist monopolies to the control of the community and the organised working class, of extending public undertakings and workers' co-operatives at the expense of private economy and of extending labour legislation and joint control by workers' organisations in the application of rationalisation, in order to protect the workers endangered by the methods of production. They must also fight for improvements in unemployment insurance, for the regulation of conditions of labour by collective agreements and for a steady increase in real wages."

Control of monopolies and joint control in the application of capitalist rationalisation are fine words to describe the practice of harmonious collaboration between the reformists and the trusts, as a result of which an increase in wages is made virtually impossible.

The international demands were of a similar character: reduction in protective tariffs and removal of trade restrictions "along the lines suggested by the economic commission of the League of Nations," the open door in all colonial countries, "the reincorporation of the Soviet Union in world economy," supervision of international cartels and trusts by an international bureau in collaboration with workers' organisations.

This was their economic programme, a programme which does not even mention the expropriation of the expropriators, but which

rather puts "the nations in the place of capitalist monopolies and the community of nations in the place of capitalist world concerns," a programme of international state capitalism with the reformists having a share in the management.

Lenin propounded the equation: soviets plus electrification equals socialism, and the Hilferdings of the world answer: state capitalism plus coalitions equals socialism.

The international economic demands indicate the community of interest between the reformist International and world imperialism as against the colonial slaves and the proletarian state; they are an echo of those demands fought for by the representatives of world capital, as against the Soviet representatives, at the world economic conference convened in 1927 by the League of Nations. If the experts of monopoly capitalism favour tariff reduction it is not because the monopolists in imperialist countries wish to give up a protectionist policy; it signifies rather that they are anxious to use their power to compel the smaller and weaker states, particularly the dependent colonial and semi-colonial countries, to reduce their tariffs.

This explains the special emphasis laid on the open door in the colonies. The demand for the reincorporation of the Soviet Union in world economy represents, not a protest against the economic blockade organised by British finance capital, but support for the efforts of the imperialists to make a breach in the Soviet foreign trade monopoly in order to enable the capitalists to beat down growing socialist industry.

Tariffs have different purposes when they are used by imperialist states as a weapon of attack on the world market and when they serve a backward country to protect its young industry against imperialist penetration. This difference, obvious to a Marxist, does not exist for the theoretician of organised capitalism.

In repeating the resolution, common to all congresses, on the ratification of the Washington agreement on the eight hour day, the Congress ingenuously welcomed "the intention of the German government to ratify the agreement." The report of the secretariat



also announced that "an important success in the international struggle for the eight hour day" would soon be witnessed in Germany. These pious hopes were based upon Hermann Müller's declaration as Social Democratic Chancellor. A few months later Wissell, Social Democratic representative of that government, voted at a conference of the I.L.O. together with the representative of Baldwin's government and against the votes of all the trade union representatives, for a revision of the Washington agreement.

In accordance with the decision made at Marseilles the colonial question was raised as a special point on the Brussels agenda. At Marseilles the Belgian socialist Piérard had declared that the Stuttgart resolution on colonial policy was no longer applicable; and indeed, of what use is a fundamental rejection of all colonial policy to socialists who as ministers and governors for the slaveholders have to carry on a "practical policy," to men such as MacDonald, Olivier, Vandervelde and Varenne, the last named having become Social Democratic vice-consul for Indo-China?

The character of this International as the servants' hall of the imperialist bourgeoisie of Europe and America was made strikingly manifest in the discussion on the colonial question, since not a single representative of the revolutionary proletariat of China, India or any other colonial country took part in it. The powerful revolutionary mass movement which had already led thousands of men and women workers into class organisations, which is rapidly taking hold of further thousands and millions, is from the outset hostile to the social-imperialist leaders whom they recognise as the apostles of capitalism. A few corrupted sham socialists, representing not even a shadow of a proletarian organisation in the colonial countries, expressed their thanks for being allowed to speak from that elevated forum and proclaimed their loyalty to the social-patriotic International in senseless cursing against Communism. Some representatives of the colonial prole-

<sup>1</sup>The proletarian opposition in the French Socialist Party managed to carry the exclusion of this careerist but the Party Committee is making vigorous efforts to get him reaccepted.

tariat, present in the gallery as guests, protested in excited interjections against this pitiful swindle.

At the Congress plenum Sidney Oliver, ex-governor of Jamaica, the only representative of an important colonial power, spoke on the colonial question. He did not deal with the role of socialism as emancipator of the colonial peoples, but with the role of British imperialism which, because of its liberal and protestant tradition, would not tolerate slavery. He also took the opportunity to defend his countrymen from the reproach of hypocrisy.

The resolution, unanimously accepted, embodied the old slaveholding theory, put forward by van Kol in 1907, that the backward peoples are not yet ripe for freedom and must be educated up to that level by their oppressors. The L.S.I. demanded "that degree of self-administration or that form of administration demanded by the native population of the area concerned" only for those colonies with an "advanced population." Whether the population is already sufficiently advanced and what degree of self-administration is demanded by the native population is of course to be determined by the imperialist slaveholders. That this is the practical significance of the resolution was proved by the Labour Party when it agreed to take part in the Simon Commission appointed by the Conservative government to examine the situation in India.

According to the principles of the L.S.I., self-administration cannot be granted to colonies whose population has not yet reached the height of civilisation demanded by the capitalist butchers and their socialist lackeys. In those countries, states this resolution, the immediate withdrawal of foreign domination would mean

"....not progress toward a national culture but a relapse into primitive savagery; not the development of a national democracy but the subjection of the masses to the rule, either of a minority of white settlers or of native despots, or else it would open a new era of capitalist plunder and colonial wars."

Although the author of the resolution recommends colonial slavery for backward peoples he nevertheless assures us that



"socialism rejects on principle political domination of the colonial peoples." This means either that the principles of the L.S.I. have nothing in common with socialism or it is an illustration of Bismarck's saying that if diplomats recognise anything in principle, they disown it in practice.

For those backward people who are not yet to be free from the education of their capitalist exploiters, the resolution demands effective protection against oppression and exploitation. This is as though one were to demand protection for a galley slave against deprivation of liberty on condition that he must remain chained to the galley. Concretely, what this protection amounts to is that the various forms of forced labour, as the slavery which actually exists is euphemistically called, are to be replaced by labour agreements on a model drawn up and announced by the governments. These agreements are to be concluded by official representatives and the workers' consent is to be given "quite voluntarily." That is, the colonial governments which support capitalism with armoured cars, machine guns and bombing planes when the slaves rebel against inhuman exploitation are to take over the guardianship of their victims.

It is therefore not surprising that the International of solidarity with the slaveholders forbade its members to join the League against Colonial Oppression, founded in Brussels in 1927; for this league really represents the colonial peoples, and its members are required to display practical solidarity with the colonial fighters for freedom.

The hostility between the representatives of opposing imperialist interests became very obvious in the dispute concerning the evacuation of the Rhine. The manifesto accepted by the Brussels Congress contains not a single word on this question. In the political commission the French social-imperialists, in opposition to a proposal made by Toni Sanders demanding immediate and unconditional evacuation, had contrived to get all mention of this delicate question avoided in the Congress decisions. Consequently Poincaré's representative in the League of Nations, Paul Boncour, was spared any conflict with his International.

The German social-patriots were offered consolation in the form of a declaration on the evacuation of the Rhineland, made by Paul Fauré at the plenary session of Congress. This declaration is a masterpiece of diplomatic hypocrisy. Fauré quoted a decision of the General Council of the French Party which mentions the immediate and unconditional evacuation of the Rhineland demanded in the election programme of the Socialist Party. He went on to quote the programme, which contains the following passage:

"... We therefore demand, as we always have done, immediate evacuation ...

"The Socialist Parties have always recognised that the question of the evacuation of the Rhineland is in practice indissolubly connected with a satisfactory solution of the problems of disarmament and security. It is to be hoped that it will be accepted without dispute and without misgiving by French public opinion which, to a large extent, still regards military occupation as a guarantee of security. Instead of this illusory guarantee, real pacification could be attained by the establishment of international control."

Unconditional evacuation, as presented in this programme, is made dependent upon all the conditions demanded by Poincaré and Briand — security and international control of the Rhineland.

The disarming of Germany, which in this programme is presented as a special demand made by the socialist agents of French imperialism — itself armed to the teeth — is described as being merely the prelude to general disarmament.

The way in which this question was dealt with at the Congress made it clear once more that the leaders of this International are not by any means unsuspecting innocents dreaming of disarmament within the imperialist world, but conscious adherents of imperialist militarism for whom the pacifist phraseology of disarmament serves as a convenient method of deceiving the masses.

At the disarmament conference of the League of Nations which preceded the Brussels Congress, Litvinov, on behalf of the Soviet government, had put forward a proposal for complete disarmament. Without concealing their conviction that no capitalist has or can have a sincere desire for disarmament, the representatives of the proletarian state, by this step, compelled the imperialist



representatives to reveal the truth behind the mask of disarmament. At this conference the socialist Boncour accepted the sorry part of finding arguments for his imperialist masters, with which to reject this proposal for real disarmament.

Since this was the situation, it was extremely disagreeable for the Socialist Congress that the I.L.P. proposed to the disarmament commission a resolution congratulating the Soviet government on its proposal for complete disarmament and demanding that in the event of war the socialist parties should organise the stoppage of war industries and refuse to vote war credits. This suggestion encountered bitter resistance from the German, French, Austrian, Polish and Czech social-patriots. Reinhard, Swiss left Social Democrat, was the only delegate to support the English. All the I.L.P. proposals were turned down, although this did not prevent these left wing heroes from voting for the resolution in the name of unity and from expressing their satisfaction that at least a few radical turns of speech had been introduced into the original resolution.

The resolution as passed was a frank recognition of the necessity for imperialist armaments. It proclaimed the goal of complete disarmament, but as the means thereto recommended nothing but the "strongest possible pressure" on capitalist governments and the utilisation of the "tendencies towards an international agreement on disarmament which are to be found even among the ruling classes."

Revolutionary methods of struggle were mentioned in only one connection. They were to be employed against any government which "in the event of an international conflict refuses to submit to arbitration and proceeds to warfare." This juristic definition of an aggressor was borrowed from the Geneva protocol, whose "revolutionary" threat is aimed at the Soviet government which, as a proletarian government, cannot submit to the arbitration of its deadly foe, the capitalists.

The strengthening of German imperialism was evident in the concession that had to be made to its socialist agents, in that the specific demand of German militarism "for equal freedom

for all nations to select their military system," was granted. The demand of the German imperialists, as against the disarmament stipulations of the Versailles Treaty, for equal freedom to arm with their imperialist competitors, was raised to the level of a socialist demand. This freedom of selection was however modified by the following warning:

"Although all nations are to exercise liberty in the choice of their army system, the L.S.I. directs attention to the danger contained in a new type of army organisation which combines a strong nucleus of professional soldiers with the possibility of rapidly bringing into action large numbers for the purposes of attack, thus uniting the dangers of a militia with those of a professional army."

It would be reasonable to infer from this resolution that it had in view the notorious French law which provides for a powerful standing army and at the same time places upon the entire civil population the obligation to take part in a war. But these social-patriotic gentlemen had no intention of condemning the work of their comrade Boncour: they raised no objection to Article 11 of that law which requisitions the services of the trade unions for military purposes in the event of war. This was quite in line with the actions of the trade union leaders from 1914 to 1918. At that time they rendered military service by denouncing revolutionary workers and their task is no different today, although it is carried out in the name of industrial democracy.<sup>1</sup>

The implications of this warning were betrayed by the Menshevik Peter Garvy in his anti-Bolshevik work *Red Militarism*.<sup>2</sup>

He quotes the paragraph of the Brussels resolution given above and adds:

<sup>1</sup> In his book *Industrial Democracy, Its Nature, Path and Goal* (German), published on behalf of the German trade union federation in 1928, Naphtali takes the German military service law as the starting point in the development of industrial democracy.

<sup>2</sup> Dietz-Verlag, 1928 (German); this work was recommended by the German S.D.P. for recruiting party members. There can scarcely be a franker admission of the fact that the S.D.P. recruits its membership from the standpoint of winning volunteers for war against the Soviet Union.



"Thus, from the socialist proletarian standpoint, the Bolshevik army system contains the defects and deficiencies of all army systems. Consequently, from the purely military standpoint, it offers the advantages of all such systems."

Approval for all imperialist military systems and condemnation of the proletarian military force which defends the proletarian revolution — this is the political significance of this famous disarmament resolution.

The demand that the army should be made more democratic and that parliament should exercise control over armaments is pacifist eyewash without practical importance. For example, state control of the chemical industry as a war industry is demanded, as though that would mean anything except that secret state support for war industries would be changed into direct and open support. In so far as the practical demands made in the resolution are really hostile to militarist interests, they do not affect the activities of socialist parties. We would mention the demand made in the resolution for the prohibition of fascist military organisations. When Germany had a Social Democratic government no ban was laid on fascist organisations, but in May 1929 the Red Front Fighters' League, the only anti-militarist, anti-fascist, anti-imperialist defence organisation in Germany, was prohibited.

But the best illustration of this disarmament swindle is afforded by the fact that at the same time that disarmament speeches were being made in Brussels, the Social Democratic minister of the German coalition government voted for the construction of a series of armoured cruisers, thus introducing a new era of German naval armaments.

The identity of the enemy against whom German, as international, armaments are directed can be deduced without much difficulty from the Congress manifesto on the international situation. This manifesto considers all dictatorships as endangering world peace to an equal extent. Bolshevism is accused of encouraging political reaction and directing the hopes of the working class to new wars. Therefore the Russian workers should abolish the dictatorship of the proletariat and re-establish democracy.

In the commission the I.L.P. representatives objected to the manifesto with the remark that in the draft the struggle against Bolshevism took up two and a half times as much space as the struggle against fascism. At the plenary session Otto Bauer took on the job of persuading the I.L.P., in the name of the unity, to withdraw their opposition, receiving support from the former left winger Lansbury.

Thereupon the I.L.P. representatives, while maintaining their objections to this expression of anti-Bolshevism, voted for the manifesto since it represented an advance over the Marseilles manifesto. The spirit of Otto Bauer is to guide the L.S.I. into unity with the Russian comrades!

So the Brussels Congress closed on the note of unity, the unity of all reformists in the struggle against the proletarian revolution and the proletarian state.<sup>1</sup>

#### *4. From Social-Imperialism to Social-Fascism — the Road of the Second International; Forward to the World Union of Soviet Republics, Forward to World Communism — the Road of the Third International*

While the diplomats of social-imperialism were disguising their imperialist policy with socialist phrases, the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern was being held in Moscow to determine the programme and tactics of the revolutionary proletariat in the given situation.

Historical importance attaches to this Congress because, for the first time since 1864, when Karl Marx drew up the Inaugural Address of the International Workingmen's Association, which served as the foundation document of the First International, a world programme for the struggle of the working class and of all

<sup>1</sup> The proceedings of the Congress Commissions, which are not reported in the official minutes, are given in Walter Stoecker's book *The Brussels Congress of the Second International and Armoured Cruiser Socialism*, Internationaler Arbeiter-Verlag (German).



the exploited was agreed upon. In discussions which lasted for days and in which delegates from all countries and all corners of the earth took part, the programme of the Comintern was elaborated, a programme which, going beyond all former Marxist programmes, concretely pointed out on the basis of the experience gained in the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship and the building up of socialism the road which the proletariat in every country is to follow until the final victory of world Communism is assured.

Throughout the entire history of the Second International, not one attempt was made to draw up such an international programme. In 1891 at the Brussels Congress a German delegate moved that a general statement of principles for all parties should be drawn up which was to serve as the introduction to the programmes of the different sections. In 1893 at Zurich a commission resolution dealing with the international organisation of Social Democracy pointed out the need for an international programme, but this resolution was never put to the vote. At the inter-parliamentary conference which was held in 1907 on the occasion of the Stuttgart Congress, Troelstra raised the question of the International's creating its "own political system." Vaillant objected on the ground that it was impossible to visualise the state of the future and the revisionist Vollmar uttered a warning against "loading all questions on to the international way."

If it was impossible for the Second International to have such a programme in the pre-war period, because a truly international outlook was lacking and the socialist parties were not imbued with the Marxist spirit, it was utterly impossible in that mockery of a socialist International established after the war which serves only in the fight against Communism.

In a letter to the Executive of his International, December 1924, Friedrich Adler wrote: "The Marxists are a minority in the International." Surely this is an exaggeration. In this International there are no Marxists and there can be none, for Marxism does not consist in a knowledge of the writings of Marx — such erudition is not difficult to find in the socialist parties — nor in lip

service to Marxism, but in an understanding of the problems of our time, in determining, 'in the spirit of Marx and Engels, the concrete tasks of the proletariat.

That is why, in the age of imperialism and the world revolution, there can be no Marxist who is not also a Leninist. For no other Marxist besides Lenin understood how to analyse in Marxist fashion the phenomena of our epoch and to determine, on the basis of that analysis, the tasks of the proletariat. Whoever does not understand Lenin's theory of imperialism, of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of the leading role of the party, of its hegemony in the revolution, of its alliance with the peasantry and the colonial peoples, is no Marxist, however often he may repeat the words of Marx. For Marxism is no dead creed, but the living unity of proletarian understanding and proletarian action. In parties whose every action scorns every principle of Marxism, there can be no Marxist.

While the Brussels Congress prophesied for the hundredth time the death of the world revolution and the Social Democratic representatives of capitalist governments consoled themselves with hopes of a new period of capitalist progress, the Sixth Congress of the Comintern declared that after a short period during which capitalism was relatively strengthened, the pre-war level of production surpassed and the European working class movement temporarily depressed because of the increase of productive forces, all the international contradictions of the capitalist system were being reproduced at a higher level and in a more acute form.

The imperialist epoch is one of wars and revolutions, and the unparalleled accentuation of imperialist and class contradictions in recent years shows that great crisis and catastrophes are rapidly approaching.

War and revolution — this is the Communist analysis. It is not true, as Otto Bauer and other demagogues maintain, that the Communists place all their hopes in a new imperialist world war. On the contrary, the Comintern is the only force which by releasing all the forces of international revolution can save the world



from a series of new destructive imperialist wars. Nobody can foresee or determine beforehand in what order wars and revolutions will follow upon each other in the forthcoming years. But whoever does not believe in miracles must realise that the capitalist world will not give way to socialism without putting up desperate resistance. The war of the imperialist states on the proletarian state is inevitable. As little as the class struggle can be eliminated so long as classes with opposing interests exist, so little can the world struggle between capitalist and the proletarian states be avoided: it is indeed but the most acute form of the class struggle. The more rapidly the proletarian revolution destroys the individual links in the chain of imperialist war preparations, the more quickly will the epoch of warfare be ended and the age of peaceful construction of the socialist world begin.

The Soviet Union, which is concentrating all its strength on carrying out the Five Year Plan of socialist construction, is most profoundly interested in putting off for as long as possible the inevitable military conflict. That is why, despite all the provocations of the international reactionaries, it maintains peace with quiet firmness and unswerving resolution. The defence of the Soviet Union has become the most important task of the class conscious workers of all countries.

The Sixth World Congress worked out the prospects of internal political development which follow from the approaching world struggle between imperialism and socialism. Economically, imperialism means the concentration of production under the control of a handful of powerful monopolies, the domination of the entire national economy by a small group of financial magnates. In the political sphere this financial oligarchy is represented by the concentration of political power in the hands of the agents of finance capital.

The tendency to limit bourgeois democracy, the crisis of bourgeois parliamentarism, is furthered by the tremendous accentuation of the class struggle, by the weakening of the bourgeois parliamentary parties' hold over the masses and by the consequent necessity to strengthen the state apparatus of oppression. This

explains why the development towards the unconcealed and unlimited dictatorship of finance capital, the development towards fascism, has become an international phenomenon.

By shouting loudly enough about the defence of democracy against fascism and Bolshevism, the reformists are trying to appear as the guardians of the workers' rights. But because of this development towards fascism, reformist organisations are becoming more and more closely connected with the imperialist state machinery, are to an increasing extent placed in the service of the state suppression of the working class movement, are collaborating more closely in the name of industrial peace and economic democracy with employers' organisations under state supervision. In this period of preparation for a counter-revolutionary war on the Soviet Union and for the fascist dictatorship, they have proved themselves to be the most effective and important tools of imperialism.

In Italy the fascist dictatorship was established by bloody terror against Social Democratic as well as Communist organisations. It was only after the victory of fascism that the reformist leader d'Arragona attempted a rapprochement with fascism.

In Hungary the situation was from the outset essentially different. Here it was a Social Democratic government that accomplished the transference of power from the hands of the proletariat into those of the executioner Horthy. When the white terror was unleashed, it did not spare the Social Democrats. Soon, however, the Social Democrats concluded a formal peace with Horthy. In 1921, under the leadership of Payer, they renounced any propaganda abroad directed against the white dictatorship and agreed not to organise agricultural labourers and state employees. In return the Bethlen government promised the Social Democrats freedom for their activities.

This scandal aroused such indignation among the socialist workers that the L. S. I. found it necessary to investigate the matter and it was, significantly enough, Kautsky who undertook the defence of the Horthy socialists. At a commission session in January 1925 it was solemnly decided to refrain from passing



any judgment on the correctness or incorrectness of the Hungarian Party leadership in concluding the pact with Bethlen, but no doubt was raised as to the "good faith" of Horthy's allies. The affair was regarded as settled by the statement of the Hungarian Party leadership that they considered themselves no longer bound by the 1921 pact.

The attitude of the Bulgarian Social Democrats was if possible even more shameful, for some of their leaders took a direct part in Tsankov's counter-revolutionary *putsch*. Kasassov, socialist, sat in the murderers' government. After the insurrection of the workers and peasants had been drowned in blood, the Social Democrats put forward their candidates jointly with the government parties.

Before an L. S. I. commission which was set up to investigate the despicable behaviour of these socialists, the Bulgarian delegation declared in March 1924:

"The Tsankov government was far from being a Social Democratic government — of the members only one was a Social Democrat — but at that moment it was the only government of which we could hope that it would find the way to establish democracy."

In a situation in which, on the one side, the mass of the Bulgarian people, with the courage of despair, fought for their liberty, while on the other side bands of officers and speculators murdered thousands of workers and peasants, this International did not dare openly to take the side of Tsankov's government of murder. An executive decision of June 1924 declared that the question of Social Democratic participation in the Tsankov government was settled, because meanwhile the party had left the government. The report of the international commission which investigated this question contains an acknowledgment of the good intentions of the Bulgarian Social Democrats, "who are wedged between two criminal and violent groups, both of which are to be fought with the utmost energy."

In Poland also the socialist party actively supported Pilsudski's fascist *coup d'état*, and a representative of the party, Moraszevski, entered Pilsudski's government. When Polish fascism

encountered increasing resistance from the workers, when the workers in the industrial centres in growing numbers turned from the pro-fascist socialist party to the Communists, the party decided, in November 1926, to go into opposition; but a section of the party, led by Moraszevski, continued openly to support the fascist government, without the Party Committee's taking any action in the matter, on the ground that for the sake of maintaining unity in the party, these comrades should not be antagonised by sharp words. However, at about the time of the Brussels Congress, the avowed adherents of fascism broke away from the P. P. S. and now the two wings of the party are playing different parts in the same game: while one frankly supports Pilsudski's government and tries to organise fascist trade unions, the other renders even more effective assistance to fascism by maintaining a sham opposition in parliament and at the same time attacking the Communists in the most brutal and malicious fashion.

It is not only the Social Democratic parties of fascist countries which, with the tacit consent of the International, co-operate with fascism; it is also the international leaders of reformism. It was not as a private person that Albert Thomas, leader of the International Labour Office, enthusiastically greeted the congress of fascist trade unions at Rome. While Friedrich Adler, who at that time did not understand M. Thomas' role as the forerunner in the development of reformism to social-fascism, protested against this act, by far the greater part of the Social Democratic press found every possible excuse for this approach to fascism. The bureau of the L. S. I. contented itself with stating regretfully that Albert Thomas' Italian journey had afforded the opportunity for "tendentious misrepresentation."

It is of the utmost importance for the working class to understand that this is not a case of accidental deviations on the part of individual members of Social Democratic parties, or individual parties in the social-patriotic International. In the decisions of the Sixth World Congress, both the development of the bourgeois state towards fascism and the development of reformism towards social-fascism are dealt with as international phenomena.



Reformism is not an independent class force; it cannot play an independent part in the class struggle, it is merely an appendage of the imperialist bourgeoisie. It reflects the interests of the labour aristocracy, completely dissociated from the proletariat, and the petty bourgeoisie, both of which, as the class struggle grows more acute, unite more closely with the employers and the bourgeois state against the revolutionary proletariat. In the post-war years great numbers of labour officials have risen to every possible state and municipal position. Thousands of well-paid functionaries rule the reformist apparatus of the party and the mass organisations, placing it entirely at the service of imperialist politics. As the imperialist bourgeoisie drops democratic-parliamentary methods of ruling in favour of fascist terrorism, the social-imperialists' ideas and methods of struggle change in the direction of fascism. The reformist idea of economic democracy corresponds to the fascist idea of the corporative state, in which syndicates of employers and workers, controlled by the state, are to work in the interests of production and exclude the class struggle.

In some countries the reformists — to some extent jointly with bourgeois parties — have created, on the fascist model, special fighting organisations, which first attract the worker with a programme of struggle against fascism, and then in a united front with fascist organisation, proceed to organise terrorism against the revolutionary working class.

This is the function of the fighting groups of the P. P. S., the *Reichsbanner* in Germany, the *Schutzbund* in Austria. While fascism in Italy annihilates by bloody terrorism the workers' organisations, trade unions, co-operatives, etc., and tries to establish new fascist trade unions, the reformists pursue the same object of replacing class struggle organisations by subsidiary organs of the imperialist state, by excluding revolutionary workers from the mass organisations, by continually provoking splits, by utterly ignoring proletarian democracy, by subjecting the mass organisations completely to the dictates of the bureaucracy, interwoven as it is with the state apparatus.

Precisely in those countries in which bourgeois democracy still formally exists, although it is gradually being replaced by fascist methods of rule, the reformist parties play the most fatal part in preparing for the fascist dictatorship. A typical example is offered by the Social Democratic Party of Germany in the years 1928 and 1929.

There, at the time that a new revolutionary wave was beginning to advance, the bourgeoisie placed the Social Democrats at the head of the government and Social Democrats occupied the most important police posts, in order to organise terrorism against the Communists. The prohibition of revolutionary organisations and the measures of suppression used against the Communist press proceeded from Social Democratic ministers and police presidents. While the L. S. I., as in past years, called for demonstrations on May Day, 1929, the Social Democratic leaders in Berlin not only gave up all thought of organising their own demonstration, but their police president Zörgiebel forbade any demonstrations at all. "In closest agreement with the party and trade unions," this Social Democrat organised a bloody massacre of the workers who on May Day 1929 demonstrated in the streets of Berlin for the demands of the Communist International. Thirty-three working men and women, demonstrators and passers-by, fell victims to the bullets of the social-fascist police. Nevertheless the workers held the streets, rallying again into their contingents and erecting barricades in Wedding and Neukölln, beating back for hours the murderous attacks of the police and their armoured cars.

While the police under Zörgiebel fought the workers in the streets, the entire bourgeois press, led by the Social Democratic *Vorwärts*, carried on a furious campaign against Moscow. Moscow was to blame because the revolutionary workers demonstrated on the streets, as they had done for years past, without flinching from police threats. The revolutionary workers were demonstrating for the defence of the Soviet Union, they were risking their lives in defence of the workers' cause. The Social Democratic ministers and police presidents answered with terror-



ism against the workers and an anti-Bolshevik campaign against the workers' state. This is a symbol of the respective roles of the Communist and the reformist Internationals in the struggles of our time.

The reformist International is no longer merely an instrument of disruption and confusion for dividing and misleading the workers; it is an instrument for the deliberate preparation of war against the proletarian state, for the establishment of the fascist dictatorship, which will introduce against the working class the unbridled terror of fascism.

What were once two different tendencies within one international organisation are now two hostile forces which have to fight out a life and death struggle.

The Third International acknowledges frankly and proudly that it will continue and complete the great work begun by the First International under the leadership of Marx and Engels. Its attitude to the Second International is different. What was created at Hamburg under the title of the Labour and Socialist International possesses not the faintest right to appeal to the great traditions of the First International, and has an essentially different character from the Second International of the pre-war period. That International combined within itself the revolutionary proletarian kernel of the international working class movement and the muddy stream of opportunism, spreading further and further among the trade unions and parties. In theory the left wing held the leadership until 1914, but in fact opportunism was steadily gaining ground. The consistent development of the opportunist tendency in the direction of complete reaction, through social-imperialism to social-fascism — that is the historic essence of that company of traitors which calls itself the Labour and Socialist International.

The Comintern, however, maintains and extends the heritage of that revolutionary wing of the Second International which took up the fight against reformism even before 1914.

Of the First International the *Times* said in 1879 that "it was a great soul in a little body;" the Second International,

conquered by opportunism, was a great body with a little soul. It embraced great masses, but it was unable to fill them with the revolutionary spirit of Marxism. In the Third International the great soul of the First is again alive, but it is now guiding a powerful body. Marxism now is not merely the guiding star of an international group of propagandists, working and fighting along a road leading to a distant future; it is the prevailing theory in a powerful state covering one-sixth of the earth, facing the imperialist world powers. Today thousands and millions of workers in the industrial countries of the west and the colonial lands of the east follow the banner of the Comintern; tomorrow they will be millions and hundreds of millions.

The great fight for the world rule of the working class, for world Communism, has begun; one organisation, the Comintern, is the lever of a tremendous world movement. One theory is the guiding star of millions who have risen to struggle and will never sink back again into dumb submission — the Marxist-Leninist theory.

Faced by this world historical struggle, in which the International of social-imperialists merely plays the part of a subsidiary organisation of world imperialism, it is only the pitifully ignorant and illusioned who can dream of a reunion among all workers' parties; there are such visionaries in the I. L. P. and among the left Social Democrats of Germany and Austria.

They do not want to understand that there can be no union, no reconciliation, between revolution and counter-revolution. They think they can turn the wheel of history back to the position before 1914, they preach a unity which would mean the subjection of the working class to the leadership of its deadly foe.

It is not by such means that the split in the working class, brought about by the social-imperialists, can be bridged. The disunion will only disappear when reformism as a force in the working class movement is annihilated. Reformism is the shadow of capitalism; the one will exist as long as the other. The destruction of capitalism will mean the destruction of the parties of reformist labour treachery. For the victory over the capitalist



class it is essential that the social-imperialists lose their influence over the working class; victory over the capitalist class is necessary for the final and complete liquidation of reformism.

Clearly and unambiguously the perspective of development is outlined. The crisis of world capitalism, continually growing more acute, must give rise to crises in all the parties of the reformist International. The contradiction between the reactionary policy of the social-fascist leaders and the proletarian interests of the rank and file members of these parties is becoming more and more obvious. If war should break out among the imperialist powers, the corpse of the Second International will meet an even more pitiful end than did its predecessor in 1914; but should war first break out between the imperialist powers and the proletarian state, its open advocacy of world reaction will rapidly open the eyes of millions of workers and drive them to break finally with this International of treachery. The Comintern may suffer several defeats in various countries; its parties may have to overcome severe internal crises on the road to establishing complete Bolshevik clarity and unity, to winning the majority of the working class, but it goes forward irresistibly.

Each day experience confirms anew the correctness of its principles and tactics. The successes of socialist construction in the Soviet Union, the policy of peace consistently pursued by the Soviet government, the leading role of the Communists in the daily struggles of the working class, the practical international solidarity in all class struggles displayed by the Comintern alone, contrasted with the shameful and treacherous role of the reformists, is daily bringing thousands of workers into the ranks of the Communist International. Through hard struggle and bitter persecution, the road of the Communist Parties leads on to victory. Attacked and persecuted, Communists in every country arm for the final struggle against the bourgeoisie.

As certain as the decay of capitalism and its social-fascist adherents is the final and complete victory of the Communist International.

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