

Workers of All Countries, Unite!

Lenin

On Soviet Socialist Democracy



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The Working Class and the National Question

Russia is a motley country as far as her nationalities are concerned. Government policy, which is the policy of the landowners supported by the bourgeoisie, is steeped in Black-Hundred¹ nationalism.

This policy is spearheaded against the *majority* of the peoples of Russia who constitute the *majority* of her population. And alongside this we have the bourgeois nationalism of other nations (Polish, Jewish, Ukrainian, Georgian, etc.), raising its head and trying to *divert* the working class from its great world-wide tasks by a national struggle or a struggle for national culture.

The national question must be clearly considered and solved by all class-conscious workers.

When the bourgeoisie was fighting for freedom together with the people, together with all those who labour, it stood for full freedom and equal rights for the nations. Advanced countries, Switzerland, Belgium, Norway and others, provide us with an example of how free nations under a really democratic system live together in peace or separate peacefully from each other.

Today the bourgeoisie fears the workers and is seeking an alliance with the Purishkeviches, with the reactionaries, and is betraying democracy, advocating oppression or unequal rights among nations and corrupting the workers with *nationalist* slogans.

In our times the proletariat alone upholds the real freedom of nations and the unity of workers of all nations.

For different nations to live together in peace and freedom or to separate and form different states (if that is

more convenient for them), a full democracy, upheld by the working class, is essential. No privileges for any nation or any one language! Not even the slightest degree of oppression or the slightest injustice in respect of a national minority—such are the principles of working-class democracy.

The capitalists and landowners want, at all costs, to keep the workers of different nations apart while the powers that be live splendidly together as shareholders in profitable concerns involving millions (such as the Lena Goldfields²); Orthodox Christians and Jews, Russians and Germans, Poles and Ukrainians, everyone who possesses *capital*, exploit the workers of all nations in company.

Class-conscious workers stand for *full unity* among the workers of all nations in every educational, trade union, political, etc., workers' organisation. Let the Cadet³ gentlemen disgrace themselves by denying or belittling the importance of equal rights for Ukrainians. Let the bourgeoisie of all nations find comfort in lying phrases about national culture, national tasks, etc., etc.

The workers will not allow themselves to be disunited by sugary speeches about national culture, or "national-cultural autonomy".⁴ The workers of all nations together, concertedly, uphold full freedom and complete equality of rights in organisations common to all—and that is the guarantee of genuine culture.

The workers of the whole world are building up their own internationalist culture, which the champions of freedom and the enemies of oppression have for long been preparing. To the old world, the world of national oppression, national bickering, and national isolation the workers counterpose a new world, a world of the unity of the working people of all nations, a world in which there is no place for any privileges or for the slightest degree of oppression of man by man.

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From Reply to P. Kievsky (Y. Pyatakov)⁵

...Capitalism in general, and imperialism in particular, turn democracy into an illusion—though at the same time capitalism engenders democratic aspirations in the masses, creates democratic institutions, aggravates the antagonism between imperialism's denial of democracy and the mass striving for democracy. Capitalism and imperialism can be overthrown only by economic revolution. They cannot be overthrown by democratic transformations, even the most "ideal". But a proletariat not schooled in the struggle for democracy is incapable of performing an economic revolution. Capitalism cannot be vanquished without *taking over the banks*, without repealing *private ownership* of the means of production. These revolutionary measures, however, cannot be implemented without organising the entire people for democratic administration of the means of production captured from the bourgeoisie, without enlisting the entire mass of the working people, the proletarians, semi-proletarians and small peasants, for the democratic organisation of their ranks, their forces, their participation in state affairs. Imperialist war may be said to be a triple negation of democracy (*a.* every war replaces "rights" by violence; *b.* imperialism as such is the negation of democracy; *c.* imperialist war fully equates the republic with the monarchy), but the awakening and growth of socialist revolt against imperialism are *indissolubly* linked with the

growth of democratic resistance and unrest. Socialism leads to the withering away of *every* state, consequently also of every democracy, but socialism can be implemented only *through* the dictatorship of the proletariat, which combines violence against the bourgeoisie, i.e., the minority of the population, with *full* development of democracy, i.e., the genuinely equal and genuinely universal participation of the *entire* mass of the population in all *state* affairs and in all the complex problems of abolishing capitalism.

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From *The State and Revolution*⁶

Chapter V

The Economic Basis of the Withering Away of the State

Marx explains this question most thoroughly in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (letter to Bracké, May 5, 1875, which was not published until 1891 when it was printed in *Neue Zeit*, Vol IX, 1, and which has appeared in Russian in a special edition).⁷ The polemical part of this remarkable work, which contains a criticism of Lassalleanism, has, so to speak, overshadowed its positive part, namely, the analysis of the connection between the development of communism and the withering away of the state.

1. Presentation of the Question by Marx

From a superficial comparison of Marx's letter to Bracké of May 5, 1875, with Engels's letter to Bebel of March 28, 1875, which we examined above, it might appear that Marx was much more of a "champion of the state" than Engels, and that the difference of opinion between the two writers on the question of the state was very considerable.

Engels suggested to Bebel that all chatter about the state be dropped altogether, that the word "state" be eliminated from the programme altogether and the word "community" substituted for it. Engels even declared that the Commune was no longer a state in the proper sense

of the word. Yet Marx even spoke of the "future state in communist society", i.e., he would seem to recognise the need for the state even under communism.

But such a view would be fundamentally wrong. A closer examination shows that Marx's and Engels's views on the state and its withering away were completely identical, and that Marx's expression quoted above refers to the state in the process of *withering away*.

Clearly there can be no question of specifying the moment of the *future* "withering away", the more so since it will obviously be a lengthy process. The apparent difference between Marx and Engels is due to the fact that they dealt with different subjects and pursued different aims. Engels set out to show Bebel graphically, sharply and in broad outline the utter absurdity of the current prejudices concerning the state (shared to no small degree by Lassalle). Marx only touched upon *this* question in passing, being interested in another subject, namely, the *development* of communist society.

The whole theory of Marx is the application of the theory of development—in its most consistent, complete, considered and pithy form—to modern capitalism. Naturally, Marx was faced with the problem of applying this theory both to the *forthcoming* collapse of capitalism and to the *future* development of *future* communism.

On the basis of what *facts*, then, can the question of the future development of future communism be dealt with?

On the basis of the fact that it *has its origin* in capitalism, that it develops historically from capitalism, that it is the result of the action of a social force to which capitalism *gave birth*. There is no trace of an attempt on Marx's part to make up a utopia, to indulge in idle guesswork about what cannot be known. Marx treated the question of communism in the same way as a naturalist would treat the question of the development of, say, a new biological variety, once he knew that it had originated in such and such a way and was changing in such and such a definite direction.

To begin with, Marx brushed aside the confusion the Gotha Programme brought into the question of the relationship between state and society. He wrote:

"'Present-day society' is capitalist society, which exists in all civilised countries, being more or less free from medieval admixture, more or less modified by the particular historical development of each country, more or less developed. On the other hand, the 'present-day state' changes with a country's frontier. It is different in the Prusso-German Empire from what it is in Switzerland, and different in England from what it is in the United States. The 'present-day state' is, therefore, a fiction.

"Nevertheless, the different states of the different civilised countries, in spite of their motley diversity of form, all have this in common, that they are based on modern bourgeois society, only one more or less capitalistically developed. They have, therefore, also certain essential characteristics in common. In this sense it is possible to speak of the 'present-day state', in contrast with the future, in which its present root, bourgeois society, will have died off.

"The question then arises: what transformation will the state undergo in communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to present state functions? This question can only be answered scientifically, and one does not get a flea-hop nearer to the problem by a thousandfold combination of the word people with the word state."⁸

After thus ridiculing all talk about a "people's state", Marx formulated the question and gave warning, as it were, that those seeking a scientific answer to it should use only firmly-established scientific data.

The first fact that has been established most accurately by the whole theory of development, by science as a whole—a fact that was ignored by the utopians, and is

ignored by the present-day opportunists, who are afraid of the socialist revolution—is that, historically, there must undoubtedly be a special stage, or a special phase, of *transition* from capitalism to communism.

2. The Transition from Capitalism to Communism

Marx continued:

“Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat...*”

Marx bases this conclusion on an analysis of the role played by the proletariat in modern capitalist society, on the data concerning the development of this society, and on the irreconcilability of the antagonistic interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

Previously the question was put as follows: to achieve its emancipation, the proletariat must overthrow the bourgeoisie, win political power and establish its revolutionary dictatorship.

Now the question is put somewhat differently: the transition from capitalist society—which is developing towards communism—to communist society is impossible without a “political transition period”, and the state in this period can only be the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

What, then, is the relation of this dictatorship to democracy?

We have seen that the *Communist Manifesto* simply places side by side the two concepts: “to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class” and “to win the battle of democracy”.⁹ On the basis of all that has been said above, it is possible to determine more precisely how

democracy changes in the transition from capitalism to communism.

In capitalist society, providing it develops under the most favourable conditions, we have a more or less complete democracy in the democratic republic. But this democracy is always hemmed in by the narrow limits set by capitalist exploitation, and consequently always remains, in effect, a democracy for the minority, only for the propertied classes, only for the rich. Freedom in capitalist society always remains about the same as it was in the ancient Greek republics: freedom for the slave-owners. Owing to the conditions of capitalist exploitation, the modern wage-slaves are so crushed by want and poverty that “they cannot be bothered with democracy”, “cannot be bothered with politics”; in the ordinary, peaceful course of events, the majority of the population is debarred from participation in public and political life.

The correctness of this statement is perhaps most clearly confirmed by Germany, because constitutional legality steadily endured there for a remarkably long time—nearly half a century (1871-1914)—and during this period the Social-Democrats were able to achieve far more than in other countries in the way of “utilising legality”, and organised a larger proportion of the workers into a political party than anywhere else in the world.

What is this largest proportion of politically conscious and active wage-slaves that has so far been recorded in capitalist society? One million members of the Social-Democratic Party—out of fifteen million wage-workers! Three million organised in trade unions—out of fifteen million!

Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich—that is the democracy of capitalist society. If we look more closely into the machinery of capitalist democracy, we see everywhere, in the “petty”—supposedly petty—details of the suffrage (residential qualification, exclusion of women, etc.), in the technique of the representative institutions, in the actual obstacles to the right of assembly (public buildings are not for “paupers”!), in

the purely capitalist organisation of the daily press, etc., etc.—we see restriction after restriction upon democracy. These restrictions, exceptions, exclusions, obstacles for the poor seem slight, especially in the eyes of one who has never known want himself and has never been in close contact with the oppressed classes in their mass life (and nine out of ten, if not ninety-nine out of a hundred, bourgeois publicists and politicians come under this category); but in their sum total these restrictions exclude and squeeze out the poor from politics, from active participation in democracy.

Marx grasped this *essence* of capitalist democracy splendidly when, in analysing the experience of the Commune, he said that the oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class shall represent and repress them in parliament!⁴⁰

But from this capitalist democracy—that is inevitably narrow and stealthily pushes aside the poor, and is therefore hypocritical and false through and through—forward development does not proceed simply, directly and smoothly, towards “greater and greater democracy”, as the liberal professors and petty-bourgeois opportunists would have us believe. No, forward development, i.e., development towards communism, proceeds through the dictatorship of the proletariat, and cannot do otherwise, for the *resistance* of the capitalist exploiters cannot be *broken* by anyone else or in any other way.

And the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the organisation of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class for the purpose of suppressing the oppressors, cannot result merely in an expansion of democracy. *Simultaneously* with an immense expansion of democracy, which *for the first time* becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the money-bags, the dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of restrictions on the freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists. We must suppress them in order to free humanity from wage slavery, their resistance

must be crushed by force; it is clear that there is no freedom and no democracy where there is suppression and where there is violence.

Engels expressed this splendidly in his letter to Bebel when he said, as the reader will remember, that “the proletariat needs the state, not in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist”.

Democracy for the vast majority of the people, and suppression by force, i.e., exclusion from democracy, of the exploiters and oppressors of the people—this is the change democracy undergoes during the *transition* from capitalism to communism.

Only in communist society, when the resistance of the capitalists has been completely crushed, when the capitalists have disappeared, when there are no classes (i.e., when there is no distinction between the members of society as regards their relation to the social means of production), *only* then “the state . . . ceases to exist”, and “*it becomes possible to speak of freedom*”. Only then will a truly complete democracy become possible and be realised, a democracy without any exceptions whatever. And only then will democracy begin to *wither away*, owing to the simple fact that, freed from capitalist slavery, from the untold horrors, savagery, absurdities and infamies of capitalist exploitation, people will gradually *become accustomed* to observing the elementary rules of social intercourse that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copy-book maxims. They will become accustomed to observing them without force, without coercion, without subordination, *without the special apparatus* for coercion called the state.

The expression “the state *withers away*” is very well chosen, for it indicates both the gradual and the spontaneous nature of the process. Only habit can, and undoubtedly will, have such an effect; for we see around us on millions of occasions how readily people become accus-

tomed to observing the necessary rules of social intercourse when there is no exploitation, when there is nothing that arouses indignation, evokes protest and revolt, and creates the need for *suppression*.

And so in capitalist society we have a democracy that is curtailed, wretched, false, a democracy only for the rich, for the minority. The dictatorship of the proletariat, the period of transition to communism, will for the first time create democracy for the people, for the majority, along with the necessary suppression of the exploiters, of the minority. Communism alone is capable of providing really complete democracy, and the more complete it is, the sooner it will become unnecessary and wither away of its own accord.

In other words, under capitalism we have the state in the proper sense of the word, that is, a special machine for the suppression of one class by another, and, what is more, of the majority by the minority. Naturally, to be successful, such an undertaking as the systematic suppression of the exploited majority by the exploiting minority calls for the utmost ferocity and savagery in the matter of suppressing, it calls for seas of blood, through which mankind is actually wading its way in slavery, serfdom and wage-labour.

Furthermore, during the *transition* from capitalism to communism suppression is *still* necessary, but it is now the suppression of the exploiting minority by the exploited majority. A special apparatus, a special machine for suppression, the "state", is *still* necessary, but this is now a transitional state. It is no longer a state in the proper sense of the word; for the suppression of the minority of exploiters by the majority of the wage-slaves of *yesterday* is comparatively so easy, simple and natural a task that it will entail far less bloodshed than the suppression of the risings of slaves, serfs or wage-labourers, and it will cost mankind far less. And it is compatible with the extension of democracy to such an overwhelming majority of the population that the need for a *special machine* of suppression will begin to disappear. Naturally, the exploiters are

unable to suppress the people without a highly complex machine for performing this task, but *the people* can suppress the exploiters even with a very simple "machine", almost without a "machine", without a special apparatus, by the simple *organisation of the armed people* (such as the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, we would remark, running ahead).

Lastly, only communism makes the state absolutely unnecessary, for there is *nobody* to be suppressed—"nobody" in the sense of a *class*, of a systematic struggle against a definite section of the population. We are not utopians, and do not in the least deny the possibility and inevitability of excesses on the part of *individual persons*, or the need to stop *such* excesses. In the first place, however, no special machine, no special apparatus of suppression, is needed for this; this will be done by the armed people themselves, as simply and as readily as any crowd of civilised people, even in modern society, interferes to put a stop to a scuffle or to prevent a woman from being assaulted. And, secondly, we know that the fundamental social cause of excesses, which consist in the violation of the rules of social intercourse, is the exploitation of the people, their want and their poverty. With the removal of this chief cause, excesses will inevitably begin to "*wither away*". We do not know how quickly and in what succession, but we do know they will wither away. With their withering away the state will also *wither away*.

Without building utopias, Marx defined more fully what can be defined *now* regarding this future, namely, the difference between the lower and higher phases (levels, stages) of communist society.

3. The First Phase of Communist Society

In the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx goes into detail to disprove Lassalle's idea that under socialism the worker will receive the "undiminished" or "full product of his labour". Marx shows that from the whole of the social labour of society there must be deducted a

reserve fund, a fund for the expansion of production, a fund for the replacement of the "wear and tear" of machinery, and so on. Then, from the means of consumption must be deducted a fund for administrative expenses, for schools, hospitals, old people's homes, and so on.

Instead of Lassalle's hazy, obscure, general phrase ("the full product of his labour to the worker"), Marx makes a sober estimate of exactly how socialist society will have to manage its affairs. Marx proceeds to make a *concrete* analysis of the conditions of life of a society in which there will be no capitalism, and says:

"What we have to deal with here [in analysing the programme of the workers' party] is a communist society, not as it has *developed* on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it *emerges* from capitalist society; which is, therefore, in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it comes."

It is this communist society, which has just emerged into the light of day out of the womb of capitalism and which is in every respect stamped with the birthmarks of the old society, that Marx terms the "first", or lower, phase of communist society.

The means of production are no longer the private property of individuals. The means of production belong to the whole of society. Every member of society, performing a certain part of the socially-necessary work, receives a certificate from society to the effect that he has done a certain amount of work. And with this certificate he receives from the public store of consumer goods a corresponding quantity of products. After a deduction is made of the amount of labour which goes to the public fund, every worker, therefore, receives from society as much as he has given to it.

"Equality" apparently reigns supreme.

But when Lassalle, having in view such a social order (usually called socialism, but termed by Marx the first

phase of communism), says that this is "equitable distribution", that this is "the equal right of all to an equal product of labour", Lassalle is mistaken and Marx exposes the mistake.

"Hence, the equal right," says Marx, in this case *still* certainly conforms to "bourgeois law", which, like all law, *implies inequality*. All law is an application of an *equal* measure to *different* people who in fact are not alike, are not equal to one another. That is why the "equal right" is a violation of equality and an injustice. In fact, everyone, having performed as much social labour as another, receives an equal share of the social product (after the above-mentioned deductions).

But people are not alike: one is strong, another is weak; one is married, another is not; one has more children, another has less, and so on. And the conclusion Marx draws is:

"With an equal performance of labour, and hence an equal share in the social consumption fund, one will in fact receive more than another, one will be richer than another, and so on. To avoid all these defects, the right would have to be unequal rather than equal."

The first phase of communism, therefore, cannot yet provide justice and equality: differences, and unjust differences, in wealth will still persist, but the *exploitation* of man by man will have become impossible because it will be impossible to seize the *means of production*—the factories, machines, land, etc.—and make them private property. In smashing Lassalle's petty-bourgeois, vague phrases about "equality" and "justice" *in general*, Marx shows the *course of development* of communist society, which is *compelled* to abolish at first *only* the "injustice" of the means of production seized by individuals, and which is *unable* at once to eliminate the other injustice, which consists in the distribution of consumer goods "according to the amount of labour performed" (and not according to needs).

The vulgar economists, including the bourgeois professors and "our" Tugan,¹¹ constantly reproach the socialists with forgetting the inequality of people and with "dreaming" of eliminating this inequality. Such a reproach, as we see, only proves the extreme ignorance of the bourgeois ideologists.

Marx not only most scrupulously takes account of the inevitable inequality of men, but he also takes into account the fact that the mere conversion of the means of production into the common property of the whole of society (commonly called "socialism") *does not remove* the defects of distribution and the inequality of "bourgeois law", which *continues to prevail* so long as products are divided "according to the amount of labour performed". Continuing, Marx says:

"But these defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society as it is when it has just emerged, after prolonged birth pangs, from capitalist society. Law can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby."

And so, in the first phase of communist society (usually called socialism) "bourgeois law" is *not* abolished in its entirety, but only in part, only in proportion to the economic revolution so far attained, i.e., only in respect of the means of production. "Bourgeois law" recognises them as the private property of individuals. Socialism converts them into *common* property. *To that extent*—and to that extent alone—"bourgeois law" disappears.

However, it persists as far as its other part is concerned; it persists in the capacity of regulator (determining factor) in the distribution of products and the allotment of labour among the members of society. The socialist principle, "He who does not work shall not eat", is *already* realised; the other socialist principle, "An equal amount of products for an equal amount of labour", is also *already* realised. But this is not yet communism, and it does not yet abolish "bourgeois law", which gives un-

equal individuals, in return for unequal (really unequal) amounts of labour, equal amounts of products.

This is a "defect", says Marx, but it is unavoidable in the first phase of communism; for if we are not to indulge in utopianism, we must not think that having overthrown capitalism people will at once learn to work for society *without any rules of law*. Besides, the abolition of capitalism *does not immediately create* the economic prerequisites for *such* a change.

Now, there are no other rules than those of "bourgeois law": To this extent, therefore, there still remains the need for a state, which, while safeguarding the common ownership of the means of production, would safeguard equality in labour and in the distribution of products.

The state withers away insofar as there are no longer any capitalists, any classes, and, consequently, no *class* can be *suppressed*.

But the state has not yet completely withered away, since there still remains the safeguarding of "bourgeois law", which sanctifies actual inequality. For the state to wither away completely, complete communism is necessary.

4. The Higher Phase of Communist Society

Marx continues:

"In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and with it also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished, after labour has become not only a livelihood but life's prime want, after the productive forces have increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois law be left behind in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!"

Only now can we fully appreciate the correctness of Engels's remarks mercilessly ridiculing the absurdity of combining the words "freedom" and "state". So long as the state exists there is no freedom. When there is freedom, there will be no state.

The economic basis for the complete withering away of the state is such a high stage of development of communism at which the antithesis between mental and physical labour disappears, at which there consequently disappears one of the principal sources of modern *social* inequality—a source, moreover, which cannot on any account be removed immediately by the mere conversion of the means of production into public property, by the mere expropriation of the capitalists.

This expropriation will make it *possible* for the productive forces to develop to a tremendous extent. And when we see how incredibly capitalism is already *retarding* this development, when we see how much progress could be achieved on the basis of the level of technique already attained, we are entitled to say with the fullest confidence that the expropriation of the capitalists will inevitably result in an enormous development of the productive forces of human society. But how rapidly this development will proceed, how soon it will reach the point of breaking away from the division of labour, of doing away with the antithesis between mental and physical labour, of transforming labour into "life's prime want"—we do not and *cannot* know.

That is why we are entitled to speak only of the inevitable withering away of the state, emphasising the protracted nature of this process and its dependence upon the rapidity of development of the *higher phase* of communism, and leaving the question of the time required for, or the concrete forms of, the withering away quite open, because there is *no* material for answering these questions.

The state will be able to wither away completely when society adopts the rule: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs", i.e., when people

have become so accustomed to observing the fundamental rules of social intercourse and when their labour has become so productive that they will voluntarily work *according to their ability*. "The narrow horizon of bourgeois law", which compels one to calculate with the heartlessness of a Shylock¹² whether one has not worked half an hour more than somebody else, whether one is not getting less pay than somebody else—this narrow horizon will then be left behind. There will then be no need for society, in distributing the products, to regulate the quantity to be received by each; each will take freely "according to his needs".

From the bourgeois point of view, it is easy to declare that such a social order is "sheer utopia" and to sneer at the socialists for promising everyone the right to receive from society, without any control over the labour of the individual citizen, any quantity of truffles, cars, pianos, etc. Even to this day, most bourgeois "savants" confine themselves to sneering in this way, thereby betraying both their ignorance and their selfish defence of capitalism.

Ignorance—for it has never entered the head of any socialist to "promise" that the higher phase of the development of communism will arrive; as for the great socialists' *forecast* that it will arrive, it presupposes not the present productivity of labour and *not the present* ordinary run of people, who, like the seminary students in Pomyalovsky's stories,¹³ are capable of damaging the stocks of public wealth "just for fun", and of demanding the impossible.

Until the "higher" phase of communism arrives, the socialists demand the *strictest* control by society *and by the state* over the measure of labour and the measure of consumption; but this control must *start* with the expropriation of the capitalists, with the establishment of workers' control over the capitalists, and must be exercised not by a state of bureaucrats, but by a state of *armed workers*.

The selfish defence of capitalism by the bourgeois ideologists (and their hangers-on, like the Tseretelis, Cher-

novs and Co.) consists in that they *substitute* arguing and talk about the distant future for the vital and burning question of *present-day* politics, namely, the expropriation of the capitalists, the conversion of *all* citizens into workers and other employees of *one* huge "syndicate"—the whole state—and the complete subordination of the entire work of this syndicate to a genuinely democratic state, *the state of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*.

In fact, when a learned professor, followed by the philistine, followed in turn by the Tseretelis and Chernovs, talks of wild utopias, of the demagogic promises of the Bolsheviks, of the impossibility of "introducing" socialism, it is the higher stage, or phase, of communism he has in mind, which no one has ever promised or even thought to "introduce", because, generally speaking, it cannot be "introduced".

And this brings us to the question of the scientific distinction between socialism and communism which Engels touched on in his above-quoted argument about the incorrectness of the name "Social-Democrat". Politically, the distinction between the first, or lower, and the higher phase of communism will in time, probably, be tremendous. But it would be ridiculous to recognise this distinction now, under capitalism, and only individual anarchists, perhaps, could invest it with primary importance (if there still are people among the anarchists who have learned nothing from the "Plekhanov" conversion of the Kropotkins, of Grave, Cornelissen and other "stars" of anarchism into social-chauvinists or "anarcho-trenchists", as Ghe, one of the few anarchists who have still preserved a sense of honour and a conscience, has put it).

But the scientific distinction between socialism and communism is clear. What is usually called socialism was termed by Marx the "first", or lower, phase of communist society. Insofar as the means of production become *common* property, the word "communism" is also applicable here, providing we do not forget that this is *not* complete communism. The great significance of Marx's

explanations is that here, too, he consistently applies materialist dialectics, the theory of development, and regards communism as something which develops *out of* capitalism. Instead of scholastically invented, "concocted" definitions and fruitless disputes over words (What is socialism? What is communism?), Marx gives an analysis of what might be called the stages of the economic maturity of communism.

In its first phase, or first stage, communism *cannot* as yet be fully mature economically and entirely free from traditions or vestiges of capitalism. Hence the interesting phenomenon that communism in its first phase retains "the narrow horizon of *bourgeois law*". Of course, bourgeois law in regard to the distribution of *consumer* goods inevitably presupposes the existence of the *bourgeois state*, for law is nothing without an apparatus capable of *enforcing* the observance of the rules of law.

It follows that under communism there remains for a time not only bourgeois law, but even the bourgeois state, without the bourgeoisie!

This may sound like a paradox or simply a dialectical conundrum, of which Marxism is often accused by people who have not taken the slightest trouble to study its extraordinarily profound content.

But in fact, remnants of the old, surviving in the new, confront us in life at every step, both in nature and in society. And Marx did not arbitrarily insert a scrap of "bourgeois" law into communism, but indicated what is economically and politically inevitable in a society *emerging out of the womb* of capitalism.

Democracy is of enormous importance to the working class in its struggle against the capitalists for its emancipation. But democracy is by no means a boundary not to be overstepped; it is only one of the stages on the road from feudalism to capitalism, and from capitalism to communism.

Democracy means equality. The great significance of the proletariat's struggle for equality and of equality as a slogan will be clear if we correctly interpret it as mean-

ing the abolition of *classes*. But democracy means only *formal* equality. And as soon as equality is achieved for all members of society *in relation* to ownership of the means of production, that is, equality of labour and wages, humanity will inevitably be confronted with the question of advancing farther, from formal equality to actual equality, i.e., to the operation of the rule "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs". By what stages, by means of what practical measures humanity will proceed to this supreme aim we do not and cannot know. But it is important to realise how infinitely mendacious is the ordinary bourgeois conception of socialism as something lifeless, rigid, fixed once and for all, whereas in reality *only* socialism will be the beginning of a rapid, genuine, truly mass forward movement, embracing first the *majority* and then the whole of the population, in all spheres of public and private life.

Democracy is a form of the state, one of its varieties. Consequently, like every state, it represents, on the one hand, the organised, systematic use of force against persons; but, on the other hand, it signifies the formal recognition of equality of citizens, the equal right of all to determine the structure of, and to administer, the state. This, in turn, results in the fact that, at a certain stage in the development of democracy, it first welds together the class that wages a revolutionary struggle against capitalism—the proletariat, and enables it to crush, smash to atoms, wipe off the face of the earth the bourgeois, even the republican-bourgeois, state machine, the standing army, the police and the bureaucracy and to substitute for them a *more* democratic state machine, but a state machine nevertheless, in the shape of armed workers who proceed to form a militia involving the entire population.

Here "quantity turns into quality": *such* a degree of democracy implies overstepping the boundaries of bourgeois society and beginning its socialist reorganisation. If really *all* take part in the administration of the state, capitalism cannot retain its hold. The development of capitalism, in turn, creates the *preconditions* that enable

really "all" to take part in the administration of the state. Some of these preconditions are: universal literacy, which has already been achieved in a number of the most advanced capitalist countries, then the "training and disciplining" of millions of workers by the huge, complex, socialised apparatus of the postal service, railways, big factories, large-scale commerce, banking, etc., etc.

Given these *economic* preconditions, it is quite possible, after the overthrow of the capitalists and the bureaucrats, to proceed immediately, overnight, to replace them in the *control* over production and distribution, in the work of *keeping account* of labour and products, by the armed workers, by the whole of the armed population. (The question of control and accounting should not be confused with the question of the scientifically trained staff of engineers, agronomists and so on. These gentlemen are working today in obedience to the wishes of the capitalists, and will work even better tomorrow in obedience to the wishes of the armed workers.)

Accounting and control—that is *mainly* what is needed for the "smooth working", for the proper functioning, of the *first phase* of communist society. *All* citizens are transformed into hired employees of the state, which consists of the armed workers. *All* citizens become employees and workers of a *single* country-wide state "syndicate". All that is required is that they should work equally, do their proper share of work, and get equal pay. The accounting and control necessary for this have been *simplified* by capitalism to the utmost and reduced to the extraordinarily simple operations—which any literate person can perform—of supervising and recording, knowledge of the four rules of arithmetic, and issuing appropriate receipts.*

When the *majority* of the people begin independently and everywhere to keep such accounts and exercise such

* When the more important functions of the state are reduced to such accounting and control by the workers themselves, it will cease to be a "political state" and "public functions will lose their political character and become mere administrative functions" (cf. above, Chapter IV, 2, Engels's controversy with the anarchists).

control over the capitalists (now converted into employees) and over the intellectual gentry who preserve their capitalist habits, this control will really become universal, general and popular; and there will be no getting away from it, there will be "nowhere to go".

The whole of society will have become a single office and a single factory, with equality of labour and pay.

But this "factory" discipline, which the proletariat, after defeating the capitalists, after overthrowing the exploiters, will extend to the whole of society, is by no means our ideal, or our ultimate goal. It is only a necessary *step* for thoroughly cleansing society of all the infamies and abominations of capitalist exploitation, and for further progress.

From the moment all members of society, or at least the vast majority, have learned to administer the state *themselves*, have taken this work into their own hands, have organised control over the insignificant capitalist minority, over the gentry who wish to preserve their capitalist habits and over the workers who have been thoroughly corrupted by capitalism—from this moment the need for government of any kind begins to disappear altogether. The more complete the democracy, the nearer the moment when it becomes unnecessary. The more democratic the "state" which consists of the armed workers, and which is "no longer a state in the proper sense of the word", the more rapidly *every form* of state begins to wither away.

For when *all* have learned to administer and actually do independently administer social production, independently keep accounts and exercise control over the parasites, the sons of the wealthy, the swindlers and other "guardians of capitalist traditions", the escape from this popular accounting and control will inevitably become so incredibly difficult, such a rare exception, and will probably be accompanied by such swift and severe punishment (for the armed workers are practical men and not sentimental intellectuals, and they will scarcely allow anyone to trifle with them), that the *necessity* of observing

the simple, fundamental rules of the community will very soon become a *habit*.

Then the door will be thrown wide open for the transition from the first phase of communist society to its higher phase, and with it to the complete withering away of the state.

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Petrograd

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To the Population

Comrades—workers, soldiers, peasants and all working people!

The workers' and peasants' revolution has definitely triumphed in Petrograd, having dispersed or arrested the last remnants of the small number of Cossacks¹⁴ deceived by Kerensky. The revolution has triumphed in Moscow too. Even before the arrival of a number of troop trains dispatched from Petrograd, the officer cadets¹⁵ and other Kornilovites in Moscow signed peace terms—the disarming of the cadets and the dissolution of the Committee of Salvation.¹⁶

Daily and hourly reports are coming in from the front and from the villages announcing the support of the overwhelming majority of the soldiers in the trenches and the peasants in the uyezds for the new government and its decrees on peace and the immediate transfer of the land to the peasants. The victory of the workers' and peasants' revolution is assured because the majority of the people have already sided with it.

It is perfectly understandable that the landowners and capitalists, and the *top groups* of office employees and civil servants closely linked with the bourgeoisie, in a word, all the wealthy and those supporting them, react to the new revolution with hostility, resist its victory, threaten to close the banks, disrupt or bring to a standstill the work of the different establishments, and hamper

the revolution in every way, openly or covertly. Every politically-conscious worker was well aware that we would inevitably encounter resistance of this kind. The entire Party press of the Bolsheviks has written about this on numerous occasions. Not for a single minute will the working classes be intimidated by this resistance; they will not falter in any way before the threats and strikes of the supporters of the bourgeoisie.

The majority of the people are with us. The majority of the working and oppressed people all over the world are with us. Ours is the cause of justice. Our victory is assured.

The resistance of the capitalists and the high-ranking employees will be smashed. Not a single person will be deprived of his property except under the special state law proclaiming nationalisation of the banks and syndicates. This law is being drafted. Not one of the working people will suffer the loss of a kopek; on the contrary, he will be helped. Apart from the strictest accounting and control, apart from levying the set taxes in full the government has no intention of introducing any other measure.

In support of these just demands the vast majority of the people have rallied round the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government.

Comrades, working people! Remember that now *you yourselves* are at the helm of state. No one will help you if you yourselves do not unite and take into *your hands all affairs* of the state. *Your* Soviets are from now on the organs of state authority, legislative bodies with full powers.

Rally around your Soviets. Strengthen them. Get on with the job yourselves; begin right at the bottom, do not wait for anyone. Establish the strictest revolutionary law and order, mercilessly suppress any attempts to create anarchy by drunkards, hooligans, counter-revolutionary officer cadets, Kornilovites and their like.

Ensure the strictest control over production and accounting of products. Arrest and hand over to the revo-

lutionary courts all who dare to injure the people's cause, irrespective of whether the injury is manifested in sabotaging production (damage, delay and subversion), or in hoarding grain and products or holding up shipments of grain, disorganising the railways and the postal, telegraph and telephone services, or any resistance whatever to the great cause of peace, the cause of transferring the land to the peasants, of ensuring workers' control over the production and distribution of products.

Comrades, workers, soldiers, peasants and all working people! Take *all* power into the hands of *your* Soviets. Be watchful and guard like the apple of your eye your land, grain, factories, equipment, products, transport—all that from now onwards will be *entirely* your property, public property. Gradually, with the consent and approval of the majority of the peasants, in keeping with their *practical* experience and that of the workers, we shall go forward firmly and unswervingly to the victory of socialism—a victory that will be sealed by the advanced workers of the most civilised countries, bring the peoples lasting peace and liberate them from all oppression and exploitation.

November 5, 1917, Petrograd

V. Ulyanov (Lenin)

Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars

Pravda No. 4 (evening edition),
November 19(6), 1917

Collected Works,
Vol. 26, pp. 296-98

Report on the Right of Recall at a Meeting of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee November 21 (December 4), 1917

The question of re-election is one of actually implementing the democratic principle. It is the accepted practice in all leading countries that only the elected are entitled to speak in the language of state legislation. But having allowed the right of summons for the conduct of affairs of state, the bourgeoisie intentionally withheld the right of recall—the right of actual control.

In all revolutionary periods in history, a prominent feature in the struggle for constitutional changes has been the fight for the right of recall.

Democratic representation exists and is accepted under all parliamentary systems, but this right of representation is curtailed by the fact that the people have the right to cast their votes once in every two years, and while it often turns out that their votes have installed those who help to oppress them, the people are deprived of the democratic right to put a stop to that by removing these men.

But this democratic right of recall has survived in countries with old democratic traditions, for instance, in some cantons of Switzerland and some states of America.

Any great revolution clearly confronts the people not only with the use of existing statutes but also with the framing of appropriate new statutes. It is necessary, therefore, in view of the impending convocation of the Constituent Assembly,¹⁷ to review the new electoral statutes.

The Soviets have been created by the working people themselves, by their revolutionary energy and initiative, and that is the only guarantee of their working entirely to promote the interests of the masses. The truly popular nature of the Soviets is evident in the fact that every peasant sends his representatives to the Soviet and is also entitled to recall them.

Various parties in this country have been in power. The last time power passed from one party to another there was a revolution, a rather stormy revolution, but if we had had the right of recall, a simple vote would have sufficed.

There is this word freedom. In the old days it meant freedom for the bourgeoisie to manipulate its millions for swindling, freedom to use its forces through such swindling. We have done with the bourgeoisie and that kind of freedom. The state is an institution for coercion. In the old days, it was the coercion of the whole people by a handful of money-bags. We want to turn the state into an institution enforcing the will of the people. We want to institute coercion in the working people's interests.

Failure to grant the right of recall from the Constituent Assembly is failure to elicit the revolutionary will of the people, it is usurpation of the people's rights. We do have proportional representation, which is indeed the most democratic. Under this system it may be somewhat difficult to introduce the right of recall but the difficulties entailed are purely technical and are fairly easy to overcome. In any case there is no contradiction between proportional representation and the right of recall.

The people do not cast their votes for individuals but for parties. The party spirit is rather strong in Russia, and as far as the people are concerned each party has a definite political character. That is why any party split must bring confusion unless the right of recall is provided for. The Socialist-Revolutionary Party¹⁸ enjoyed great influence. But a split occurred after the election lists had been put out. The lists cannot be altered, nor can the convocation of the Constituent Assembly be postponed.

As a result, the people actually voted for a party which had ceased to exist. This was proved by the Left-wing Second Peasant Congress.¹⁹ It turned out that the peasants were not misled by individuals but by the party split. This state of things needs to be set right. The direct, consistent and immediate democratic principle, namely, the right of recall, must be introduced.

One thing we should be wary of is being faced with an unrepresentative election. Given a high level of mass consciousness—compare the revolutions of 1905 and 1917—there is nothing to fear from introducing the right of re-election.

The people were told that the Soviet is a plenipotentiary organ: they believed it and acted upon that belief. The process of democratisation must be carried forward and the right of recall introduced.

The right of recall should be given to the Soviets, as the best embodiment of the idea of state power, of coercion. The transfer of power from one party to another may then take place peacefully, by mere re-election.

Pravda No. 196, December 5
(November 22), 1917 and
Soldatskaya Pravda No. 87,
November 24, 1917

Collected Works,
Vol. 26, pp. 338-40

Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People²⁰

The Constituent Assembly resolves:

- I. 1. Russia is hereby proclaimed a Republic of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. All power, centrally and locally, is vested in these Soviets.
2. The Russian Soviet Republic is established on the principle of a free union of free nations, as a federation of Soviet national republics.
- II. Its fundamental aim being to abolish all exploitation of man by man, to completely eliminate the division of society into classes, to mercilessly crush the resistance of the exploiters, to establish a socialist organisation of society and to achieve the victory of socialism in all countries, the Constituent Assembly further resolves:
 1. Private ownership of land is hereby abolished. All land together with all buildings, farm implements and other appurtenances of agricultural production, is proclaimed the property of the entire working people.
 2. The Soviet laws on workers' control and on the Supreme Economic Council are hereby confirmed for the purpose of guaranteeing the power of the working people over the exploiters and as a first step towards the complete conversion of the factories, mines, rail-

ways, and other means of production and transport into the property of the workers' and peasants' state.

3. The conversion of all banks into the property of the workers' and peasants' state is hereby confirmed as one of the conditions for the emancipation of the working people from the yoke of capital.

4. For the purpose of abolishing the parasitic sections of society, universal labour conscription is hereby instituted.

5. To ensure the sovereign power of the working people, and to eliminate all possibility of the restoration of the power of the exploiters, the arming of the working people, the creation of a socialist Red Army of workers and peasants and the complete disarming of the propertied classes are hereby decreed.

- III. 1. Expressing its firm determination to wrest mankind from the clutches of finance capital and imperialism, which have in this most criminal of wars drenched the world in blood, the Constituent Assembly whole-heartedly endorses the policy pursued by Soviet power of denouncing the secret treaties, organising most extensive fraternisation with the workers and peasants of the armies in the war, and achieving at all costs, by revolutionary means, a democratic peace between the nations, without annexations and indemnities and on the basis of the free self-determination of nations.

2. With the same end in view, the Constituent Assembly insists on a complete break with the barbarous policy of bourgeois civilisation, which has built the prosperity of the exploiters belonging to a few chosen nations on the enslavement of hundreds of millions of working people in Asia, in the colonies in general and in the small countries.

The Constituent Assembly welcomes the policy of the Council of People's Commissars in proclaiming the complete independence of Finland, commencing

the evacuation of troops from Persia, and proclaiming freedom of self-determination for Armenia.²¹

3. The Constituent Assembly regards the Soviet law on the cancellation of the loans contracted by the governments of the tsar, the landowners and the bourgeoisie as a first blow struck at international banking, finance capital, and expresses the conviction that Soviet power will firmly pursue this path until the international workers' uprising against the yoke of capital has completely triumphed.

IV. Having been elected on the basis of party lists drawn up prior to the October Revolution, when the people were not yet in a position to rise *en masse* against the exploiters, had not yet experienced the full strength of resistance of the latter in defence of their class privileges, and had not yet applied themselves in practice to the task of building socialist society, the Constituent Assembly considers that it would be fundamentally wrong, even formally, to put itself in opposition to Soviet power.

In essence the Constituent Assembly considers that now, when the people are waging the last fight against their exploiters, there can be no place for exploiters in any government body. Power must be vested wholly and entirely in the working people and their authorised representatives—the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies.

Supporting Soviet power and the decrees of the Council of People's Commissars, the Constituent Assembly considers that its own task is confined to establishing the fundamental principles of the socialist reconstruction of society.

At the same time, endeavouring to create a really free and voluntary, and therefore all the more firm and stable, union of the working classes of all the nations of Russia, the Constituent Assembly confines its own task to setting up the fundamental principles of a federation of Soviet Republics of Russia, while leaving it to the workers and peasants of each

nation to decide independently at their own authoritative Congress of Soviets whether they wish to participate in the federal government and in the other federal Soviet institutions, and on what terms.

Written not later than
January 3 (16), 1918

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1918

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Vol. 26, pp. 423-25

**Concluding Speech on the Report
of the Council
of People's Commissars
at the Third All-Russia
Congress of Soviets²²
January 12 (25), 1918**

Having listened today to the speakers on the Right, who voiced objections to my report, I am surprised that they have not yet learned anything and have forgotten all that they in vain call "Marxism". One of the objectors declared that we had favoured the dictatorship of democracy, that we had recognised the rule of democracy. That declaration was so absurd, so utterly meaningless, that it is merely a collection of words. It was just like saying "iron snow", or something similar. (*Laughter.*) Democracy is a form of bourgeois state championed by all traitors to genuine socialism, who now find themselves at the head of official socialism and who assert that democracy is contrary to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Until the revolution transcended the limits of the bourgeois system, we were for democracy; but as soon as we saw the first signs of socialism in the progress of the revolution, we took a firm and resolute stand for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

It is strange that people who cannot or refuse to understand this plain truth, this definition of the meaning of the terms "democracy" and "dictatorship of the proletariat", should make bold to bring before so numerous an assembly old, utterly worthless rubbish, such as that in which all the objecting gentlemen's speeches abound. Democracy is formal parliamentarism, but in reality it is a continuous, cruel mockery, heartless, unbearable op-

pression of the working people by the bourgeoisie. And this can only be denied by those who are not true spokesmen for the working class but wretched men in mufflers²³ who have kept away from life all the time, who have been sleeping with an old, shabby little book carefully stowed away under the pillow, the unwanted book that serves them as a guide and manual in implanting official socialism. But the minds of tens of millions of those who are doing things create something infinitely loftier than the greatest genius can foresee. Genuine, revolutionary socialism did not break away today but at the beginning of the war. This significant break, this rift in socialist theory, has come about in every country and every state. And it is splendid that socialism has split!

We can counter the accusation that we are fighting against "socialists" by saying merely that in the epoch of parliamentarism these supporters of the latter no longer have anything in common with socialism but have become decayed, obsolete and backward, and have ended by deserting to the bourgeoisie. "Socialists" who shouted about "defending the country" during a war resulting from the imperialist urge of international robbers are not socialists but hangers-on of the bourgeoisie, their dish-lickers.

Those who talk so much about the dictatorship of democracy merely utter meaningless, absurd phrases which indicate neither economic knowledge nor political understanding.

One of the objectors said here that the Paris Commune can be proud of the fact that during the Paris workers' uprising there was no violence or arbitrary action on their part; but it is beyond doubt that the Commune fell only because it did not make proper use of armed force at the right moment, although it won undying fame in history, for it was the first to put the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat into practice.

Commenting briefly on the struggle against the bourgeoisie, landowners and capitalists, the speaker declared firmly and resolutely, amidst a burst of applause: "Say

what you may, the bourgeoisie will in the end be forced by the will of the revolutionary people either to capitulate, or to perish."

Drawing a parallel between anarchism and Bolshevik views, Comrade Lenin said that at that time, in the period of a radical break-up of the bourgeois system, the concept of anarchism was finally assuming concrete features. But if the oppression of the bourgeois system was to be abolished, there would have to be firm revolutionary power of the working classes, the power of a revolutionary state. This was the essence of communism. When the masses were themselves taking up arms to start an unrelenting struggle against the exploiters, when a new people's power was being applied that had nothing in common with parliamentary power, it was no longer the old state, outdated in its traditions and forms, that they had before them, but something new, something based on the creative power of the people. And while some anarchists spoke of the Soviets with fear because they were still influenced by obsolete views, the new, fresh trend in anarchism was definitely on the side of the Soviets, because it saw their vitality and their ability to win the sympathy of the working masses and arouse their creative energy.

"Your sin and blindness," said the speaker, turning to the "objectors", "are due to your failure to learn anything from the revolution. As early as April 4, I affirmed, speaking in this hall, that the Soviets are the highest form of democracy.* Either the Soviets will perish and then the revolution will be irrevocably lost, or the Soviets will live and then it will be ridiculous to talk of a bourgeois-democratic revolution at a time when the socialist system is on the way to its full development and capitalism is collapsing. The Bolsheviks spoke of a bourgeois-democratic revolution in 1905, but today, when the Soviets are in power, when the workers, soldiers and peasants have said—in a war situation unprecedented for hardships and horrors, in an atmosphere of ruin, and

in the face of death by starvation—that they will assume full power and will themselves set about building a new life, there can be no question of a bourgeois-democratic revolution. And the Bolsheviks said as much at their congresses and meetings and conferences, and in their resolutions and decisions, as early as last April.

"To those who say that we have done nothing, that we have been inactive all the time that Soviet rule has borne no fruits, we can say this: Look wherever there are working people, look among the masses, and you will see organisational, creative work in full swing, you will see the stir of a life that is being renewed and halloed by the revolution. The peasants are taking over the land in the countryside, the workers are seizing the factories, and all kinds of organisations are springing up everywhere.

"Soviet power is striving to bring the war to an end, and we are confident that it will achieve this goal earlier than Kerensky government spokesmen have promised. For the revolution has become a factor in the matter of ending the war, a factor which has denounced treaties and repudiated loans. The war will come to an end due to the international revolutionary movement."

In conclusion, the speaker commented in a few words on counter-revolutionary saboteurs, saying that they were groups bribed by the bourgeoisie, which showered its gifts on the sabotaging officials who declared war on the Soviet state, for the triumph of reaction. To them it was doomsday, the irrevocable end of everything when they saw the people striking vigorously at the bourgeoisie with a peasants' and workers' axe. "Our only fault, if any, is that we were much too humane, much too kind-hearted, towards the monstrously treacherous representatives of the bourgeois-imperialist system.

"A few days ago some *Novaya Zhizn*²⁴ writers visited me, saying they had come on behalf of bank employees who wanted to take up service and submit fully to Soviet power, stopping the policy of sabotage. High time, I answered. But, speaking confidentially, if they imagine that

* See *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, pp. 21-26.—Ed.

having begun those talks, we shall cede our revolutionary positions one iota, they are sorely mistaken.

"The world has never seen anything like that which is now taking place here in Russia, in this vast country broken up into a number of separate states and containing an enormous number of heterogeneous nationalities and peoples. I refer to the immense organisational work in every uyezd and region, the organisation of the lower strata, the work of the masses themselves, the creative, constructive activity, which encounters obstacles raised by various bourgeois representatives of imperialism. They, the workers and peasants, are engaged in an effort unprecedented in its titanic aims; together with the Soviets, they will smash capitalist exploitation, and bourgeois oppression will in the end be abolished once and for all."

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January 13, 1918

Collected Works,
Vol. 26, pp. 473-77

From The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government

"Harmonious Organisation" and Dictatorship

The resolution adopted by the recent Moscow Congress of Soviets advanced as the primary task of the moment the establishment of a "harmonious organisation", and the tightening of discipline. Everyone now readily "votes for" and "subscribes to" resolutions of this kind; but usually people do not think over the fact that the application of such resolutions calls for coercion—coercion precisely in the form of dictatorship. And yet it would be extremely stupid and absurdly utopian to assume that the transition from capitalism to socialism is possible without coercion and without dictatorship. Marx's theory very definitely opposed this petty-bourgeois-democratic and anarchist absurdity long ago. And Russia of 1917-18 confirms the correctness of Marx's theory in this respect so strikingly, palpably and imposingly that only those who are hopelessly dull or who have obstinately decided to turn their backs on the truth can be under any misapprehension concerning this. Either the dictatorship of Kornilov (if we take him as the Russian type of bourgeois Cavaignac), or the dictatorship of the proletariat—any other choice is *out of the question* for a country which is developing at an extremely rapid rate with extremely sharp turns and amidst desperate ruin created by one of the most horrible wars in history. Every solution that offers a middle path is either a deception of the people by the bourgeoisie—for the bourgeoisie dare not tell the

truth, dare not say that they need Kornilov—or an expression of the dull-wittedness of the petty-bourgeois democrats, of the Chernovs, Tseretelis and Martovs, who chatter about the unity of democracy, the dictatorship of democracy, the general democratic front, and similar nonsense. Those whom even the progress of the Russian Revolution of 1917-18 has not taught that a middle course is impossible, must be given up for lost.

On the other hand, it is not difficult to see that during every transition from capitalism to socialism, dictatorship is necessary for two main reasons, or along two main channels. Firstly, capitalism cannot be defeated and eradicated without the ruthless suppression of the resistance of the exploiters, who cannot at once be deprived of their wealth, of their advantages of organisation and knowledge, and consequently for a fairly long period will inevitably try to overthrow the hated rule of the poor; secondly, every great revolution, and a socialist revolution in particular, even if there is no external war, is inconceivable without internal war, i.e., civil war, which is even more devastating than external war, and involves thousands and millions of cases of wavering and desertion from one side to another, implies a state of extreme indefiniteness, lack of equilibrium and chaos. And of course, all the elements of disintegration of the old society, which are inevitably very numerous and connected mainly with the petty bourgeoisie (because it is the petty bourgeoisie that every war and every crisis ruins and destroys first), are bound to "reveal themselves" during such a profound revolution. And these elements of disintegration *cannot* "reveal themselves" otherwise than in an increase of crime, hooliganism, corruption, profiteering and outrages of every kind. To put these down requires time and *requires an iron hand*.

There has not been a single great revolution in history in which the people did not instinctively realise this and did not show salutary firmness by shooting thieves on the spot. The misfortune of previous revolutions was that the revolutionary enthusiasm of the people, which sustained them in their state of tension and gave them the strength

to suppress ruthlessly the elements of disintegration, did not last long. The social, i.e., the class, reason for this instability of the revolutionary enthusiasm of the people was the weakness of the proletariat, which *alone* is able (if it is sufficiently numerous, class-conscious and disciplined) to win over to its side *the majority* of the working and exploited people (the majority of the poor, to speak more simply and popularly) and retain power sufficiently long to suppress completely all the exploiters as well as all the elements of disintegration.

It was this historical experience of all revolutions, it was this world-historic—economic and political—lesson that Marx summed up when he gave his short, sharp, concise and expressive formula: dictatorship of the proletariat. And the fact that the Russian revolution has been correct in its approach to this world-historic task *has been proved* by the victorious progress of the Soviet form of organisation among all the peoples and tongues of Russia. For Soviet power is nothing but an organisational form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the dictatorship of the advanced class, which raises to a new democracy and to independent participation in the administration of the state tens upon tens of millions of working and exploited people, who by their own experience learn to regard the disciplined and class-conscious vanguard of the proletariat as their most reliable leader.

Dictatorship, however, is a big word, and big words should not be thrown about carelessly. Dictatorship is iron rule, government that is revolutionarily bold, swift and ruthless in suppressing both exploiters and hooligans. But our government is excessively mild, very often it resembles jelly more than iron. We must not forget for a moment that the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois element is fighting against the Soviet system in two ways; on the one hand, it is operating from without, by the methods of the Savinkovs, Gotzes, Gegechkoris and Kornilovs, by conspiracies and rebellions, and by their filthy "ideological" reflection, the flood of lies and slander in the Constitutional-Democratic, Right Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik²⁵ press;

on the other hand, this element operates from within and takes advantage of every manifestation of disintegration, of every weakness, in order to bribe, to increase indiscipline, laxity and chaos. The nearer we approach the complete military suppression of the bourgeoisie, the more dangerous does the element of petty-bourgeois anarchy become. And the fight against this element cannot be waged solely with the aid of propaganda and agitation, solely by organising competition and by selecting organisers. The struggle must also be waged by means of coercion.

As the fundamental task of the government becomes, not military suppression, but administration, the typical manifestation of suppression and compulsion will be, not shooting on the spot, but trial by court. In this respect also the revolutionary people after October 25, 1917 took the right path and demonstrated the viability of the revolution by setting up their own workers' and peasants' courts, even before the decrees dissolving the bourgeois bureaucratic judiciary were passed. But our revolutionary and people's courts are extremely, incredibly weak. One feels that we have not yet done away with the people's attitude towards the courts as towards something official and alien, an attitude inherited from the yoke of the landowners and of the bourgeoisie. It is not yet sufficiently realised that the courts are an organ which enlists precisely the poor, every one of them, in the work of state administration (for the work of the courts is one of the functions of state administration), that the courts are an *organ of the power* of the proletariat and of the poor peasants, that the courts are an instrument for *inculcating discipline*. There is not yet sufficient appreciation of the simple and obvious fact that if the principal misfortunes of Russia at the present time are hunger and unemployment, these misfortunes cannot be overcome by spurts, but only by comprehensive, all-embracing, country-wide organisation and discipline in order to increase the output of bread for the people and bread for industry (fuel), to transport these in good time to the places where they are required, and to distribute them properly;

and it is not fully appreciated that, consequently, it is *those* who violate labour discipline at any factory, in any undertaking, in any matter, who are *responsible* for the sufferings caused by the famine and unemployment, that we must know how to find the guilty ones, to bring them to trial and ruthlessly punish them. Where the petty-bourgeois anarchy against which we must now wage a most persistent struggle makes itself felt is in the failure to appreciate the economic and political connection between famine and unemployment, on the one hand, and general laxity in matters of organisation and discipline, on the other—in the tenacity of the *small-proprietor* outlook, namely, I'll grab all I can for myself; the rest can go hang.

In the rail transport service, which perhaps most strikingly embodies the economic ties of an organism created by large-scale capitalism, the struggle between the element of petty-bourgeois laxity and proletarian organisation is particularly evident. The "administrative" elements provide a host of saboteurs and bribe-takers; the best part of the proletarian elements fight for discipline; but among both elements there are, of course, many waverers and "weak" characters who are unable to withstand the "temptation" of profiteering, bribery, personal gain obtained by spoiling the whole apparatus, upon the proper working of which the victory over famine and unemployment depends.

The struggle that has been developing around the recent decree on the management of the railways, the decree which grants individual executives dictatorial powers (or "unlimited" powers),²⁶ is characteristic. The conscious (and to a large extent, probably, unconscious) representatives of petty-bourgeois laxity would like to see in this granting of "unlimited" (i.e., dictatorial) powers to individuals a departure from the collegiate principle, from democracy and from the principles of Soviet government. Here and there, among Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, a positively hooligan agitation, i.e., agitation appealing to the base instincts and to the small proprietor's urge to "grab

all he can", has been developed against the dictatorship decree. The question has become one of really enormous significance. Firstly, the question of principle, namely, is the appointment of individuals, dictators with unlimited powers, in general compatible with the fundamental principles of Soviet government? Secondly, what relation has this case—this precedent, if you will—to the special tasks of government in the present concrete situation? We must deal very thoroughly with both these questions.

That in the history of revolutionary movements the dictatorship of individuals was very often the expression, the vehicle, the channel of the dictatorship of the revolutionary classes has been shown by the irrefutable experience of history. Undoubtedly, the dictatorship of individuals was compatible with bourgeois democracy. On this point, however, the bourgeois denigrators of the Soviet system, as well as their petty-bourgeois henchmen, always display sleight of hand: on the one hand, they declare the Soviet system to be something absurd, anarchistic and savage, and carefully pass over in silence all our historical examples and theoretical arguments which prove that the Soviets are a higher form of democracy, and what is more, the beginning of a *socialist* form of democracy; on the other hand, they demand of us a higher democracy than bourgeois democracy and say: personal dictatorship is absolutely incompatible with your, Bolshevik (i.e., not bourgeois, *but socialist*), Soviet democracy.

These are exceedingly poor arguments. If we are not anarchists, we must admit that the state, *that is, coercion*, is necessary for the transition from capitalism to socialism. The form of coercion is determined by the degree of development of the given revolutionary class, and also by special circumstances, such as, for example, the legacy of a long and reactionary war and the forms of resistance put up by the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie. There is, therefore, absolutely *no* contradiction in principle between Soviet (*that is, socialist*) democracy and the exercise of dictatorial powers by individuals. The difference between proletarian dictatorship and bourgeois dictator-

ship is that the former strikes at the exploiting minority in the interests of the exploited majority, and that it is exercised—*also through individuals*—not only by the working and exploited people, but also by organisations which are built in such a way as to rouse these people to history-making activity. (The Soviet organisations are organisations of this kind.)

In regard to the second question, concerning the significance of individual dictatorial powers from the point of view of the specific tasks of the present moment, it must be said that large-scale machine industry—which is precisely the material source, the productive source, the foundation of socialism—calls for absolute and strict *unity of will*, which directs the joint labours of hundreds, thousands and tens of thousands of people. The technical, economic and historical necessity of this is obvious, and all those who have thought about socialism have always regarded it as one of the conditions of socialism. But how can strict unity of will be ensured? By thousands subordinating their will to the will of one.

Given ideal class-consciousness and discipline on the part of those participating in the common work, this subordination would be something like the mild leadership of a conductor of an orchestra. It may assume the sharp forms of a dictatorship if ideal discipline and class-consciousness are lacking. But be that as it may, *unquestioning subordination* to a single will is absolutely necessary for the success of processes organised on the pattern of large-scale machine industry. On the railways it is twice and three times as necessary. In this transition from one political task to another, which *on the surface* is totally dissimilar to the first, lies the whole originality of the present situation. The revolution has only just smashed the oldest, strongest and heaviest of fetters, to which the people submitted under duress. That was yesterday. Today, however, the same revolution demands—precisely in the interests of its development and consolidation, precisely in the interests of socialism—that the people *unquestioningly obey the single will*

of the leaders of labour. Of course, such a transition cannot be made at one step. Clearly, it can be achieved only as a result of tremendous jolts, shocks, reversions to old ways, the enormous exertion of effort on the part of the proletarian vanguard, which is leading the people to the new ways. Those who drop into the philistine hysterics of *Novaya Zhizn* or *Uperyod*, *Dyelo Naroda* or *Nash Uek*²⁷ do not stop to think about this.

Take the psychology of the average, ordinary representative of the toiling and exploited masses, compare it with the objective, material conditions of his life in society. Before the October Revolution he did *not* see a single instance of the propertied, exploiting classes making any real sacrifice for him, giving up anything for his benefit. He did *not* see them giving him the land and liberty that had been repeatedly promised him, giving him peace, sacrificing "Great Power" interests and the interests of Great Power secret treaties, sacrificing capital and profits. He saw this only *after* October 25, 1917, when he took it himself by force, and had to defend by force what he had taken, against the Kerenskys, Gotzes, Gegechkoris, Dutovs and Kornilovs. Naturally, for a certain time, all his attention, all his thoughts, all his spiritual strength, were concentrated on taking a breath, on unbending his back, on straightening his shoulders, on taking the blessings of life that were there for the taking, and that had always been denied him by the now overthrown exploiters. Of course, a certain amount of time is required to enable the ordinary working man not only to see for himself, not only to become convinced, but also to feel that he cannot simply "take", snatch, grab things, that this leads to increased disruption, to ruin, to the return of the Kornilovs. The corresponding change in the conditions of life (and consequently in the psychology) of the ordinary working men is only just beginning. And our whole task, the task of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks), which is the class-conscious spokesman for the strivings of the exploited for emancipation, is to appreciate this change, to understand that it is necessary, to

stand at the head of the exhausted people who are wearily seeking a way out and lead them along the true path, along the path of labour discipline, along the path of co-ordinating the task of arguing at mass meetings *about* the conditions of work with the task of unquestioningly obeying the will of the Soviet leader, of the dictator, *during* the work.

The "mania for meetings" is an object of the ridicule, and still more often of the spiteful hissing of the bourgeoisie, the Mensheviks, the *Novaya Zhizn* people, who see only the chaos, the confusion and the outbursts of small-proprietor egoism. But without the discussions at public meetings the mass of the oppressed could never have changed from the discipline forced upon them by the exploiters to conscious, voluntary discipline. The airing of questions at public meetings is the genuine democracy of the working people, their way of unbending their backs, their awakening to a new life, their first steps along the road which they themselves have cleared of vipers (the exploiters, the imperialists, the landowners and capitalists) and which they want to learn to build themselves, in their own way, for themselves, on the principles of their own *Soviet*, and not alien, not aristocratic, not bourgeois rule. It required precisely the October victory of the working people over the exploiters, it required a whole historical period in which the working people themselves could first of all discuss the new conditions of life and the new tasks, in order to make possible the durable transition to superior forms of labour discipline, to the conscious appreciation of the necessity for the dictatorship of the proletariat, to unquestioning obedience to the orders of individual representatives of the Soviet government during the work.

This transition has now begun.

We have successfully fulfilled the first task of the revolution; we have seen how the mass of working people evolved in themselves the fundamental condition for its success: they united their efforts against the exploiters in order to overthrow them. Stages like that of October

1905, February and October 1917 are of world-historic significance.

We have successfully fulfilled the second task of the revolution: to awaken, to raise those very "lower ranks" of society whom the exploiters had pushed down, and who only after October 25, 1917, obtained complete freedom to overthrow the exploiters and to begin to take stock of things and arrange life in their own way. The airing of questions at public meetings by the most oppressed and downtrodden, by the least educated mass of working people, their coming over to the side of the Bolsheviks, their setting up everywhere of their own Soviet organisations—this was the second great stage of the revolution.

The third stage is now beginning. We must consolidate what we ourselves have won, what we ourselves have decreed, made law, discussed, planned—consolidate all this in stable forms of *everyday labour discipline*. This is the most difficult, but the most gratifying task, because only its fulfilment will give us a socialist system. We must learn to combine the "public meeting" democracy of the working people—turbulent, surging, overflowing its banks like a spring flood—with *iron discipline* while at work, with *unquestioning obedience* to the will of a single person, the Soviet leader, while at work.

We have not yet learned to do this.

We shall learn it.

Yesterday we were menaced by the restoration of bourgeois exploitation, personified by the Kornilovs, Gotzes, Dutovs, Gegechkoris and Bogayevskys. We conquered them. This restoration, this very same restoration menaces us today in another form, in the form of the element of petty-bourgeois laxity and anarchism, or small-proprietor "it's not my business" psychology, in the form of the daily, petty, but numerous sorties and attacks of this element against proletarian discipline. We must, and we shall, vanquish this element of petty-bourgeois anarchy.

The Development of Soviet Organisation

The socialist character of Soviet, i.e., *proletarian*, democracy, as concretely applied today, lies first in the fact that the electors are the working and exploited people; the bourgeoisie is excluded. Secondly, it lies in the fact that all bureaucratic formalities and restrictions of elections are abolished; the people themselves determine the order and time of elections, and are completely free to recall any elected person. Thirdly, it lies in the creation of the best mass organisation of the vanguard of the working people, i.e., the proletariat engaged in large-scale industry, which enables it to lead the vast mass of the exploited, to draw them into independent political life, to educate them politically by their own experience; therefore for the first time a start is made by the *entire* population in learning the art of administration, and in beginning to administer.

These are the principal distinguishing features of the democracy now applied in Russia, which is a higher *type* of democracy, a break with the bourgeois distortion of democracy, transition to socialist democracy and to the conditions in which the state can begin to wither away.

It goes without saying that the element of petty-bourgeois disorganisation (which must *inevitably* be apparent to some extent in *every* proletarian revolution, and which is especially apparent in our revolution, owing to the petty-bourgeois character of our country, its backwardness and the consequences of a reactionary war) cannot but leave its impress upon the Soviets as well.

We must work unremittingly to develop the organisation of the Soviets and of the Soviet government. There is a petty-bourgeois tendency to transform the members of the Soviets into "parliamentarians", or else into bureaucrats. We must combat this by drawing *all* the members of the Soviets into the practical work of administration. In many places the departments of the Soviets are gradually merging with the Commissariats. Our aim is to

draw *the whole of the poor* into the practical work of administration, and all steps that are taken in this direction—the more varied they are, the better—should be carefully recorded, studied, systematised, tested by wider experience and embodied in law. Our aim is to ensure that *every* toiler, having finished his eight hours' "task" in productive labour, shall perform state duties *without pay*; the transition to this is particularly difficult, but this transition alone can guarantee the final consolidation of socialism. Naturally, the novelty and difficulty of the change lead to an abundance of steps being taken, as it were, gropingly, to an abundance of mistakes, vacillation—without this, any marked progress is impossible. The reason why the present position seems peculiar to many of those who would like to be regarded as socialists is that they have been accustomed to contrasting capitalism with socialism abstractly, and that they profoundly put between the two the word "leap" (some of them, recalling fragments of what they have read of Engels's writings, still more profoundly add the phrase "leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom"²⁸). The majority of these so-called socialists, who have "read in books" about socialism but who have never seriously thought over the matter, are unable to consider that by "leap" the teachers of socialism meant turning-points on a world-historical scale, and that leaps of this kind extend over decades and even longer periods. Naturally, in such times, the notorious "intelligentsia" provides an infinite number of mourners of the dead. Some mourn over the Constituent Assembly, others mourn over bourgeois discipline, others again mourn over the capitalist system, still others mourn over the cultured landowner, and still others again mourn over imperialist Great Power policy, etc., etc.

The real interest of the epoch of great leaps lies in the fact that the abundance of fragments of the old, which sometimes accumulate more rapidly than the rudiments (not always immediately discernible) of the new, calls for the ability to discern what is most important in the line

or chain of development. History knows moments when the most important thing for the success of the revolution is to heap up as large a quantity of the fragments as possible, i.e., to blow up as many of the old institutions as possible; moments arise when enough has been blown up and the next task is to perform the "prosaic" (for the petty-bourgeois revolutionary, the "boring") task of clearing away the fragments; and moments arise when the careful nursing of the rudiments of the new system, which are growing amidst the wreckage on a soil which as yet has been badly cleared of rubble, is the most important thing.

It is not enough to be a revolutionary and an adherent of socialism or a Communist in general. You must be able at each particular moment to find the particular link in the chain which you must grasp with all your might in order to hold the whole chain and to prepare firmly for the transition to the next link; the order of the links, their form, the manner in which they are linked together, the way they differ from each other in the historical chain of events, are not as simple and not as meaningless as those in an ordinary chain made by a smith.

The fight against the bureaucratic distortion of the Soviet form of organisation is assured by the firmness of the connection between the Soviets and the "people", meaning by that the working and exploited people, and by the flexibility and elasticity of this connection. Even in the most democratic capitalist republics in the world, the poor never regard the bourgeois parliament as "their" institution. But the Soviets are "theirs" and not alien institutions to the mass of workers and peasants. The modern "Social-Democrats" of the Scheidemann or, what is almost the same thing, of the Martov type are repelled by the Soviets, and they are drawn towards the respectable bourgeois parliament, or to the Constituent Assembly, in the same way as Turgenev, sixty years ago, was drawn towards a moderate monarchist and noblemen's Constitution and was repelled by the peasant democracy of Dobrolyubov and Chernyshevsky.

It is the closeness of the Soviets to the "people", to the working people, that creates the special forms of recall and other means of control from below which must be most zealously developed now. For example, the Councils of Public Education, as periodical conferences of Soviet electors and their delegates called to discuss and control the activities of the Soviet authorities in this field, deserve full sympathy and support. Nothing could be sillier than to transform the Soviets into something congealed and self-contained. The more resolutely we now have to stand for a ruthlessly firm government, for the dictatorship of individuals in *definite processes of work*, in definite aspects of *purely executive* functions, the more varied must be the forms and methods of control from below in order to counteract every shadow of a possibility of distorting the principles of Soviet government, in order repeatedly and tirelessly to weed out bureaucracy.

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From *The Proletarian Revolution* and the Renegade Kautsky

Bourgeois and Proletarian Democracy

The question which Kautsky has so shamelessly muddled really stands as follows.

If we are not to mock at common sense and history, it is obvious that we cannot speak of "pure democracy" as long as different *classes* exist; we can only speak of *class* democracy. (Let us say in parenthesis that "pure democracy" is not only an *ignorant* phrase, revealing a lack of understanding both of the class struggle and of the nature of the state, but also a thrice-empty phrase, since in communist society democracy will *wither away* in the process of changing and becoming a habit, but will never be "pure" democracy.)

"Pure democracy" is the mendacious phrase of a liberal who wants to fool the workers. History knows of bourgeois democracy which takes the place of feudalism, and of proletarian democracy which takes the place of bourgeois democracy.

When Kautsky devotes dozens of pages to "proving" the truth that bourgeois democracy is progressive compared with medievalism, and that the proletariat must unfailingly utilise it in its struggle against the bourgeoisie, that in fact is just liberal twaddle intended to fool the workers. This is a truism, not only for educated Germany, but also for uneducated Russia. Kautsky is simply throwing "learned" dust in the eyes of the workers when, with a pompous mien, he talks about Weitling and

the Jesuits of Paraguay and many other things, *in order to avoid* telling about the *bourgeois* essence of modern, i.e., *capitalist*, democracy.

Kautsky takes from Marxism what is acceptable to the liberals, to the bourgeoisie (the criticism of the Middle Ages, and the progressive historical role of capitalism in general and of capitalist democracy in particular), and discards, passes over in silence, glosses over all that in Marxism which is *unacceptable* to the bourgeoisie (the revolutionary violence of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie for the latter's destruction). That is why Kautsky, by virtue of his objective position and irrespective of what his subjective convictions may be, inevitably proves to be a lackey of the bourgeoisie.

Bourgeois democracy, although a great historical advance in comparison with medievalism, always remains, and under capitalism is bound to remain, restricted, truncated, false and hypocritical, a paradise for the rich and a snare and deception for the exploited, for the poor. It is this truth, which forms a most essential part of Marx's teaching, that Kautsky the "Marxist" has failed to understand. On this—the fundamental issue—Kautsky offers "delights" for the bourgeoisie instead of a scientific criticism of those conditions which make every bourgeois democracy a democracy for the rich.

Let us first remind the most learned Mr. Kautsky of the theoretical propositions of Marx and Engels which that pedant has so disgracefully "forgotten" (to please the bourgeoisie), and then explain the matter as popularly as possible.

Not only the ancient and feudal, but also "the modern representative state is an instrument of exploitation of wage-labour by capital" (Engels, in his work on the state).²⁹ "As, therefore, the state is only a transitional institution which is used in the struggle, in the revolution, to hold down one's adversaries by force, it is sheer nonsense to talk of a 'free people's state'; so long as the proletariat still needs the state, it does not need it in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adver-

saries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist" (Engels, in his letter to Bebel, March 28, 1875). "In reality, however, the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another, and indeed in the democratic republic no less than in the monarchy" (Engels, Introduction to *The Civil War in France* by Marx).³⁰ Universal suffrage is "the gauge of the maturity of the working class. *It cannot and never will be anything more in the present-day state*". (Engels, in his work on the state.³¹ Mr. Kautsky very tediously chews over the cud in the first part of this proposition, which is acceptable to the bourgeoisie. But the second part, which we have italicised and which is not acceptable to the bourgeoisie, the renegade Kautsky passes over in silence!) "The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time. . . . Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to represent and suppress (*ver- und zertreten*) the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in Communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for workers, foremen and accountants for his business" (Marx, in his work on the Paris Commune, *The Civil War in France*).³²

Every one of these propositions, which are excellently known to the most learned Mr. Kautsky, is a slap in his face and lays bare his apostasy. Nowhere in his pamphlet does Kautsky reveal the slightest understanding of these truths. His whole pamphlet is a sheer mockery of Marxism!

Take the fundamental laws of modern states, take their administration, take freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, or "equality of all citizens before the law", and you will see at every turn evidence of the hypocrisy of bourgeois democracy with which every honest and class-conscious worker is familiar. There is not a single state, however democratic, which has no loopholes or reservations in its constitution guaranteeing the bourgeoisie the possibility of dispatching troops against

the workers, of proclaiming martial law, and so forth, in case of a "violation of public order", and actually in case the exploited class "violates" its position of slavery and tries to behave in a non-slavish manner. Kautsky shamelessly embellishes bourgeois democracy and omits to mention, for instance, how the most democratic and republican bourgeoisie in America or Switzerland deal with workers on strike.

The wise and learned Kautsky keeps silent about these things! That learned politician does not realise that to remain silent on this matter is despicable. He prefers to tell the workers nursery tales of the kind that democracy means "protecting the minority". It is incredible, but it is a fact! In the year of our Lord 1918, in the fifth year of the world imperialist slaughter and the strangulation of internationalist minorities (i.e., those who have not despicably betrayed socialism, like the Renaudels and Longuets, the Scheidemanns and Kautskys, the Hendersons and Webbs et al.) in all "democracies" of the world, the learned Mr. Kautsky sweetly, very sweetly, sings the praises of "protection of the minority". Those who are interested may read this on page 15 of Kautsky's pamphlet. And on page 16 this learned . . . individual tells you about the Whigs and Tories in England in the eighteenth century!

What wonderful erudition! What refined servility to the bourgeoisie! What civilised belly-crawling before the capitalists and boot-licking! If I were Krupp or Scheidemann, or Clemenceau or Renaudel, I would pay Mr. Kautsky millions, reward him with Judas kisses, praise him before the workers and urge "socialist unity" with "honourable" men like him. To write pamphlets against the dictatorship of the proletariat, to talk about the Whigs and Tories in England in the eighteenth century, to assert that democracy means "protecting the minority", and remain silent about *pogroms* against internationalists in the "democratic" republic of America—isn't this rendering lackey service to the bourgeoisie?

The learned Mr. Kautsky has "forgotten"—accidentally forgotten, probably—a "trifle", namely, that the ruling

party in a bourgeois democracy extends the protection of the minority only to another *bourgeois* party, while the proletariat, on all *serious, profound and fundamental* issues, gets martial law or pogroms, instead of the "protection of the minority". *The more highly developed a democracy is, the more imminent are pogroms or civil war in connection with any profound political divergence which is dangerous to the bourgeoisie.* The learned Mr. Kautsky could have studied this "law" of bourgeois democracy in connection with the Dreyfus case³³ in republican France, with the lynching of Negroes and internationalists in the democratic republic of America, with the case of Ireland and Ulster in democratic Britain,³⁴ with the baiting of the Bolsheviks and the staging of pogroms against them in April 1917 in the democratic republic of Russia. I have purposely chosen examples not only from wartime but also from pre-war time, peacetime. But mealy-mouthed Mr. Kautsky prefers to shut his eyes to these facts of the twentieth century, and instead to tell the workers wonderfully new, remarkably interesting, unusually edifying and incredibly important things about the Whigs and Tories of the eighteenth century!

Take the bourgeois parliament. Can it be that the learned Kautsky has never heard that the *more highly* democracy is developed, the *more* the bourgeois parliaments are subjected by the stock exchange and the bankers? This does not mean that we must not make use of bourgeois parliament (the Bolsheviks made better use of it than probably any other party in the world, for in 1912-14 we won the entire workers' curia in the Fourth Duma³⁵). But it does mean that only a liberal can forget the *historical limitations and conventional nature* of the bourgeois parliamentary system as Kautsky does. Even in the most democratic bourgeois state the oppressed people at every step encounter the crying contradiction between the *formal* equality proclaimed by the "democracy" of the capitalists and the thousands of *real* limitations and subterfuges which turn the proletarians into *wage-slaves*. It is precisely this contradiction that is opening the eyes

of the people to the rottenness, mendacity and hypocrisy of capitalism. It is this contradiction that the agitators and propagandists of socialism are constantly exposing to the people, *in order to prepare* them for revolution! And now that the era of revolution *has begun*, Kautsky turns his back upon it and begins to extol the charms of *moribund* bourgeois democracy.

Proletarian democracy, of which Soviet government is one of the forms, has brought a development and expansion of democracy unprecedented in the world, for the vast majority of the population, for the exploited and working people. To write a whole pamphlet about democracy, as Kautsky did, in which two pages are devoted to dictatorship and dozens to "pure democracy", and *fail to notice* this fact, means completely distorting the subject in liberal fashion.

Take foreign policy. In no bourgeois state, not even in the most democratic, is it conducted openly. The people are deceived everywhere, and in democratic France, Switzerland, America and Britain this is done on an incomparably wider scale and in an incomparably subtler manner than in other countries. The Soviet government has torn the veil of mystery from foreign policy in a revolutionary manner. Kautsky has not noticed this, he keeps silent about it, although in the era of predatory wars and secret treaties for the "division of spheres of influence" (i.e., for the partition of the world among the capitalist bandits) this is of *cardinal* importance, for on it depends the question of peace, the life and death of tens of millions of people.

Take the structure of the state. Kautsky picks at all manner of "trifles", down to the argument that under the Soviet Constitution elections are "indirect", but he misses the point. He fails to see the *class* nature of the state apparatus, of the machinery of state. Under bourgeois democracy the capitalists, by thousands of tricks—which are the more artful and effective the more "pure" democracy is developed—*drive* the people away from administrative work, from freedom of the press, freedom of as-

sembly, etc. The Soviet government is the *first* in the world (or strictly speaking, the second, because the Paris Commune began to do the same thing) to *enlist* the people, specifically the *exploited* people, in the work of administration. The working people are *barred* from participation in bourgeois parliaments (they *never decide* important questions under bourgeois democracy, which are decided by the stock exchange and the banks) by thousands of obstacles, and the workers know and feel, see and realise perfectly well that the bourgeois parliaments are institutions *alien* to them, *instruments for the oppression* of the workers by the bourgeoisie, institutions of a hostile class, of the exploiting minority.

The Soviets are the direct organisation of the working and exploited people themselves, which *helps* them to organise and administer their own state in every possible way. And in this it is the vanguard of the working and exploited people, the urban proletariat, that enjoys the advantage of being best united by the large enterprises; it is easier for it than for all others to elect and exercise control over those elected. The Soviet form of organisation automatically *helps* to unite all the working and exploited people around their vanguard, the proletariat. The old bourgeois apparatus—the bureaucracy, the privileges of wealth, of bourgeois education, of social connections, etc. (these real privileges are the more varied the more highly bourgeois democracy is developed)—all this disappears under the Soviet form of organisation. Freedom of the press ceases to be hypocrisy, because the printing-plants and stocks of paper are taken away from the bourgeoisie. The same thing applies to the best buildings, the palaces, the mansions and manor-houses. Soviet power took thousands upon thousands of these best buildings from the exploiters at one stroke, and in this way made the right of assembly—without which democracy is a fraud—a *million times* more democratic for the people. Indirect elections to non-local Soviets make it easier to hold congresses of Soviets, they make the *entire* apparatus less costly, more flexible, more accessible to the workers

and peasants at a time when life is seething and it is necessary to be able very quickly to recall one's local deputy or to delegate him to a general congress of Soviets.

Proletarian democracy is *a million times* more democratic than any bourgeois democracy; Soviet power is a million times more democratic than the most democratic bourgeois republic.

To fail to see this one must either deliberately serve the bourgeoisie, or be politically as dead as a doornail, unable to see real life from behind the dusty pages of bourgeois books, be thoroughly imbued with bourgeois-democratic prejudices, and thereby objectively convert oneself into a lackey of the bourgeoisie.

To fail to see this one must be incapable of *presenting the question* from the point of view of the *oppressed* classes:

Is there a single country in the world, even among the most democratic bourgeois countries, in which the *average rank-and-file* worker, the average rank-and-file *farm labourer*, or village semi-proletarian generally (i.e., the representative of the oppressed, of the overwhelming majority of the population), enjoys anything approaching such *liberty* of holding meetings in the best buildings, such *liberty* of using the largest printing-plants and biggest stocks of paper to express his ideas and to defend his interests, such *liberty* of promoting men and women of his own class to administer and to "knock into shape" the state, as in Soviet Russia?

It is ridiculous to think that Mr. Kautsky could find in any country even one out of a thousand of well-informed workers or farm labourers who would have any doubts as to the reply. Instinctively, from hearing fragments of admissions of the truth in the bourgeois press, the workers of the whole world sympathise with the Soviet Republic precisely because they regard it as a *proletarian* democracy, *a democracy for the poor*, and not a democracy for the rich that every bourgeois democracy, even the best, actually is.

We are governed (and our state is "knocked into shape") by bourgeois bureaucrats, by bourgeois members of parliament, by bourgeois judges—such is the simple, obvious and indisputable truth which tens and hundreds of millions of people belonging to the oppressed classes in all bourgeois countries, including the most democratic, know from their own experience, feel and realise every day.

In Russia, however, the bureaucratic machine has been completely smashed, razed to the ground; the old judges have all been sent packing, the bourgeois parliament has been dispersed—and *far more accessible* representation has been given to the workers and peasants; *their* Soviets have replaced the bureaucrats, or *their* Soviets have been put in control of the bureaucrats, and *their* Soviets have been authorised to elect the judges. This fact alone is enough for all the oppressed classes to recognise that Soviet power, i.e., the present form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, is a million times more democratic than the most democratic bourgeois republic.

Kautsky does not understand this truth, which is so clear and obvious to every worker, because he has "forgotten", "unlearned" to put the question: democracy *for which class?* He argues from the point of view of "pure" (i.e., non-class? or above-class?) democracy. He argues like Shylock³⁶: my "pound of flesh" and nothing else. Equality for all citizens—otherwise there is no democracy.

We must ask the learned Kautsky, the "Marxist" and "socialist" Kautsky:

Can there be equality between the exploited and the exploiters?

It is dreadful, it is incredible that such a question should have to be put in discussing a book written by the ideological leader of the Second International.³⁷ But "having put your hand to the plough, don't look back", and having undertaken to write about Kautsky, I must explain to the learned man why there can be no equality between the exploiter and the exploited.

Can There be Equality Between the Exploited and the Exploiter?

Kautsky argues as follows:

(1) "The exploiters have always formed only a small minority of the population" (p. 14 of Kautsky's pamphlet).

This is indisputably true. Taking this as the starting-point, what should be the argument? One may argue in a Marxist, a socialist way. In which case one would proceed from the relation between the exploited and the exploiters. Or one may argue in a liberal, a bourgeois-democratic way. And in that case one would proceed from the relation between the majority and the minority.

If we argue in a Marxist way, we must say: the exploiters inevitably transform the state (and we are speaking of democracy, i.e., one of the forms of the state) into an instrument of the rule of their class, the exploiters, over the exploited. Hence, as long as there are exploiters who rule the majority, the exploited, the democratic state must inevitably be a democracy for the exploiters. A state of the exploited must fundamentally differ from such a state; it must be a democracy for the exploited, and a means of *suppressing the exploiters*; and the suppression of a class means inequality for that class, its exclusion from "democracy".

If we argue in a liberal way, we must say: the majority decides, the minority submits. Those who do not submit are punished. That is all. Nothing need be said about the class character of the state in general, or of "pure democracy" in particular, because it is irrelevant; for a majority is a majority and a minority is a minority. A pound of flesh is a pound of flesh, and that is all there is to it.

And this is exactly how Kautsky argues.

(2) "Why should the rule of the proletariat assume, and necessarily assume, a form which is incompatible with democracy?" (P.21.) Then follows a very detailed and a very verbose explanation, backed by a quotation

from Marx and the election figures of the Paris Commune, to the effect that the proletariat is in the majority. The conclusion is: "A regime which is so strongly rooted in the people has not the slightest reason for encroaching upon democracy. It cannot always dispense with violence in cases when violence is employed to suppress democracy. Violence can only be met with violence. But a regime which knows that it has popular backing will employ violence only to *protect* democracy and not to *destroy* it. It would be simply suicidal if it attempted to do away with its most reliable basis—universal suffrage, that deep source of mighty moral authority" (p. 22).

As you see, the relation between the exploited and the exploiters has vanished in Kautsky's argument. All that remains is majority in general, minority in general, democracy in general, the "pure democracy" with which we are already familiar.

And all this, mark you, is said *apropos of the Paris Commune!* To make things clearer I shall quote Marx and Engels to show what they said on the subject of dictatorship *apropos of the Paris Commune*:

Marx: "... When the workers replace the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by their revolutionary dictatorship ... to break down the resistance of the bourgeoisie ... the workers invest the state with a revolutionary and transitional form. ..." ³⁸

Engels: "... And the victorious party" (in a revolution) "must maintain its rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionaries. Would the Paris Commune have lasted more than a day if it had not used the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie? Cannot we, on the contrary, blame it for having made too little use of that authority?..." ³⁹

Engels: "As, therefore, the state is only a transitional institution which is used in the struggle, in the revolution, to hold down one's adversaries by force, it is sheer nonsense to talk of a 'free people's state'; so long as the proletariat still needs the state, it does not need it in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adver-

saries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist. . . ."⁴⁰

Kautsky is as far removed from Marx and Engels as heaven is from earth, as a liberal from a proletarian revolutionary. The pure democracy and simple "democracy" that Kautsky talks about is merely a paraphrase of the "free people's state", i.e., *sheer nonsense*. Kautsky, with the learned air of a most learned armchair fool, or with the innocent air of a ten-year-old schoolgirl, asks: Why do we need a dictatorship when we have a majority? And Marx and Engels explain:

- to break down the resistance of the bourgeoisie;
- to inspire the reactionaries with fear;
- to maintain the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie;
- that the proletariat may forcibly hold down its adversaries.

Kautsky does not understand these explanations. Infatuated with the "purity" of democracy, blind to its bourgeois character, he "consistently" urges that the majority, since it is the majority, need not "break down the resistance" of the minority, nor "forcibly hold it down"—it is sufficient to suppress *cases* of infringement of democracy. Infatuated with the "purity" of democracy, Kautsky *inadvertently* commits the same little error that all bourgeois democrats always commit, namely, he takes formal equality (which is nothing but a fraud and hypocrisy under capitalism) for actual equality! Quite a trifle!

The exploiter and the exploited cannot be equal.

This truth, however unpleasant it may be to Kautsky, nevertheless forms the essence of socialism.

Another truth: there can be no real, actual equality until all possibility of the exploitation of one class by another has been totally destroyed.

The exploiters can be defeated at one stroke in the event of a successful uprising at the centre, or of a revolt in the army. But except in very rare and special cases, the exploiters cannot be destroyed at one stroke. It is impos-

sible to expropriate all the landowners and capitalists of any big country at one stroke. Furthermore, expropriation alone, as a legal or political act, does not settle the matter by a long chalk, because it is necessary to *depose* the landowners and capitalists in actual fact, to *replace* their management of the factories and estates by a different management, workers' management, in actual fact. There can be no equality between the exploiters—who for many generations have been better off because of their education, conditions of wealthy life, and habits—and the exploited, the majority of whom even in the most advanced and most democratic bourgeois republics are down-trodden, backward, ignorant, intimidated and disunited. For a long time after the revolution the exploiters inevitably continue to retain a number of great practical advantages: they still have money (since it is impossible to abolish money all at once); some movable property—often fairly considerable; they still have various connections, habits of organisation and management; knowledge of all the "secrets" (customs, methods, means and possibilities) of management; superior education; close connections with the higher technical personnel (who live and think like the bourgeoisie); incomparably greater experience in the art of war (this is very important), and so on and so forth.

If the exploiters are defeated in one country only—and this, of course, is typical, since a simultaneous revolution in a number of countries is a rare exception—they *still* remain *stronger* than the exploited, for the international connections of the exploiters are enormous. That a section of the exploited from the least advanced middle-peasant, artisan and similar groups of the population may, and indeed does, follow the exploiters has been proved by *all* revolutions, including the Commune (for there were also proletarians among the Versailles troops, which the most learned Kautsky has "forgotten").

In these circumstances, to assume that in a revolution which is at all profound and serious the issue is decided simply by the relation between the majority and the

minority is the acme of stupidity, the silliest prejudice of a common liberal, an attempt to *deceive the people* by concealing from them a well-established historical truth. This historical truth is that in every profound revolution, the *prolonged, stubborn and desperate* resistance of the exploiters, who for a number of years retain important practical advantages over the exploited, is the *rule*. Never—except in the sentimental fantasies of the sentimental fool Kautsky—will the exploiters submit to the decision of the exploited majority without trying to make use of their advantages in a last desperate battle, or series of battles.

The transition from capitalism to communism takes an entire historical epoch. Until this epoch is over, the exploiters inevitably cherish the hope of restoration, and this *hope* turns into *attempts* at restoration. After their first serious defeat, the overthrown exploiters—who had not expected their overthrow, never believed it possible, never conceded the thought of it—throw themselves with energy grown tenfold, with furious passion and hatred grown a hundredfold, into the battle for the recovery of the “paradise”, of which they were deprived, on behalf of their families, who had been leading such a sweet and easy life and whom now the “common herd” is condemning to ruin and destitution (or to “common” labour...). In the train of the capitalist exploiters follow the wide sections of the petty bourgeoisie, with regard to whom decades of historical experience of all countries testify that they vacillate and hesitate, one day marching behind the proletariat and the next day taking fright at the difficulties of the revolution; that they become panic-stricken at the first defeat or semi-defeat of the workers, grow nervous, run about aimlessly, snivel, and rush from one camp into the other—just like our Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries.

In these circumstances, in an epoch of desperately acute war, when history presents the question of whether age-old and thousand-year-old privileges are to be or not to be—at such a time to talk about majority and minority,

about pure democracy, about dictatorship being unnecessary and about equality between the exploiter and the exploited! What infinite stupidity and abysmal philistinism are needed for this!

However, during the decades of comparatively “peaceful” capitalism between 1871 and 1914, the Augean stables⁴¹ of philistinism, imbecility, and apostasy accumulated in the socialist parties which were adapting themselves to opportunism. . . .

* * *

The reader will probably have noticed that Kautsky, in the passage from his pamphlet quoted above, speaks of an attempt to encroach upon universal suffrage (calling it, by the way, a deep source of mighty moral authority, whereas Engels, apropos of the same Paris Commune and the same question of dictatorship, spoke of the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie—a very characteristic difference between the philistine's and the revolutionary's views on “authority”...).

It should be observed that the question of depriving the exploiters of the franchise is a *purely Russian* question, and not a question of the dictatorship of the proletariat in general. Had Kautsky, casting aside hypocrisy, entitled his pamphlet *Against the Bolsheviks*, the title would have corresponded to the contents of the pamphlet, and Kautsky would have been justified in speaking bluntly about the franchise. But Kautsky wanted to come out primarily as a “theoretician”. He called his pamphlet *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat—in general*. He speaks about the Soviets and about Russia specifically only in the second part of the pamphlet, beginning with the sixth paragraph. The subject dealt with in the first part (from which I took the quotation) is *democracy and dictatorship in general*. In speaking about the franchise, Kautsky *betrayed himself* as an opponent of the Bolsheviks, *who does not care a brass farthing for theory*. For theory, i.e., the reasoning about the general (and not the nationally specific) class foundations of democracy and dictatorship,

ought to deal not with a special question, such as the franchise, but with the general question of whether democracy can be *preserved for the rich, for the exploiters* in the historical period of the overthrow of the exploiters and the replacement of their state by the state of the exploited.

That is the way, the only way, a theoretician can present the question.

We know the example of the Paris Commune, we know all that was said by the founders of Marxism in connection with it and in reference to it. On the basis of this material I examined, for instance, the question of democracy and dictatorship in my pamphlet, *The State and Revolution*, written before the October Revolution. *I did not say anything at all* about restricting the franchise. And it must be said now that the question of restricting the franchise is a nationally specific and not a general question of the dictatorship. One must approach the question of restricting the franchise by studying the *specific conditions* of the Russian revolution and the *specific path* of its development. This will be done later on in this pamphlet. It would be a mistake, however, to guarantee in advance that the impending proletarian revolutions in Europe will all, or the majority of them, be necessarily accompanied by restriction of the franchise for the bourgeoisie. It may be so. After the war and the experience of the Russian revolution it probably will be so; but it is *not absolutely necessary* for the exercise of the dictatorship, it is not an *indispensable* characteristic of the logical concept "dictatorship", it does not enter as an *indispensable* condition in the historical and class concept "dictatorship".

The indispensable characteristic, the necessary condition of dictatorship is the *forcible* suppression of the exploiters as a *class*, and, consequently, the *infringement* of "pure democracy", i.e., of equality and freedom, *in regard to that class*.

This is the way, the only way, the question can be put theoretically. And by failing to put the question thus, Kautsky has shown that he opposes the Bolsheviks not as

a theoretician, but as a sycophant of the opportunists and the bourgeoisie.

In which countries, and given what national features of capitalism, democracy for the exploiters will be in one or another form restricted (wholly or in part), infringed upon, is a question of the specific national features of this or that capitalism, of this or that revolution. The theoretical question is different: Is the dictatorship of the proletariat possible *without infringing democracy* in relation to the *exploiting class*?

It is precisely this question, the *only* theoretically important and essential one, that Kautsky has evaded. He has quoted all sorts of passages from Marx and Engels, *except those* which bear on this question, and which I quoted above.

Kautsky talks about anything you like, about everything that is acceptable to liberals and bourgeois democrats and does not go beyond their circle of ideas, but he does not talk about the main thing, namely, the fact that the proletariat cannot achieve victory *without breaking the resistance* of the bourgeoisie, *without forcibly suppressing its adversaries*, and that, where there is "forcible suppression", where there is no "freedom", *there is, of course, no democracy*.

This Kautsky has not understood.

* * *

We shall now examine the experience of the Russian revolution and that divergence between the Soviets of Deputies and the Constituent Assembly which led to the dissolution of the latter and to the withdrawal of the franchise from the bourgeoisie.

The Soviets Dare not Become State Organisations

The Soviets are the Russian form of the proletarian dictatorship. If a Marxist theoretician, writing a work on the dictatorship of the proletariat, had really studied the subject (and not merely repeated the petty-bourgeois

lamentations against dictatorship, as Kautsky did, singing to Menshevik tunes), he would first have given a general definition of dictatorship, and would then have examined its peculiar, national, form, the Soviets; he would have given his critique of them as one of the forms of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

It goes without saying that nothing serious could be expected from Kautsky after his liberalistic "interpretation" of Marx's teaching on dictatorship; but the manner in which he approached the question of what the Soviets are and the way he dealt with this question is highly characteristic.

The Soviets, he says, recalling their rise in 1905, created "the most all-embracing (*umfassendste*) form of proletarian organisation, for it embraced all the wage-workers" (p. 31). In 1905 they were only local bodies; in 1917 they became a national organisation.

"The Soviet form of organisation," Kautsky continues, "already has a great and glorious history behind it, and it has a still mightier future before it, and not in Russia alone. It appears that everywhere the old methods of the economic and political struggle of the proletariat are inadequate" (*versagen*; this German expression is somewhat stronger than "inadequate" and somewhat weaker than "impotent") "against the gigantic economic and political forces which finance capital has at its disposal. These old methods cannot be discarded; they are still indispensable for normal times; but from time to time tasks arise which they cannot cope with, tasks that can be accomplished successfully only as a result of a combination of all the political and economic instruments of force of the working class" (p. 32).

Then follows a reasoning on the mass strike and on "trade union bureaucracy"—which is no less necessary than the trade unions—being "useless for the purpose of directing the mighty mass battles that are more and more becoming a sign of the times. . . ."

"Thus," Kautsky concludes, "the Soviet form of organisation is one of the most important phenomena of our time. It promises to acquire decisive importance in the great decisive battles between capital and labour towards which we are marching.

"But are we entitled to demand more of the Soviets? The Bolsheviks, after the November Revolution" (new style, or October, according to our style) "1917, secured in conjunction with the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries a majority in the Russian Soviets of Work-

ers Deputies, and after the dispersion of the Constituent Assembly, they set out to transform the Soviets from a *combat organisation* of one class, as they had been up to then, into a *state organisation*. They destroyed the democracy which the Russian people had won in the March" (new style, or February, our style) "Revolution. In line with this, the Bolsheviks have ceased to call themselves Social-Democrats. They call themselves *Communists*" (p. 33, Kautsky's italics).

Those who are familiar with Russian Menshevik literature will at once see how slavishly Kautsky copies Martov, Axelrod, Stein and Co. Yes, "slavishly", because Kautsky ridiculously distorts the facts in order to pander to Menshevik prejudices. Kautsky did not take the trouble, for instance, to ask his informants (Stein of Berlin, or Axelrod of Stockholm) *when* the questions of changing the name of the Bolsheviks to Communists and of the significance of the Soviets as state organisations were first raised. Had Kautsky made this simple inquiry he would not have penned these ludicrous lines, for both these questions were raised by the Bolsheviks *in April 1917*, for example, in my "Theses" of April 4, 1917, i.e., *long before* the Revolution of October 1917 (and, of course, long before the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly on January 5, 1918).

But Kautsky's argument which I have just quoted in full represents the *crux* of the whole question of the Soviets. The *crux* is: should the Soviets aspire to become state organisations (in April 1917 the Bolsheviks put forward the slogan: "All Power to the Soviets!" and at the Bolshevik Party Conference held in the same month they declared they were not satisfied with a bourgeois parliamentary republic but demanded a workers' and peasants' republic of the Paris Commune or Soviet type); or should the Soviets not strive for this, refrain from taking power into their hands, refrain from becoming state organisations and remain the "combat organisations" of one "class" (as Martov expressed it, embellishing by this innocent wish the fact that under Menshevik leadership the Soviets were *an instrument for the subjection of the workers to the bourgeoisie*)?

Kautsky slavishly repeats Martov's words, picks out *fragments* of the theoretical controversy between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, and uncritically and senselessly transplants them to the general theoretical and general European field. The result is such a hodge-podge as to provoke Homeric laughter in every class-conscious Russian worker had he read these arguments of Kautsky's.

When we explain what the question at issue is, every worker in Europe (barring a handful of inveterate social-imperialists) will greet Kautsky with similar laughter.

Kautsky has rendered Martov a backhanded service by developing his mistake into a glaring absurdity. Indeed, look what Kautsky's argument amounts to.

The Soviets embrace all wage-workers. The old methods of economic and political struggle of the proletariat are inadequate against finance capital. The Soviets have a great role to play in the future, and not only in Russia. They will play a decisive battles between capital and labour in Europe. That is what Kautsky says.

Excellent. But won't the "decisive battles between capital and labour" decide which of the two classes will assume state power?

Nothing of the kind! Heaven forbid!

The Soviets, which embrace all the wage-workers, *must not become state organisations* in the "decisive" battles!

But what is the state?

The state is nothing but a machine for the suppression of one class by another.

Thus, the oppressed class, the vanguard of all the working and exploited people in modern society, must strive towards the "decisive battles between capital and labour", *but must not touch* the machine by means of which capital suppresses labour!—*It must not break up* that machine!—*It must not make use* of its all-embracing organisation for *suppressing the exploiters*!

Excellent, Mr. Kautsky, magnificent! "We" recognise class struggle—in the same way as all liberals recognise it, i.e., without the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. . . .

This is where Kautsky's complete rupture both with Marxism and with socialism becomes obvious. Actually, it is desertion to the camp of the bourgeoisie, who are prepared to concede everything except the transformation of the organisations of the class which they oppress into state organisations. Kautsky can no longer save his position of trying to reconcile everything and of getting away from all profound contradictions with mere phrases.

Kautsky either rejects the assumption of state power by the working class altogether, or he concedes that the working class may take over the old, bourgeois state machine. But he will by no means concede that it must break it up, smash it, and replace it by a new, proletarian machine. Whichever way Kautsky's arguments are "interpreted", or "explained", his rupture with Marxism and his desertion to the bourgeoisie are obvious.

Back in the *Communist Manifesto*, describing what sort of state the victorious working class needs, Marx wrote: "the state, i.e., the proletariat organised as the ruling class."⁴² Now we have a man who claims still to be a Marxist coming forward and declaring that the proletariat, fully organised and waging the "decisive battle" against capital, *must not* transform its class organisation into a state organisation. Here Kautsky has betrayed that "superstitious belief in the state" which in Germany, as Engels wrote in 1891, "has been carried over into the general thinking of the bourgeoisie and even of many workers".⁴³ Workers, fight!—our philistine "agrees" to this (as every bourgeois "agrees", since the workers are fighting all the same, and the only thing to do is to devise means of blunting the edge of their sword)—fight, but *don't dare win*! Don't destroy the state machine of the bourgeoisie, don't replace the bourgeois "state organisation" by the proletarian "state organisation"!

Whoever sincerely shared the Marxist view that the state is nothing but a machine for the suppression of one class by another, and who has at all reflected upon this truth, could never have reached the absurd conclusion that the proletarian organisations capable of defeating

finance capital must not transform themselves into state organisations. It was this point that betrayed the petty bourgeois who believes that "after all is said and done" the state is something outside classes or above classes. Indeed, why should the proletariat, "*one class*", be permitted to wage unremitting war on *capital*, which rules not only over the proletariat, but over the whole people, over the whole petty bourgeoisie, over all the peasants, yet this proletariat, this "*one class*", is not to be permitted to transform its organisation into a state organisation? Because the petty bourgeois is *afraid* of the class struggle, and does not carry it to its logical conclusion, to its *main object*.

Kautsky has got himself completely mixed up and has given himself away entirely. Mark you, he himself admits that Europe is heading for decisive battles between capital and labour, and that the old methods of economic and political struggle of the proletariat are inadequate. But these old methods were precisely the utilisation of *bourgeois democracy*. It therefore follows. . . ?

But Kautsky is afraid to think of what follows.

. . . It therefore follows that only a reactionary, an enemy of the working class, a henchman of the bourgeoisie, can now turn his face to the obsolete past, paint the charms of bourgeois democracy and babble about pure democracy. Bourgeois democracy *was* progressive compared with medievalism, and it had to be utilised. But now it is *not sufficient* for the working class. Now we must look forward instead of backward—to replacing the bourgeois democracy by *proletarian democracy*. And while the preparatory work for the proletarian revolution, the formation and training of the proletarian army were possible (and necessary) *within the framework* of the bourgeois-democratic state, now that we have reached the stage of "decisive battles", to confine the proletariat to this framework means betraying the cause of the proletariat, means being a renegade.

Kautsky has made himself particularly ridiculous by repeating Martov's argument *without noticing* that in

Martov's case this argument was based on *another* argument which he, Kautsky, does not use! Martov said (and Kautsky repeats after him) that Russia is not yet ripe for socialism; from which it logically follows that it is too early to transform the Soviets from organs of struggle into state organisations (read: it is timely to transform the Soviets, with the assistance of the Menshevik leaders, into instruments for *subjecting* the workers to the imperialist bourgeoisie). Kautsky, however, *cannot* say outright that Europe is not ripe for socialism. In 1909, when he was not yet a renegade, he wrote that there was then no reason to fear a *premature* revolution, that whoever had renounced revolution for fear of defeat would have been a traitor. Kautsky does not dare renounce this *outright*. And so we get an absurdity, which completely reveals the stupidity and cowardice of the petty bourgeois: on the one hand, Europe is ripe for socialism and is heading towards decisive battles between capital and labour: but, on the other hand, the *combat organisation* (i.e., the organisation which arises, grows and gains strength in combat), the organisation of the proletariat, the vanguard and organiser, the leader of the oppressed, *must not* be transformed into a state organisation!

* * *

From the point of view of practical politics the idea that the Soviets are necessary as combat organisations but must not be transformed into state organisations is infinitely more absurd than from the point of view of theory. Even in peacetime, when there is no revolutionary situation, the mass struggle of the workers against the capitalists—for instance, the mass strike—gives rise to great bitterness on both sides, to fierce passions in the struggle, the bourgeoisie constantly insisting that they remain and mean to remain "masters in their own house", etc. And in time of revolution, when political life reaches boiling point, an organisation like the Soviets, which embraces *all* the workers in *all* branches of industry, *all* the soldiers,

and all the working and poorest sections of the rural population—such an organisation, of its own accord, with the development of the struggle, by the simple “logic” of attack and defence, comes inevitably to pose the question *point-blank*. The attempt to take up a middle position and to “reconcile” the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is sheer stupidity and doomed to miserable failure. That is what happened in Russia to the preachings of Martov and other Mensheviks, and that will inevitably happen in Germany and other countries if the Soviets succeed in developing on any wide scale, manage to unite and strengthen. To say to the Soviets: fight, but don’t take all state power into your hands, don’t become state organisations—is tantamount to preaching class collaboration and “social peace” between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. It is ridiculous even to think that such a position in the midst of fierce struggle could lead to anything but ignominious failure. But it is Kautsky’s everlasting fate to sit between two stools. He pretends to disagree with the opportunists on everything in theory, but *in practice* he agrees with them on everything essential (i.e., on everything pertaining to revolution).

The Constituent Assembly and the Soviet Republic

The question of the Constituent Assembly and its dispersal by the Bolsheviks is the crux of Kautsky’s entire pamphlet. He constantly reverts to it, and the whole of this literary production of the ideological leader of the Second International is replete with innuendoes to the effect that the Bolsheviks have “destroyed democracy” (see one of the quotations from Kautsky above). The question is really an interesting and important one, because the relation between bourgeois democracy and proletarian democracy here confronted the revolution in a *practical*

form. Let us see how our “Marxist theoretician” has dealt with the question.

He quotes the “Theses on the Constituent Assembly” written by me and published in *Pravda* on December 26, 1917.* One would think that no better evidence of Kautsky’s serious approach to the subject, quoting as he does the documents, could be desired. But look *how* he quotes. He does not say that there were nineteen of these theses; he does not say that they dealt with the relation between the ordinary bourgeois republic with a Constituent Assembly and a Soviet republic, as well as with the *history* of the divergence in our revolution between the Constituent Assembly and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Kautsky ignores all that, and simply tells the reader that “two of them” (of the theses) “are particularly important”: one stating that a split occurred among the Socialist-Revolutionaries after the elections to the Constituent Assembly, but before it was convened (Kautsky does not mention that this was the fifth thesis), and the other, that the republic of Soviets is in general a higher democratic form than the Constituent Assembly (Kautsky does not mention that this was the third thesis).

Only from this third thesis does Kautsky quote a part in full, namely, the following passage:

“The republic of Soviets is not only a higher type of democratic institution (as compared with the *usual* bourgeois republic crowned by a Constituent Assembly), but is the only form capable of securing the most painless** transition to socialism” (Kautsky omits the word “usual”

* See *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 379-83.—Ed.

** Incidentally, Kautsky, obviously trying to be ironical, repeatedly quotes the expression “most painless” transition; but as the shaft misses its mark, a few pages farther on he commits a slight forgery and falsely quotes it as a “painless” transition! Of course, by such means it is easy to put any absurdity into the mouth of an opponent. The forgery also helps him to evade the substance of the argument, namely, that the most painless transition to socialism is possible only when all the poor are organised to a man (Soviets) and when the core of state power (the proletariat) helps them to organise.

and the introductory words of the thesis: "For the transition from the bourgeois to the socialist system, for the dictatorship of the proletariat").

After quoting these words, Kautsky, with magnificent irony, exclaims:

"It is a pity that this conclusion was arrived at only after the Bolsheviki found themselves in the minority in the Constituent Assembly. Before that no one had demanded it more vociferously than Lenin."

This is literally what Kautsky says on page 31 of his book!

It is positively a gem! Only a sycophant of the bourgeoisie could present the question in such a false way as to give the reader the impression that all the Bolsheviks' talk about a higher type of state was an invention which saw light of day *after* they found themselves in the minority in the Constituent Assembly! Such an infamous lie could only have been uttered by a scoundrel who has sold himself to the bourgeoisie, or what is absolutely the same thing, who has placed his trust in Axelrod and is concealing the source of his information.

For everyone knows that on the very day of my arrival in Russia, on April 4, 1917, I publicly read my theses in which I proclaimed the superiority of the Paris Commune type of state over the bourgeois parliamentary republic. Afterwards I *repeatedly* stated this in print, as, for instance, in a pamphlet on political parties, which was translated into English and was published in January 1918 in the New York *Evening Post*.⁴⁴ More than that, the Conference of the Bolshevik Party held at the end of April 1917 adopted a resolution to the effect that a proletarian and peasant republic was superior to a bourgeois parliamentary republic, that our Party would not be satisfied with the latter, and that the Party Programme should be modified accordingly.⁴⁵

In face of these facts, what name can be given to Kautsky's trick of assuring his German readers that I had been vigorously demanding the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, and that I began to "belittle" the honour and

dignity of the Constituent Assembly only after the Bolsheviks found themselves in the minority in it? How can one excuse such a trick? By pleading that Kautsky did not know the facts? If that is the case, why did he undertake to write about them? Or why did he not honestly announce that he was writing on the strength of information supplied by the Mensheviks Stein and Axelrod and Co.? By pretending to be objective, Kautsky wants to conceal his role as the servant of the Mensheviks, who are disgruntled because they have been defeated.

This, however, is a mere trifle compared with what is to come.

Let us assume that Kautsky would not or could not (?) obtain from his informants a translation of the Bolshevik resolutions and declarations on the question of whether the Bolsheviks would be satisfied with a bourgeois parliamentary democratic republic or not. Let us assume this, although it is incredible. But Kautsky *directly mentions* my theses of December 26, 1917, on page 30 of his book.

Does he not know these theses in full, or does he know only what was translated for him by the Steins, the Axelrods and Co.? Kautsky quotes the *third* thesis on the *fundamental* question of whether the Bolsheviks, *before* the elections to the Constituent Assembly, realised that a Soviet republic is superior to a bourgeois republic, and whether they told the *people* that. *But he keeps silent about the second thesis.*

The second thesis reads as follows:

"While demanding the convocation of a Constituent Assembly, revolutionary Social-Democracy has ever since the beginning of the revolution of 1917 *repeatedly emphasised that a republic of Soviets is a higher form of democracy than the usual bourgeois republic with a Constituent Assembly*" (my italics).

* Incidentally, there are many Menshevik lies of this kind in Kautsky's pamphlet! It is a lampoon written by an embittered Menshevik.

In order to represent the Bolsheviks as unprincipled people, as "revolutionary opportunists" (this is a term which Kautsky employs somewhere in his book, I forget in which connection), Mr. Kautsky *has concealed from his German readers* the fact that the theses contain a direct reference to "repeated" declarations!

These are the petty, miserable and contemptible methods Mr. Kautsky employs! That is the way he has evaded the *theoretical* question.

Is it true or not that the bourgeois-democratic parliamentary republic is *inferior* to the republic of the Paris Commune or Soviet type? This is the whole point, and Kautsky has evaded it. Kautsky has "forgotten" all that Marx said in his analysis of the Paris Commune. He has also "forgotten" Engels's letter to Bebel of March 28, 1875, in which this same idea of Marx is formulated in a particularly lucid and comprehensible fashion: "The Commune was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word."⁴⁶

Here is the most prominent theoretician of the Second International, in a special pamphlet on *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, specially dealing with Russia, where the question of a form of state that is higher than a democratic bourgeois republic has been raised directly and repeatedly, ignoring this very question. In what way does this differ *in fact* from desertion to the bourgeois camp?

(Let us observe in parenthesis that in this respect, too, Kautsky is merely trailing after the Russian Mensheviks. Among the latter there are any number of people who know "all the quotations" from Marx and Engels. Yet not a single Menshevik, from April to October 1917 and from October 1917 to October 1918, has *ever* made a *single* attempt to examine the question of the Paris Commune type of state. Plekhanov, too, has evaded the question. *Evidently he had to.*)

It goes without saying that to discuss the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly with people who call themselves socialists and Marxists, but who in fact desert to the bourgeoisie on the *main* question, the question of the Paris

Commune type of state, would be casting pearls before swine. It will be sufficient to give the complete text of my theses on the Constituent Assembly as an appendix to the present book. The reader will then see that the question was presented on December 26, 1917, in the light of theory, history and practical politics.

If Kautsky has completely renounced Marxism as a theoretician he might at least have examined the question of the struggle of the Soviets with the Constituent Assembly as a historian. We know from many of Kautsky's works that he *knew how* to be a Marxist historian, and that *such* works of his will remain a permanent possession of the proletariat in spite of his subsequent apostasy. But on this question Kautsky, even as a historian, *turns his back* on the truth, ignores *well-known* facts and behaves like a sycophant. He *wants* to represent the Bolsheviks as being unprincipled and he tells his readers that they tried to *mitigate* the conflict with the Constituent Assembly before dispersing it. There is absolutely nothing wrong about it, we have nothing to recant; I give the theses in full and there it is said as clear as clear can be: Gentlemen of the vacillating petty bourgeoisie entrenched in the Constituent Assembly, either reconcile yourselves to the proletarian dictatorship, or else we shall defeat you by "revolutionary means" (theses 18 and 19).

That is how a really revolutionary proletariat has always behaved and always will behave towards the vacillating petty bourgeoisie.

Kautsky adopts a formal standpoint on the question of the Constituent Assembly. My theses say clearly and repeatedly that the interests of the revolution are higher than the formal rights of the Constituent Assembly (see theses 16 and 17). The formal democratic point of view is precisely the point of view of the *bourgeois* democrat who refuses to admit that the interests of the proletariat and of the proletarian class struggle are supreme. As a historian, Kautsky would not have been able to deny that bourgeois parliaments are the organs of this or that class. But now (for the sordid purpose of renouncing rev-

olution) Kautsky finds it necessary to forget his Marxism, and he *refrains from putting the question*: the organ of what *class* was the Constituent Assembly of Russia? Kautsky does not examine the concrete conditions; he does not want to face facts; he does not say a single word to his German readers about the fact that the theses contained not only a theoretical elucidation of the question of the limited character of bourgeois democracy (theses 1-3), not only a description of the concrete conditions which determined the discrepancy between the party lists of candidates in the middle of October 1917 and the real state of affairs in December 1917 (theses 4-6), but also a *history of the class struggle and the Civil War* in October-December 1917 (theses 7-15). From this concrete history we drew the conclusion (thesis 14) that the slogan "All Power to the Constituent Assembly!" had, *in reality*, become the slogan of the Cadets and the Kaledin men and their abettors.

Kautsky the historian fails to see this. Kautsky the historian has never heard that universal suffrage sometimes produces petty-bourgeois, sometimes reactionary and counter-revolutionary parliaments. Kautsky the Marxist historian has never heard that the form of elections, the form of democracy, is one thing, and the class content of the given institution is another. This question of the class content of the Constituent Assembly is directly put and answered in my theses. Perhaps my answer is wrong. Nothing would have been more welcome to us than a Marxist criticism of our analysis by an outsider. Instead of writing utterly silly phrases (of which there are plenty in Kautsky's book) about somebody preventing criticism of Bolshevism, he ought to have set out to make such a criticism. But the point is that he offers no criticism. He does not even *raise the question* of a class analysis of the Soviets on the one hand, and of the Constituent Assembly on the other. It is therefore *impossible* to argue, to debate with Kautsky. All we can do is *demonstrate* to the reader why Kautsky cannot be called anything else but a renegade.

The divergence between the Soviets and the Constituent Assembly has its history, which even a historian who does not share the point of view of the class struggle could not have ignored. Kautsky would not *touch* upon this actual history. Kautsky has concealed from his German readers the universally known fact (which only malignant Mensheviks now conceal) that the divergence between the Soviets and the "general state" (that is, bourgeois) institutions existed even under the rule of the Mensheviks, i.e., from the end of February to October 1917. Actually, Kautsky adopts the position of conciliation, compromise and collaboration between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. However much Kautsky may repudiate this, it is a fact which is borne out by his whole pamphlet. To say that the Constituent Assembly should not have been dispersed is tantamount to saying that the fight against the bourgeoisie should not have been fought to a finish, that the bourgeoisie should not have been overthrown and that the proletariat should have made peace with them.

Why has Kautsky kept quiet about the fact that the Mensheviks were engaged in this inglorious work between February and October 1917 and did not achieve anything? If it was possible to reconcile the bourgeoisie with the proletariat, why didn't the Mensheviks succeed in doing so? Why did the bourgeoisie stand aloof from the Soviets? Why did the *Mensheviks* call the Soviets "revolutionary democracy", and the bourgeoisie the "propertied elements"?

Kautsky has concealed from his German readers that it was the Mensheviks who, in the "epoch" of their rule (February to October 1917), called the Soviets "revolutionary democracy", *thereby* admitting their superiority over all other institutions. It is only by concealing this fact that Kautsky the historian made it appear that the divergence between the Soviets and the bourgeoisie had no history, that it arose instantaneously, without cause, suddenly, because of the bad behaviour of the Bolsheviks. Yet, in actual fact, it was *the more than six months'* (an enormous period in time of revolution) *experience* of

Menshevik compromise, of their attempts to reconcile the proletariat with the bourgeoisie, that convinced the people of the fruitlessness of these attempts and drove the proletariat away from the Mensheviks.

Kautsky admits that the Soviets are an excellent combat organisation of the proletariat, and that they have a great future before them. But, that being the case, Kautsky's position collapses like a house of cards, or like the dreams of a petty bourgeois that the acute struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie can be avoided. For revolution is one continuous and moreover desperate struggle, and the proletariat is the vanguard class of all the oppressed, the focus and centre of all the aspirations of all the oppressed for their emancipation! Naturally, therefore, the Soviets, as the organ of the struggle of the oppressed people, reflected and expressed the moods and changes of opinions of these people ever so much more quickly, fully, and faithfully than any other institution (that, incidentally, is one of the reasons why Soviet democracy is the highest type of democracy).

In the period between February 28 (old style) and October 25, 1917, the Soviets managed to convene *two* all-Russia congresses of representatives of the overwhelming majority of the population of Russia, of all the workers and soldiers, and of 70 or 80 per cent of the peasants, not to mention the vast number of local, uyezd, town, gubernia, and regional congresses. During this period the bourgeoisie did not succeed in convening a single institution representing the majority (except that obvious sham and mockery called the "Democratic Conference",⁴⁷ which enraged the proletariat). The Constituent Assembly reflected *the same* popular mood and *the same* political grouping as the First (June) All-Russia Congress of Soviets.⁴⁸ By the time the Constituent Assembly was convened (January 1918), the Second (October 1917)⁴⁹ and Third (January 1918)⁵⁰ congresses of Soviets had met, both of which had *demonstrated as clear as clear could be* that the people had swung to the left, had become revolutionised, had turned away from the Mensheviks and

the Socialist-Revolutionaries, and had passed over to the side of the Bolsheviks; *that is*, had turned away from petty-bourgeois leadership, from the illusion that it was possible to reach a compromise with the bourgeoisie, and had joined the proletarian revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

So, even the *external history* of the Soviets shows that the Constituent Assembly was a *reactionary* body and that its dispersal was inevitable. But Kautsky sticks firmly to his "slogan": let "pure democracy" prevail though the revolution perish and the bourgeoisie triumph over the proletariat! *Fiat justitia, pereat mundus!*⁵¹

Here are the brief figures relating to the all-Russia congresses of Soviets in the course of the history of the Russian revolution:

All-Russia Congress of Soviets	Number of Delegates	Number of Bolsheviks	Percentage of Bolsheviks
First (June 3, 1917)	790	103	13
Second (October 25, 1917) . . .	675	343	51
Third (January 10, 1918) . . .	710	434	61
Fourth (March 14, 1918) . . .	1,232	795	64
Fifth (July 4, 1918)	1,164	773	66

One glance at these figures is enough to understand why the defence of the Constituent Assembly and talk (like Kautsky's) about the Bolsheviks not having a majority of the population behind them are just ridiculed in Russia.

The Soviet Constitution

As I have already pointed out, the disfranchisement of the bourgeoisie is not a necessary and indispensable feature of the dictatorship of the proletariat. And in Russia, the Bolsheviks, who long before October put forward the

* Let justice be done, even though the world may perish.—Ed.

slogan of proletarian dictatorship, did not say anything in advance about disfranchising the exploiters. *This* aspect of the dictatorship did not make its appearance "according to the plan" of any particular party; it *emerged* of itself in the course of the struggle. Of course, Kautsky the historian failed to notice this. He failed to understand that even when the Mensheviks (who compromised with the bourgeoisie) still ruled the Soviets, the bourgeoisie cut themselves off from the Soviets of their own accord, boycotted them, put themselves up in opposition to them and intrigued against them. The Soviets arose without any constitution and existed without one for *more than a year* (from the spring of 1917 to the summer of 1918). The fury of the bourgeoisie against this independent and omnipotent (because it was all-embracing) organisation of the oppressed; the fight, the unscrupulous, self-seeking and sordid fight, the bourgeoisie waged against the Soviets; and, lastly, the overt participation of the bourgeoisie (from the Cadets to the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, from Milyukov to Kerensky) in the Kornilov mutiny—all this *paved the way* for the formal exclusion of the bourgeoisie from the Soviets.

Kautsky has heard about the Kornilov mutiny, but he majestically scorns historical facts and the course and forms of the struggle which determine the *forms* of the dictatorship. Indeed, who should care about facts where "pure" democracy is involved? That is why Kautsky's "criticism" of the disfranchisement of the bourgeoisie is distinguished by such . . . sweet naïveté, which would be touching in a child but is repulsive in a person who has not yet been officially certified as feeble-minded.

"...If the capitalists found themselves in an insignificant minority under universal suffrage they would more readily become reconciled to their fate" (p. 33). . . . Charming, isn't it? Clever Kautsky has seen many cases in history, and, generally, knows perfectly well from his own observations of life of landowners and capitalists reckoning with the will of the majority of the oppressed. Clever Kautsky firmly advocates an "opposition", i.e., parliamen-

tary struggle. That is literally what he says: "opposition" (p. 34 and elsewhere).

My dear learned historian and politician! It would not harm you to know that "opposition" is a concept that belongs to the peaceful and only to the parliamentary struggle, i.e., a concept that corresponds to a non-revolutionary situation, a concept that corresponds to an *absence of revolution*. During revolution we have to deal with a ruthless enemy in civil war; and no reactionary jeremiads of a petty bourgeois who fears such a war, as Kautsky does, will alter the fact. To examine the problems of ruthless civil war from the point of view of "opposition" at a time when the bourgeoisie are prepared to commit any crime—the example of the Versailles men and their deals with Bismarck must mean something to every person who does not treat history like Gogol's *Petrushka*⁵¹—when the bourgeoisie are summoning foreign states to their aid and intriguing with them against the revolution, is simply comical. The revolutionary proletariat is to put on a nightcap, like "Muddle-headed Counsellor" Kautsky, and regard the bourgeoisie, who are organising Dutov, Krasnov and Czech counter-revolutionary insurrections⁵² and are paying millions to saboteurs, as a legal "opposition". Oh, what profundity!

Kautsky is exclusively interested in the formal, legal aspect of the question, and, reading his disquisitions on the Soviet Constitution, one involuntarily recalls Bebel's words: Lawyers are thoroughbred reactionaries. "In reality," Kautsky writes, "the capitalists alone cannot be disfranchised. What is a capitalist in the legal sense of the term? A property-owner? Even in a country which has advanced so far along the path of economic progress as Germany, where the proletariat is so numerous, the establishment of a Soviet republic would disfranchise a large mass of people. In 1907, the number of persons in the German Empire engaged in the three great occupational groups—agriculture, industry and commerce—together with their families amounted roughly to thirty-five million in the wage-earners' and salaried employees'

group, and seventeen million in the independent group. Hence, a party might well form a majority among the wage-workers but a minority among the population as a whole" (p. 33).

That is an example of Kautsky's mode of argument. Isn't it the counter-revolutionary whining of a bourgeois? Why, Mr. Kautsky, have you relegated all the "independents" to the category of the disfranchised, when you know very well that the overwhelming majority of the Russian peasants do not employ hired labour, and do not, therefore, lose their franchise? Isn't this falsification?

Why, learned economist, did you not quote the facts with which you are perfectly familiar and which are to be found in those same German statistical returns for 1907 relating to hired labour in agriculture according to size of farms? Why did you not quote these facts to enable the German workers, the readers of your pamphlet, to see *how many exploiters there are*, and how few they are compared with the total number of "farmers" who figure in German statistics?

You did not because your apostasy has made you a mere sycophant of the bourgeoisie.

The term capitalist, Kautsky argues, is legally a vague concept, and on several pages he thunders against the "arbitrariness" of the Soviet Constitution. This "serious scholar" has no objection to the British bourgeoisie taking several centuries to work out and develop a new (new for the Middle Ages) bourgeois constitution, but, representative of lackey's science that he is, he will allow no time to us, the workers and peasants of Russia. He expects us to have a constitution all worked out to the very last letter in a few months....

"Arbitrariness!" Just imagine what a depth of vile subservience to the bourgeoisie and most inept pedantry is contained in *such* a reproach. When thoroughly bourgeois and for the most part reactionary lawyers in the capitalist countries have for centuries or decades been drawing up most detailed rules and regulations and writing scores and hundreds of volumes of laws and interpretations of

laws to *oppress* the workers, to bind the *poor man* hand and foot and to place thousands of hindrances and obstacles in the way of any of the common labouring people—there the bourgeois liberals and Mr. Kautsky see no "arbitrariness"! That is "law" and "order"! The ways in which the poor are to be "kept down" have all been thought out and written down. There are thousands of bourgeois lawyers and bureaucrats (about them Kautsky says nothing at all, probably just because Marx attached enormous significance to *smashing* the bureaucratic machine...)—lawyers and bureaucrats who know how to interpret the laws in such a way that the worker and the average peasant can never break through the barbed-wire entanglements of these laws. This is not "arbitrariness" on the part of the bourgeoisie, it is not the dictatorship of the sordid and self-seeking exploiters who are sucking the blood of the people. Nothing of the kind! It is "pure democracy", which is becoming purer and purer every day.

But now that the toiling and exploited classes, while cut off by the imperialist war from their brothers across the border, have for the first time in history set up their *own* Soviets, have called to the work of political construction *those people* whom the bourgeoisie used to oppress, grind down and stupefy, and have begun *themselves* to build a *new*, proletarian state, have begun in the heat of furious struggle, in the fire of civil war, to *sketch* the fundamental principles of a state *without exploiters*—all the bourgeois scoundrels, the whole gang of bloodsuckers, with Kautsky echoing them, howl about "arbitrariness"! Indeed, how will these ignorant people, these workers and peasants, this "mob", be able to interpret their laws? How can these common labourers acquire a sense of justice without the counsel of educated lawyers, of bourgeois writers, of the Kautskys and the wise old bureaucrats?

Mr. Kautsky quotes from my speech of April 28, 1918,⁵³ the words: "The people themselves determine the procedure and the time of elections." And Kautsky, the "pure democrat", infers from this:

"...Hence, it would mean that every assembly of electors may determine the procedure of elections at their own discretion. Arbitrariness and the opportunity of getting rid of undesirable opposition in the ranks of the proletariat itself would thus be carried to the extreme" (p. 37).

Well, how does this differ from the talk of a hack hired by capitalists, who howls about the people oppressing industrious workers who are "willing to work" during a strike? Why is the *bourgeois* bureaucratic method of determining electoral procedure under "pure" bourgeois democracy *not* arbitrariness? Why should the sense of justice *among the masses who have risen to fight* their age-old exploiters and who are being educated and steeled in this desperate struggle be less than that of a *handful* of bureaucrats, intellectuals and lawyers brought up in *bourgeois* prejudices?

Kautsky is a true socialist. Don't dare suspect the sincerity of this very respectable father of a family, of this very honest citizen. He is an ardent and convinced supporter of the victory of the workers, of the proletarian revolution. All he wants is that the honey-mouthed, petty-bourgeois intellectuals and philistines in nightcaps should *first—before* the masses begin to move, *before* they start a furious battle with the exploiters, and certainly *without* civil war—draw up a moderate and precise *set of rules for the development of the revolution*....

Burning with profound moral indignation, our most learned Judas Golovlyov⁵⁴ tells the German workers that on June 14, 1918, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of Soviets resolved to expel the representatives of the Right Socialist-Revolutionary Party and the Mensheviks from the Soviets.⁵⁵ "This measure," writes Judas Kautsky, all afire with noble indignation, "is not directed against definite persons guilty of definite punishable offences.... The Constitution of the Soviet Republic does not contain a single word about the immunity of Soviet deputies. It is not definite *persons*, but definite *parties* that are expelled from the Soviets" (p. 37).

Yes, that is really awful, an intolerable departure from pure democracy, according to the rules of which our revolutionary Judas Kautsky will make the revolution. We Russian Bolsheviks should first have guaranteed immunity to the Savinkovs and Co., to the Lieberdants,⁵⁶ Potresovs ("activists"⁵⁷) and Co., then drawn up a criminal code proclaiming participation in the Czech counter-revolutionary war,⁵⁸ or in the alliance with the German imperialists in the Ukraine or in Georgia *against* the workers of one's own country, to be "punishable offences", and *only then*, on the basis of this criminal code, would we be entitled, in accordance with the principles of "pure democracy", to expel "definite persons" from the Soviets. It goes without saying that the Czechs, who are subsidised by the British and French capitalists through the medium (or thanks to the agitation) of the Savinkovs, Potresovs and Lieberdants, and the Krasnovs who receive ammunition from the Germans through the medium of the Ukrainian and Tiflis Mensheviks, would have sat quietly waiting until we were ready with our proper criminal code, and, like the purest democrats they are, would have confined themselves to the role of an "opposition".

No less profound moral indignation is aroused in Kautsky's breast by the fact that the Soviet Constitution disfranchises all those who "employ hired labour with a view to profit". "A home-worker, or a small master employing only one journeyman," Kautsky writes, "may live and feel quite like a proletarian, but he has no vote" (p. 36).

What a departure from "pure democracy"! What an injustice! True, up to now all Marxists have thought—and thousands of facts have proved it—that the small masters were the most unscrupulous and grasping exploiters of hired labour, but our Judas Kautsky takes the small masters not as a *class* (who invented that pernicious theory of the class struggle?) but as single individuals, exploiters who "live and feel quite like proletarians". The famous "thrifty Agnes", who was considered dead and buried long ago, has come to life again under Kautsky's pen. This "thrifty Agnes" was invented and launched into

German literature some decades ago by that "pure" democrat, the bourgeois Eugen Richter. He predicted untold calamities that would follow the dictatorship of the proletariat, the confiscation of the capital of the exploiters, and asked with an innocent air: What is a capitalist in the legal sense of the term? He took as an example a poor, thrifty seamstress ("thrifty Agnes"), whom the wicked "proletarian dictators" rob of her last farthing. There was a time when all German Social-Democrats used to poke fun at this "thrifty Agnes" of the pure democrat, Eugen Richter. But that was a long, long time ago, when Bebel, who was quite frank and open about there being many national-liberals⁵⁹ in his party, was still alive; that was very long ago, when Kautsky was not yet a renegade.

Now "thrifty Agnes" has come to life again in the person of the "small master who employs only one journeyman and who lives and feels quite like a proletarian". The wicked Bolsheviks are wronging him, depriving him of his vote. It is true that "every assembly of electors" in the Soviet Republic, as Kautsky tells us, may admit into its midst a poor little master who, for instance, may be connected with this or that factory, if, by way of an exception, he is not an exploiter, and if he *really* "lives and feels quite like a proletarian". But can one rely on the knowledge of life, on the sense of justice of an irregular factory meeting of common workers acting (how awful!) without a written code? Would it not clearly be better to grant the vote to *all* exploiters, to *all* who employ hired labour, rather than risk the possibility of "thrifty Agnes" and the "small master who lives and feels quite like a proletarian" being wronged by the workers?

* * *

Let the contemptible renegade scoundrels, amidst the applause of the bourgeoisie and the social-chauvinists,*

* I have just read a leading article in *Frankfurter Zeitung*⁶⁰ (No. 293, October 22, 1918), giving an enthusiastic summary of Kautsky's pamphlet. This organ of the stock exchange is satisfied.

abuse our Soviet Constitution for disfranchising the exploiters! That's fine because it will accelerate and widen the split between the revolutionary workers of Europe and the Scheidemanns and Kautskys, the Renaudels and Longuets, the Hendersons and Ramsay MacDonalds, the old leaders and old betrayers of socialism.

The mass of the oppressed classes, the class-conscious and honest revolutionary proletarian leaders will be *on our side*. It will be enough to acquaint such proletarians and such people with our Soviet Constitution for them to say at once: "These are really *our people*, this is a real workers' party, this is a real workers' government, for it does not deceive the workers by talking about reforms in the way *all the above-mentioned leaders have done*, but is fighting the exploiters in real earnest, making a revolution in real earnest and *actually* fighting for the complete emancipation of the workers."

The *fact* that after a year's "experience" the Soviets have deprived the exploiters of the franchise *shows* that the Soviets are really organisations of the oppressed and not of social-imperialists and social-pacifists who have sold themselves to the bourgeoisie. The *fact* that the Soviets have disfranchised the exploiters *shows* they are not organs of petty-bourgeois compromise with the capitalists, not organs of parliamentary chatter (on the part of the Kautskys, the Longuets and the MacDonalds), but organs of the genuinely revolutionary proletariat which is waging a life-and-death struggle against the exploiters.

"Kautsky's book is almost unknown here," a well-informed comrade wrote to me from Berlin a few days ago (today is October 30). I would advise our ambassadors in Germany and Switzerland not to stint thousands in buying up this book and *distributing it gratis* among the

And no wonder! And a comrade writes to me from Berlin that *Vorwärts*,⁶¹ the organ of the Scheidemanns, has declared in a special article that it subscribes to almost every line Kautsky has written. Hearty congratulations!

class-conscious workers so as to trample in the mud this "European"—read: imperialist and reformist—Social-Democracy, which has long been a "stinking corpse".

* * *

At the end of his book on pages 61 and 63, Mr. Kautsky bitterly laments the fact that the "new theory" (as he calls Bolshevism, fearing to touch Marx's and Engels's analysis of the Paris Commune) "finds supporters even in old democracies like Switzerland, for instance". "It is incomprehensible" to Kautsky "how this theory can be adopted by German Social-Democrats".

No, it is quite comprehensible; for after the serious lessons of the war the revolutionary masses are becoming sick and tired of the Scheidemanns and the Kautskys.

"We" have always been in favour of democracy, Kautsky writes, yet we are supposed suddenly to renounce it!

"We", the opportunists of Social-Democracy, have always been opposed to the dictatorship of the proletariat, and Kolb and Co. proclaimed this *long ago*. Kautsky knows this and vainly expects that he will be able to conceal from his readers the obvious fact that he has "returned to the fold" of the Bernsteins and Kolbs.

"We", the revolutionary Marxists, have never made a fetish of "pure" (bourgeois) democracy. As is known, in 1903 Plekhanov was a revolutionary Marxist (later his unfortunate turn brought him to the position of a Russian Scheidemann). And in that year Plekhanov declared at our Party Congress, which was then adopting its programme, that in the revolution the proletariat would, if necessary, disfranchise the capitalists and *disperse any parliament* that was found to be counter-revolutionary. That this is the only view that corresponds to Marxism will be clear to anybody even from the statements of Marx and Engels which I have quoted above; it patently follows from all the fundamental principles of Marxism.

"We", the revolutionary Marxists, never made speeches to the people that the Kautskyites of all nations love to make, cringing before the bourgeoisie, adapting them-

selves to the bourgeois parliamentary system, keeping silent about the *bourgeois* character of modern democracy and demanding only *its* extension, only that *it* be carried to its logical conclusion.

"We" said to the bourgeoisie: You, exploiters and hypocrites, talk about democracy, while at every step you erect thousands of barriers to prevent the *oppressed people* from taking part in politics. We take you at your word and, in the interests of these people, demand the extension of *your* bourgeois democracy *in order to prepare the people for revolution* for the purpose of overthrowing you, the exploiters. And if you exploiters attempt to offer resistance to our proletarian revolution we shall ruthlessly suppress you; we shall deprive you of all rights; more than that, we shall not give you any bread, for in our proletarian republic the exploiters will have no rights, they will be deprived of fire and water, for we are socialists in real earnest, and not in the Scheidemann or Kautsky fashion.

That is what "we", the revolutionary Marxists, said, and will say—and that is why the oppressed people will support us and be with us, while the Scheidemanns and the Kautskys will be swept into the renegades' cesspool.

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"Democracy" and Dictatorship

The few numbers of the Berlin *Red Banner* and the Vienna *Call* (*Weckruf*),⁶² organ of the Communist Party of German Austria, that have reached Moscow, show that the traitors to socialism—those who supported the war of the predatory imperialists—the Scheidemanns and Eberts, Austerlitzes and Renners—are getting the rebuff they deserve from the genuine representatives of the revolutionary workers of Germany and Austria. We extend warm greetings to both papers, which epitomise the vitality and growth of the Third International.⁶³

Apparently the chief question of the revolution both in Germany and Austria now is: Constituent Assembly or Soviet government? The spokesmen of the bankrupt Second International, all the way from Scheidemann to Kautsky, stand for the first and describe their stand as defence of "democracy" (Kautsky has even gone so far as to call it "pure democracy") as distinct from dictatorship. In the pamphlet *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, which has just come off the press in Moscow and Petrograd, I examine Kautsky's views in detail. I shall try briefly to give the substance of the point at issue, which has become the question of the day for all the advanced capitalist countries.

The Scheidemanns and Kautskys speak about "pure democracy" and "democracy" in general for the purpose of deceiving the people and concealing from them the

bourgeois character of *present-day* democracy. Let the bourgeoisie continue to keep the entire apparatus of state power in their hands, let a handful of exploiters continue to use the former, bourgeois, state machine! Elections held in such circumstances are lauded by the bourgeoisie, for very good reasons, as being "free", "equal", "democratic" and "universal". These words are designed to conceal the truth, to conceal the fact that the means of production and political power remain in the hands of the exploiters, and that therefore real freedom and real equality for the exploited, that is, for the vast majority of the population, are out of the question. It is profitable and indispensable for the bourgeoisie to conceal from the people the *bourgeois* character of modern democracy, to picture it as democracy in general or "pure democracy", and the Scheidemanns and the Kautskys, repeating this, *in practice* abandon the standpoint of the proletariat and side with the bourgeoisie.

Marx and Engels in their last joint preface to the *Communist Manifesto* (in 1872) considered it necessary specially to warn the workers that the proletariat cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made (that is, the bourgeois) state machine and wield it for its own purpose, that it must smash it, break it up.⁶⁴ The renegade Kautsky, who has written a special pamphlet entitled *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, concealed from the workers this most important Marxist truth, utterly distorted Marxism, and, quite obviously, the praise which Scheidemann and Co. showered on the pamphlet was fully merited as praise by agents of the bourgeoisie for one switching to the side of the bourgeoisie.

It is sheer mockery of the working and exploited people to speak of pure democracy, of democracy in general, of equality, freedom and universal rights when the workers and all working people are ill-fed, ill-clad, ruined and worn out not only as a result of capitalist wage-slavery, but as a consequence of four years of predatory war, while the capitalists and profiteers remain in possession of the "property" usurped by them and the "ready-made"

apparatus of state power. This is tantamount to trampling on the basic truths of Marxism which has taught the workers: you must take advantage of bourgeois democracy which, compared with feudalism, represents a great historical advance, but not for one minute must you forget the bourgeois character of this "democracy", its historically conditional and limited character. Never share the "superstitious belief" in the "state" and never forget that the state even in the most democratic republic, and not only in a monarchy, is simply a machine for the suppression of one class by another.

The bourgeoisie are compelled to be hypocritical and to describe as "popular government" or democracy in general, or pure democracy, the (*bourgeois*) democratic republic which is, in practice, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, the dictatorship of the exploiters over the working people. The Scheidemanns and Kautskys, the Austerlitzes and Renners (and now, to our regret, with the help of Friedrich Adler) fall in line with this falsehood and hypocrisy. But Marxists, Communists, expose this hypocrisy, and tell the workers and the working people in general this frank and straightforward truth: the democratic republic, the Constituent Assembly, general elections, etc., are, in practice, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, and for the emancipation of labour from the yoke of capital there is no other way but to replace this dictatorship with the *dictatorship of the proletariat*.

The dictatorship of the proletariat alone can emancipate humanity from the oppression of capital, from the lies, falsehood and hypocrisy of bourgeois democracy—democracy *for the rich*—and establish democracy *for the poor*, that is, make the blessings of democracy *really* accessible to the workers and poor peasants, whereas now (even in the most democratic—*bourgeois*—republic) the blessings of democracy are, *in fact*, inaccessible to the vast majority of working people.

Take, for example, freedom of assembly and freedom of the press. The Scheidemanns and Kautskys, the Austerlitzes and Renners assure the workers that the present

elections to the Constituent Assembly in Germany and Austria are "democratic". That is a lie. *In practice* the capitalists, the exploiters, the landowners and the profiteers own 9/10 of the best meeting halls, and 9/10 of the stocks of newsprint, printing-presses, etc. The urban workers and the farm hands and day labourers are, *in practice*, debarred from democracy by the "sacred right of property" (guarded by the Kautskys and Renners, and now, to our regret, by Friedrich Adler as well) and by the bourgeois state apparatus, that is, bourgeois officials, bourgeois judges, and so on. The present "freedom of assembly and the press" in the "democratic" (bourgeois-democratic) German republic is false and hypocritical, because *in fact* it is *freedom for the rich* to buy and bribe the press, *freedom for the rich* to befuddle the people with the venomous lies of the bourgeois press, *freedom for the rich* to keep as their "property" the landowners' mansions, the best buildings, etc. The dictatorship of the proletariat *will take* from the capitalists and hand over to the working people the landowners' mansions, the best buildings, printing-presses and the stocks of newsprint.

But this means replacing "universal", "pure" democracy by the "dictatorship of one class", scream the Scheidemanns and Kautskys, the Austerlitzes and Renners (together with their followers in other countries—the Gomperses, Hendersons, Renaudels, Vanderveldes and Co.).

Wrong, we reply. This means replacing what in fact is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (a dictatorship hypocritically cloaked in the forms of the democratic bourgeois republic) by the dictatorship of the proletariat. This means replacing democracy for the rich by democracy for the poor. This means replacing freedom of assembly and the press for the minority, for the exploiters, by freedom of assembly and the press for the *majority* of the population, for the working people. This means a gigantic, world-historic *extension* of democracy, its transformation from falsehood into truth, the liberation of humanity from the shackles of capital, which *distorts* and truncates any, even the most "democratic" and republican, *bourgeois*

democracy. This means replacing the bourgeois state by the *proletarian* state, a replacement that is the sole way the state can eventually wither away altogether.

But why not reach this goal without the dictatorship of one class? Why not switch directly to "pure" democracy? So ask the hypocritical friends of the bourgeoisie or the naïve petty bourgeois and philistines gulled by them.

And we reply: Because in any capitalist society the decisive say lies with either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, while the small proprietors, inevitably, remain wavering, helpless, stupid dreamers of "pure", i.e., non-class or above-class, democracy. Because from a society in which one class oppresses another there is no way out other than through the dictatorship of the oppressed class. Because the proletariat alone is capable of defeating the bourgeoisie, of overthrowing them, being the sole class which capitalism has united and "schooled", and which is capable of drawing to its side the wavering mass of the working population with a petty-bourgeois way of life, of drawing them to its side or at least "neutralising" them. Because only mealy-mouthed petty bourgeois and philistines can dream—deceiving thereby both themselves and the workers—of overthrowing capitalist oppression without a long and difficult process of *suppressing the resistance* of the exploiters. In Germany and Austria this resistance is not yet very pronounced because expropriation of the expropriators has not yet begun. But once expropriation begins the resistance will be fierce and desperate. In concealing this from themselves and from the workers the Scheidemanns and Kautskys, the Austerlitzes and Renners betray the interests of the proletariat, switching at the most decisive moment from the class struggle and overthrow of the yoke of the bourgeoisie to getting the proletariat to come to terms with the bourgeoisie, achieving "social peace" or reconciliation of exploited and exploiters.

Revolutions are the locomotives of history, said Marx.⁶⁵ Revolutions teach quickly. The urban workers and farm hands in Germany and Austria will quickly discern the

betrayal of the cause of socialism by the Scheidemanns and Kautskys, the Austerlitzes and Renners. The proletariat will cast aside these "social traitors"—socialists in words and betrayers of socialism in practice—as it did in Russia with the same kind of petty bourgeoisie and philistines—the Mensheviks and "Socialist-Revolutionaries". The more complete the domination of the above-mentioned "leaders", the quicker the proletariat will see that only the replacement of the bourgeois state, be it the most democratic bourgeois republic, by a state of the type of the Paris Commune (about which so much was said by Marx, who has been distorted and betrayed by the Scheidemanns and Kautskys) or by a state of the Soviet type, can open the way to socialism. The dictatorship of the proletariat will deliver humanity from capitalist oppression and war.

Moscow, December 23, 1918

Pravda No. 2, January 3, 1919

Collected Works,
Vol. 28, pp. 368-72

**First Congress of the Communist
International⁶⁶
March 2-6, 1919**

1

**Speech at the Opening Session
of the Congress
March 2**

On behalf of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party I declare the First Congress of the Communist International open. First I would ask all present to rise in tribute to the finest representatives of the Third International: Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.⁶⁷ (*All rise.*)

Comrades, our gathering has great historic significance. It testifies to the collapse of all the illusions cherished by bourgeois democrats. Not only in Russia, but in the most developed capitalist countries of Europe, Germany for example, civil war is a fact.

The bourgeoisie are terror-stricken at the growing workers' revolutionary movement. This is understandable if we take into account that the development of events since the imperialist war inevitably favours the workers' revolutionary movement, and that the world revolution is beginning and growing in intensity everywhere.

The people are aware of the greatness and significance of the struggle now going on. All that is needed is to find the practical form to enable the proletariat to establish its rule. Such a form is the Soviet system with the dictatorship of the proletariat. Dictatorship of the proletariat—until now these words were Latin to the masses. Thanks to the spread of the Soviets throughout the world this Latin has been translated into all modern languages; a practical form of dictatorship has been found by the

working people. The mass of workers now understand it thanks to Soviet power in Russia, thanks to the Spartacus League⁶⁸ in Germany and to similar organisations in other countries, such as, for example, the Shop Stewards Committees in Britain.⁶⁹ All this shows that a revolutionary form of the dictatorship of the proletariat has been found, that the proletariat is now able to exercise its rule.

Comrades, I think that after the events in Russia and the January struggle in Germany, it is especially important to note that in other countries, too, the latest form of the workers' movement is asserting itself and getting the upper hand. Today, for example, I read in an anti-socialist newspaper a report to the effect that the British Government had received a deputation from the Birmingham Workers' Council⁷⁰ and had expressed its readiness to recognise the Councils as economic bodies. The Soviet system has triumphed not only in backward Russia, but also in the most developed country of Europe—in Germany, and in Britain, the oldest capitalist country.

Even though the bourgeoisie are still raging, even though they may kill thousands more workers, victory will be ours, the victory of the world-wide communist revolution is assured.

Comrades, I extend hearty greetings to you on behalf of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. I move that we elect a presidium. Let us have nominations.

First published in 1920,
in German, in the book
*Der I Kongress der
Kommunistischen
Internationale. Protokoll,*
Petrograd

First published in Russian
in 1921 in the book *First
Congress of the Communist
International. Minutes,*
Petrograd

Collected Works,
Vol. 28, pp. 453-56

**Theses and Report on Bourgeois
Democracy and the Dictatorship
of the Proletariat
March 4**

1. Faced with the growth of the revolutionary workers' movement in every country, the bourgeoisie and their agents in the workers' organisations are making desperate attempts to find ideological and political arguments in defence of the rule of the exploiters. Condemnation of dictatorship and defence of democracy are particularly prominent among these arguments. The falsity and hypocrisy of this argument, repeated in a thousand strains by the capitalist press and at the Berne yellow International Conference in February 1919,⁷¹ are obvious to all who refuse to betray the fundamental principles of socialism.

2. Firstly, this argument employs the concepts of "democracy in general" and "dictatorship in general", without posing the question of the class concerned. This non-class or above-class presentation, which supposedly is popular, is an outright travesty of the basic tenet of socialism, namely, its theory of class struggle, which socialists who have sided with the bourgeoisie recognise in words but disregard in practice. For in no civilised capitalist country does "democracy in general" exist; all that exists is bourgeois democracy, and it is not a question of "dictatorship in general", but of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, i.e., the proletariat, over its oppressors and exploiters, i.e., the bourgeoisie, in order to overcome the resistance offered by the exploiters in their fight to maintain their domination.

3. History teaches us that no oppressed class ever did, or could, achieve power without going through a period of dictatorship, i.e., the conquest of political power and forcible suppression of the resistance always offered by the exploiters—a resistance that is most desperate, most furious, and that stops at nothing. The bourgeoisie, whose domination is now defended by the socialists who denounce "dictatorship in general" and extol "democracy in general", won power in the advanced countries through a series of insurrections, civil wars, and the forcible suppression of kings, feudal lords, slave-owners and their attempts at restoration. In books, pamphlets, congress resolutions and propaganda speeches socialists everywhere have thousands and millions of times explained to the people the class nature of these bourgeois revolutions and this bourgeois dictatorship. That is why the present defence of bourgeois democracy under cover of talk about "democracy in general" and the present howls and shouts against proletarian dictatorship under cover of shouts about "dictatorship in general" are an outright betrayal of socialism. They are, in fact, desertion to the bourgeoisie, denial of the proletariat's right to its own, proletarian, revolution, and defence of bourgeois reformism at the very historical juncture when bourgeois reformism throughout the world has collapsed and the war has created a revolutionary situation.

4. In explaining the class nature of bourgeois civilisation, bourgeois democracy and the bourgeois parliamentary system, all socialists have expressed the idea formulated with the greatest scientific precision by Marx and Engels, namely, that the most democratic bourgeois republic is no more than a machine for the suppression of the working class by the bourgeoisie, for the suppression of the working people by a handful of capitalists.⁷² There is not a single revolutionary, not a single Marxist among those now shouting against dictatorship and for democracy who has not sworn and vowed to the workers that he accepts this basic truth of socialism. But now, when the revolutionary proletariat is in a fighting mood and taking

action to destroy this machine of oppression and to establish proletarian dictatorship, these traitors to socialism claim that the bourgeoisie have granted the working people "pure democracy", have abandoned resistance and are prepared to yield to the majority of the working people. They assert that in a democratic republic there is not, and never has been, any such thing as a state machine for the oppression of labour by capital.

5. The Paris Commune—to which all who parade as socialists pay lip service, for they know that the workers ardently and sincerely sympathise with the Commune—showed very clearly the historically conventional nature and limited value of the bourgeois parliamentary system and bourgeois democracy—institutions which, though highly progressive compared with medieval times, inevitably require a radical alteration in the era of proletarian revolution. It was Marx who best appraised the historical significance of the Commune. In his analysis, he revealed the exploiting nature of bourgeois democracy and the bourgeois parliamentary system under which the oppressed classes enjoy the right to decide once in several years which representative of the propertied classes shall "represent and suppress" (*ver- und zertreten*) the people in parliament.⁷³ And it is now, when the Soviet movement is embracing the entire world and continuing the work of the Commune for all to see, that the traitors to socialism are forgetting the concrete experience and concrete lessons of the Paris Commune and repeating the old bourgeois rubbish about "democracy in general". The Commune was not a parliamentary institution.

6. The significance of the Commune, furthermore, lies in the fact that it endeavoured to crush, to smash to its very foundations, the bourgeois state apparatus, the bureaucratic, judicial, military and police machine, and to replace it by a self-governing, mass workers' organisation in which there was no division between legislative and executive power. All contemporary bourgeois-democratic republics, including the German republic, which the traitors to socialism, in mockery of the truth, describe as

a proletarian republic, retain this state apparatus. We therefore again get quite clear confirmation of the point that shouting in defence of "democracy in general" is actually defence of the bourgeoisie and their privileges as exploiters.

7. "Freedom of assembly" can be taken as a sample of the requisites of "pure democracy". Every class-conscious worker who has not broken with his class will readily appreciate the absurdity of promising freedom of assembly to the exploiters at a time and in a situation when the exploiters are resisting the overthrow of their rule and are fighting to retain their privileges. When the bourgeoisie were revolutionary, they did not, either in England in 1649 or in France in 1793, grant "freedom of assembly" to the monarchists and nobles, who summoned foreign troops and "assembled" to organise attempts at restoration. If the present-day bourgeoisie, who have long since become reactionary, demand from the proletariat advance guarantees of "freedom of assembly" for the exploiters, whatever the resistance offered by the capitalists to being expropriated, the workers will only laugh at their hypocrisy.

The workers know perfectly well, too, that even in the most democratic bourgeois republic "freedom of assembly" is a hollow phrase, for the rich have the best public and private buildings at their disposal, and enough leisure to assemble at meetings, which are protected by the bourgeois machine of power. The rural and urban workers and the small peasants—the overwhelming majority of the population—are denied all these things. As long as that state of affairs prevails, "equality", i.e., "pure democracy", is a fraud. The first thing to do to win genuine equality and enable the working people to enjoy democracy in practice is to deprive the exploiters of all the public and sumptuous private buildings, to give the working people leisure and to see to it that their freedom of assembly is protected by armed workers, not by scions of the nobility or capitalist officers in command of down-trodden soldiers.

Only when that change is effected can we speak of freedom of assembly and of equality without mocking at the workers, at working people in general, at the poor. And this change can be effected only by the vanguard of the working people, the proletariat, which overthrows the exploiters, the bourgeoisie.

8. "Freedom of the press" is another of the principal slogans of "pure democracy". And here, too, the workers know—and socialists everywhere have admitted it millions of times—that this freedom is a deception while the best printing-presses and the biggest stocks of paper are appropriated by the capitalists, and while capitalist rule over the press remains, a rule that is manifested throughout the world all the more strikingly, sharply and cynically the more democracy and the republican system are developed, as in America for example. The first thing to do to win real equality and genuine democracy for the working people, for the workers and peasants, is to deprive capital of the possibility of hiring writers, buying up publishing houses and bribing newspapers. And to do that the capitalists and exploiters have to be overthrown and their resistance suppressed. The capitalists have always used the term "freedom" to mean freedom for the rich to get richer and for the workers to starve to death. In capitalist usage, freedom of the press means freedom of the rich to bribe the press, freedom to use their wealth to shape and fabricate so-called public opinion. In this respect, too, the defenders of "pure democracy" prove to be defenders of an utterly foul and venal system that gives the rich control over the mass media. They prove to be deceivers of the people, who, with the aid of plausible, fine-sounding, but thoroughly false phrases, divert them from the concrete historical task of liberating the press from capitalist enslavement. Genuine freedom and equality will be embodied in the system which the Communists are building, and in which there will be no opportunity for amassing wealth at the expense of others, no objective opportunities for putting the press under the direct or indirect power of money, and no impediments

in the way of any workingman (or groups of workingmen, in any numbers) for enjoying and practising equal rights in the use of public printing-presses and public stocks of paper.

9. The history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries demonstrated, even before the war, what this celebrated "pure democracy" really is under capitalism. Marxists have always maintained that the more developed, the "purer" democracy is, the more naked, acute and merciless the class struggle becomes, and the "purer" the capitalist oppression and bourgeois dictatorship. The Dreyfus case in republican France, the massacre of strikers by hired bands armed by the capitalists in the free and democratic American republic—these and thousands of similar facts illustrate the truth which the bourgeoisie are vainly seeking to conceal, namely, that actually terror and bourgeois dictatorship prevail in the most democratic of republics and are openly displayed every time the exploiters think the power of capital is being shaken.

10. The imperialist war of 1914-18 conclusively revealed even to backward workers the true nature of bourgeois democracy, even in the freest republics, as being a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Tens of millions were killed for the sake of enriching the German or the British group of millionaires and multimillionaires, and bourgeois military dictatorships were established in the freest republics. This military dictatorship continues to exist in the Allied countries even after Germany's defeat. It was mostly the war that opened the eyes of the working people, that stripped bourgeois democracy of its camouflage and showed the people the abyss of speculation and profiteering that existed during and because of the war. It was in the name of "freedom and equality" that the bourgeoisie waged the war, and in the name of "freedom and equality" that the munition manufacturers piled up fabulous fortunes. Nothing that the yellow Berne International⁷⁴ does can conceal from the people the now thoroughly exposed exploiting

character of bourgeois freedom, bourgeois equality and bourgeois democracy.

11. In Germany, the most developed capitalist country of continental Europe, the very first months of full republican freedom, established as a result of imperialist Germany's defeat, have shown the German workers and the whole world the true class substance of the bourgeois-democratic republic. The murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg is an event of epoch-making significance not only because of the tragic death of these finest people and leaders of the truly proletarian, Communist International, but also because the class nature of an advanced European state—it can be said without exaggeration, of an advanced state on a world-wide scale—has been conclusively exposed. If those arrested, i.e., those placed under state protection, could be assassinated by officers and capitalists with impunity, and this under a government headed by social-patriots, then the democratic republic where such a thing was possible is a bourgeois dictatorship. Those who voice their indignation at the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg but fail to understand this fact are only demonstrating their stupidity, or hypocrisy. "Freedom" in the German republic, one of the freest and advanced republics of the world, is freedom to murder arrested leaders of the proletariat with impunity. Nor can it be otherwise as long as capitalism remains, for the development of democracy sharpens rather than dampens the class struggle which, by virtue of all the results and influences of the war and of its consequences, has been brought to boiling point.

Throughout the civilised world we see Bolsheviks being exiled, persecuted and thrown into prison. This is the case, for example, in Switzerland, one of the freest bourgeois republics, and in America, where there have been anti-Bolshevik pogroms, etc. From the standpoint of "democracy in general", or "pure democracy", it is really ridiculous that advanced, civilised, and democratic countries, which are armed to the teeth, should fear the presence of a few score men from backward, famine-stricken

and ruined Russia, which the bourgeois papers, in tens of millions of copies, describe as savage, criminal, etc. Clearly, the social situation that could produce this crying contradiction is in fact a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

12. In these circumstances, proletarian dictatorship is not only an absolutely legitimate means of overthrowing the exploiters and suppressing their resistance, but also absolutely necessary to the entire mass of working people, being their only defence against the bourgeois dictatorship which led to the war and is preparing new wars.

The main thing that socialists fail to understand and that constitutes their short-sightedness in matters of theory, their subservience to bourgeois prejudices and their political betrayal of the proletariat is that in capitalist society, whenever there is any serious aggravation of the class struggle intrinsic to that society, there can be no alternative but the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat. Dreams of some third way are reactionary, petty-bourgeois lamentations. That is borne out by more than a century of development of bourgeois democracy and the working-class movement in all the advanced countries, and notably by the experience of the past five years. This is also borne out by the whole science of political economy, by the entire content of Marxism, which reveals the economic inevitability, wherever commodity economy prevails, of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie that can only be replaced by the class which the very growth of capitalism develops, multiplies, welds together and strengthens, that is, the proletarian class.

13. Another theoretical and political error of the socialists is their failure to understand that ever since the rudiments of democracy first appeared in antiquity, its forms inevitably changed over the centuries as one ruling class replaced another. Democracy assumed different forms and was applied in different degrees in the ancient republics of Greece, the medieval cities and the advanced capitalist

countries. It would be sheer nonsense to think that the most profound revolution in human history, the first case in the world of power being transferred from the exploiting minority to the exploited majority, could take place within the time-worn framework of the old, bourgeois, parliamentary democracy, without drastic changes, without the creation of new forms of democracy, new institutions that embody the new conditions for applying democracy, etc.

14. Proletarian dictatorship is similar to the dictatorship of other classes in that it arises out of the need, as every other dictatorship does, to forcibly suppress the resistance of the class that is losing its political sway. The fundamental distinction between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dictatorship of other classes—landlord dictatorship in the Middle Ages and bourgeois dictatorship in all the civilised capitalist countries—consists in the fact that the dictatorship of the landowners and bourgeoisie was the forcible suppression of the resistance offered by the vast majority of the population, namely, the working people. In contrast, proletarian dictatorship is the forcible suppression of the resistance of the exploiters, i.e., an insignificant minority of the population, the landowners and capitalists.

It follows that proletarian dictatorship must inevitably entail not only a change in democratic forms and institutions, generally speaking, but precisely such a change as provides an unparalleled extension of the actual enjoyment of democracy by those oppressed by capitalism—the toiling classes.

And indeed, the form of proletarian dictatorship that has already taken shape, i.e., Soviet power in Russia, the Räte-System in Germany, the Shop Stewards Committees in Britain and similar Soviet institutions in other countries, all this implies and presents to the toiling classes, i.e., the vast majority of the population, greater practical opportunities for enjoying democratic rights and liberties than ever existed before, even approximately, in the best and the most democratic bourgeois republics.

The substance of Soviet government is that the permanent and only foundation of state power, the entire machinery of state, is the mass-scale organisation of the classes oppressed by capitalism, i.e., the workers and the semi-proletarians (peasants who do not exploit the labour of others and regularly resort to the sale of at least a part of their own labour-power). It is the people, who even in the most democratic bourgeois republics, while possessing equal rights by law, have in fact been debarred by thousands of devices and subterfuges from participation in political life and enjoyment of democratic rights and liberties, that are now drawn into constant and unending, moreover, decisive, participation in the democratic administration of the state.

15. The equality of citizens, irrespective of sex, religion, race, or nationality, which bourgeois democracy everywhere has always promised but never effected, and never could effect because of the domination of capital, is given immediate and full effect by the Soviet system, or dictatorship of the proletariat. The fact is that this can only be done by a government of the workers, who are not interested in the means of production being privately owned and in the fight for their division and redivision.

16. The old, i.e., bourgeois, democracy and the parliamentary system were so organised that it was the mass of working people who were kept farthest away from the machinery of government. Soviet power, i.e., the dictatorship of the proletariat, on the other hand, is so organised as to bring the working people close to the machinery of government. That, too, is the purpose of combining the legislative and executive authority under the Soviet organisation of the state and of replacing territorial constituencies by production units—the factory.

17. The army was a machine of oppression not only under the monarchy. It remains as such in all bourgeois republics, even the most democratic ones. Only the Soviets, the permanent organisations of government authority of the classes that were oppressed by capitalism, are in a position to destroy the army's subordination to bourgeois

commanders and really merge the proletariat with the army; only the Soviets can effectively arm the proletariat and disarm the bourgeoisie. Unless this is done, the victory of socialism is impossible.

18. The Soviet organisation of the state is suited to the leading role of the proletariat as a class most concentrated and enlightened by capitalism. The experience of all revolutions and all movements of the oppressed classes, the experience of the world socialist movement teaches us that only the proletariat is in a position to unite and lead the scattered and backward sections of the working and exploited population.

19. Only the Soviet organisation of the state can really effect the immediate break-up and total destruction of the old, i.e., bourgeois, bureaucratic and judicial machinery, which has been, and has inevitably had to be, retained under capitalism even in the most democratic republics, and which is, in actual fact, the greatest obstacle to the practical implementation of democracy for the workers and working people generally. The Paris Commune took the first epoch-making step along this path. The Soviet system has taken the second.

20. Destruction of state power is the aim set by all socialists, including Marx above all. Genuine democracy, i.e., liberty and equality, is unrealisable unless this aim is achieved. But its practical achievement is possible only through Soviet, or proletarian, democracy, for by enlisting the mass organisations of the working people in constant and unflinching participation in the administration of the state, it immediately begins to prepare the complete withering away of any state.

21. The complete bankruptcy of the socialists who assembled in Berne, their complete failure to understand the new, i.e., proletarian, democracy, is especially apparent from the following. On February 10, 1919, Branting delivered the concluding speech at the international Conference of the yellow International in Berne. In Berlin, on February 11, 1919, *Die Freiheit*,⁷⁵ the paper of the International's affiliates, published an appeal from the Party

of "Independents"⁷⁶ to the proletariat. The appeal acknowledged the bourgeois character of the Scheidemann government, rebuked it for wanting to abolish the Soviets, which it described as *Träger und Schützer der Revolution*—vehicles and guardians of the revolution—and proposed that the Soviets be legalised, invested with government authority and given the right to suspend the operation of National Assembly decisions pending a popular referendum.

That proposal indicates the complete ideological bankruptcy of the theorists who defended democracy and failed to see its bourgeois character. This ludicrous attempt to combine the Soviet system, i.e., proletarian dictatorship, with the National Assembly, i.e., bourgeois dictatorship, utterly exposes the paucity of thought of the yellow socialists and Social-Democrats, their reactionary petty-bourgeois political outlook, and their cowardly concessions to the irresistibly growing strength of the new, proletarian democracy.

22. From the class standpoint, the Berne yellow International majority, which did not dare to adopt a formal resolution out of fear of the mass of workers, was right in condemning Bolshevism. This majority is in full agreement with the Russian Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, and the Scheidemanns in Germany. In complaining of persecution by the Bolsheviks, the Russian Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries try to conceal the fact that they are persecuted for participating in the Civil War on the side of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. Similarly, the Scheidemanns and their party have already demonstrated in Germany that they, too, are participating in the civil war on the side of the bourgeoisie against the workers.

It is therefore quite natural that the Berne yellow International majority should be in favour of condemning the Bolsheviks. This was not an expression of the defence of "pure democracy", but of the self-defence of people who know and feel that in the civil war they stand with the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.

That is why, from the class point of view, the decision of the yellow International majority must be considered correct. The proletariat must not fear the truth, it must face it squarely and draw all the necessary political conclusions.

Comrades, I would like to add a word or two to the last two points. I think that the comrades who are to report to us on the Berne Conference will deal with it in greater detail.

Not a word was said at the Berne Conference about the significance of Soviet power. We in Russia have been discussing this question for two years now. At our Party Conference in April 1917 we raised the following question, theoretically and politically: "What is Soviet power, what is its substance and what is its historical significance?" We have been discussing it for almost two years. And at our Party Congress⁷⁷ we adopted a resolution on it.

On February 11 Berlin *Die Freiheit* published an appeal to the German proletariat signed not only by the leaders of the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, but also by all the members of the Independent Social-Democratic group in the Reichstag. In August 1918, Kautsky, one of the leading theorists of these Independents, wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, in which he declared that he was a supporter of democracy and of Soviet bodies, but that the Soviets must be bodies merely of an economic character and that they must not by any means be recognised as state organisations. Kautsky says the same thing in *Die Freiheit* of November 11 and January 12. On February 9 an article appeared by Rudolf Hilferding, who is also regarded as one of the leading and authoritative theorists of the Second International, in which he proposed that the Soviet system be united with the National Assembly juridically, by state legislation. That was on February 9. On February 11 this proposal was adopted by the whole of the Independent Party and published in the form of an appeal.

There is vacillation again, despite the fact that the National Assembly already exists, even after "pure de-

mocracy" has been embodied in reality, after the leading theorists of the Independent Social-Democratic Party have declared that the Soviet organisations must not be state organisations! This proves that these gentlemen really understand nothing about the new movement and about its conditions of struggle. But it goes to prove something else, namely, that there must be conditions, causes, for this vacillation! When, after all these events, after nearly two years of victorious revolution in Russia, we are offered resolutions like those adopted at the Berne Conference, which say nothing about the Soviets and their significance, about which not a single delegate uttered a single word, we have a perfect right to say that all these gentlemen are dead to us as socialists and theorists.

However, comrades, from the practical side, from the political point of view, the fact that these Independents, who in theory and on principle have been opposed to these state organisations, suddenly make the stupid proposal to "peacefully" unite the National Assembly with the Soviet system, i.e., to unite the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the proletariat, shows that a great change is taking place among the masses. We see that the Independents are all bankrupt in the socialist and theoretical sense and that an enormous change is taking place among the masses. The backward masses among the German workers are coming to us, have come to us! So, the significance of the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, the best section of the Berne Conference, is nil from the theoretical and socialist standpoint. Still, it has some significance, which is that these waverers serve as an index to us of the mood of the backward sections of the proletariat. This, in my opinion, is the great historical significance of this Conference. We experienced something of the kind in our own revolution. Our Mensheviks traversed almost exactly the same path as that of the theorists of the Independents in Germany. At first, when they had a majority in the Soviets, they were in favour of the Soviets. All we heard then was: "Long live the Soviets!", "For the Soviets!", "The Soviets are revolu-

tionary democracy!" When, however, we Bolsheviks secured a majority in the Soviets, they changed their tune; they said: the Soviets must not exist side by side with the Constituent Assembly. And various Menshevik theorists made practically the same proposals, like the one to unite the Soviet system with the Constituent Assembly and to incorporate the Soviets in the state structure. Once again it is here revealed that the general course of the proletarian revolution is the same throughout the world. First the spontaneous formation of Soviets, then their spread and development, and then the appearance of the practical problem: Soviets, or National Assembly, or Constituent Assembly, or the bourgeois parliamentary system; utter confusion among the leaders, and finally—the proletarian revolution. But I think we should not present the problem in this way after nearly two years of revolution; we should rather adopt concrete decisions because for us, and particularly for the majority of the West-European countries, spreading of the Soviet system is a most important task.

I would like to quote here just one Menshevik resolution. I asked Comrade Obolensky to translate it into German. He promised to do so but, unfortunately, he is not here. I shall try to render it from memory, as I have not the full text of it with me.

It is very difficult for a foreigner who has not heard anything about Bolshevism to arrive at an independent opinion about our controversial questions. Everything the Bolsheviks assert is challenged by the Mensheviks, and vice versa. Of course, it cannot be otherwise in the middle of a struggle, and that is why it is so important that the last Menshevik Party conference, held in December 1918, adopted the long and detailed resolution published in full in the *Menshevik Gazeta Pechatnikov*.⁷⁸ In this resolution the Mensheviks themselves briefly outline the history of the class struggle and of the Civil War. The resolution states that they condemn those groups in their party which are allied with the propertied classes in the Urals, in the South, in the Crimea and in Georgia—all these regions

are enumerated. Those groups of the Menshevik Party which, in alliance with the propertied classes, fought against the Soviets are now condemned in the resolution; but the last point of the resolution also condemns those who joined the Communists. It follows that the Mensheviks were compelled to admit that there was no unity in their party, and that its members were either on the side of the bourgeoisie or on the side of the proletariat. The majority of the Mensheviks went over to the bourgeoisie and fought against us during the Civil War. We, of course, persecute Mensheviks, we even shoot them, when they wage war against us, fight against our Red Army and shoot our Red commanders. We responded to the bourgeois war with the proletarian war—there can be no other way. Therefore, from the political point of view, all this is sheer Menshevik hypocrisy. Historically, it is incomprehensible how people who have not been officially certified as mad could talk at the Berne Conference, on the instructions of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, about the Bolsheviks fighting the latter, yet keep silent about their own struggle, in alliance with the bourgeoisie, against the proletariat.

All of them furiously attack us for persecuting them. This is true. But they do not say a word about the part they themselves have taken in the Civil War! I think that I shall have to provide the full text of the resolution to be recorded in the minutes, and I shall ask the foreign comrades to study it because it is a historical document in which the issue is raised correctly and which provides excellent material for appraising the controversy between the "socialist" trends in Russia. In between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie there is another class of people, who incline first this way and then the other. This has always been the case in all revolutions, and it is absolutely impossible in capitalist society, in which the proletariat and the bourgeoisie form two hostile camps, for intermediary sections not to exist between them. The existence of these waverers is historically inevitable, and, unfortunately, these elements, who do not know themselves

on whose side they will fight tomorrow, will exist for quite some time.

I want to make the practical proposal that a resolution be adopted in which three points shall be specifically mentioned.

First: One of the most important tasks confronting the West-European comrades is to explain to the people the meaning, importance and necessity of the Soviet system. There is a sort of misunderstanding on this question. Although Kautsky and Hilferding are bankrupt as theorists, their recent articles in *Die Freiheit* show that they correctly reflect the mood of the backward sections of the German proletariat. The same thing took place in our country: during the first eight months of the Russian revolution the question of the Soviet organisation was very much discussed, and the workers did not understand what the new system was and whether the Soviets could be transformed into a state machine. In our revolution we advanced along the path of practice, and not of theory. For example, formerly we did not raise the question of the Constituent Assembly from the theoretical side, and we did not say we did not recognise the Constituent Assembly. It was only later, when the Soviet organisations had spread throughout the country and had captured political power, that we decided to dissolve the Constituent Assembly. Now we see that in Hungary and Switzerland the question is much more acute. On the one hand, this is very good: it gives us the firm conviction that in the West-European states the revolution is advancing more quickly and will yield great victories. On the other hand, a certain danger is concealed in it, namely, that the struggle will be so precipitous that the minds of the mass of workers will not keep pace with this development. Even now the significance of the Soviet system is not clear to a large mass of the politically educated German workers, because they have been trained in the spirit of the parliamentary system and amid bourgeois prejudices.

Second: About the spread of the Soviet system. When we hear how quickly the idea of Soviets is spreading in

Germany, and even in Britain, it is very important evidence that the proletarian revolution will be victorious. Its progress can be only retarded for a short time. It is quite another thing, however, when Comrades Albert and Platten tell us that in the rural districts in their countries there are hardly any Soviets among the farm labourers and small peasants. In *Die Rote Fahne* I read an article opposing peasant Soviets, but quite properly supporting Soviets of farm labourers and of poor peasants.⁷⁹ The bourgeoisie and their lackeys, like Scheidemann and Co., have already issued the slogan of peasant Soviets. All we need, however, is Soviets of farm labourers and poor peasants. Unfortunately, from the reports of Comrades Albert, Platten and others, we see that, with the exception of Hungary, very little is being done to spread the Soviet system in the countryside. In this, perhaps, lies the real and quite serious danger threatening the achievement of certain victory by the German proletariat. Victory can only be considered assured when not only the urban workers, but also the rural proletarians are organised, and organised not as before—in trade unions and co-operative societies—but in Soviets. Our victory was made easier by the fact that in October 1917 we marched with the peasants, with all the peasants. In that sense, our revolution at that time was a bourgeois revolution. The first step taken by our proletarian government was to embody in a law promulgated on October 26 (old style), 1917, on the next day after the revolution, the old demands of all the peasants which peasant Soviets and village assemblies had put forward under Kerensky. That is where our strength lay; that is why we were able to win the overwhelming majority so easily. As far as the countryside was concerned, our revolution continued to be a bourgeois revolution, and only later, after a lapse of six months, were we compelled within the framework of the state organisation to start the class struggle in the countryside, to establish Committees of Poor Peasants, of semi-proletarians, in every village, and to carry on a methodical fight against the rural bourgeoisie. This was inevitable in Russia owing

to the backwardness of the country. In Western Europe things will proceed differently, and that is why we must emphasise the absolute necessity of spreading the Soviet system also to the rural population in proper, perhaps new, forms.

Third: We must say that winning a Communist majority in the Soviets is the principal task in all countries in which Soviet government is not yet victorious. Our Resolutions' Commission discussed this question yesterday. Perhaps other comrades will express their opinion on it; but I would like to propose that these three points be adopted as a special resolution. Of course, we are not in a position to prescribe the path of development. It is quite likely that the revolution will come very soon in many West-European countries, but we, as the organised section of the working class, as a party, strive and must strive to gain a majority in the Soviets. Then our victory will be assured and no power on earth will be able to do anything against the communist revolution. If we do not, victory will not be secured so easily, and it will not be durable. And so, I would like to propose that these three points be adopted as a special resolution.

Theses published March 6, 1919 in *Pravda* No. 51, *Izvestia UTsIK* No. 51 and in the journal *Communist International* No. 1, May 1, 1919; report first published in 1920 in the German and in 1921 in the Russian editions of the minutes of the First Congress of the Communist International

Collected Works,
Vol. 28, pp. 457-74

3

Resolution to the Theses on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

On the basis of these theses and the reports made by the delegates from the different countries, the Congress of the Communist International declares that the chief task of the Communist Parties in all countries where Soviet government has not yet been established is as follows:

1) to explain to the broad mass of the workers the historic significance and the political and historical necessity of the new, proletarian, democracy which must replace bourgeois democracy and the parliamentary system;

2) to extend the organisation of Soviets among the workers in all branches of industry, among the soldiers in the Army and sailors in the Navy and also among farm labourers and poor peasants;

3) to build a stable Communist majority inside the Soviets.

Pravda No. 54, March 11, 1919
and the journal *Communist International* No. 1, May 1, 1919

Collected Works,
Vol. 28, p. 475

**Concluding Speech at the Closing
Session of the Congress
March 6**

That we have been able to gather, despite all the persecution and all the difficulties created by the police, that we have been able without any serious differences and in a brief space of time to reach important decisions on all the vitally urgent questions of the contemporary revolutionary epoch, we owe to the fact that the proletarian masses of the whole world, by their action, have brought up these questions in practice and begun to tackle them.

All we have had to do here has been to record the gains already won by the people in the process of their revolutionary struggle.

Not only in the East-European but also in the West-European countries, not only in the vanquished but also in the victor countries, for example in Britain, the movement in favour of Soviets is spreading farther and farther, and this movement is, most assuredly, a movement pursuing the aim of establishing the new, proletarian democracy. It is the most significant step towards the dictatorship of the proletariat, towards the complete victory of communism.

No matter how the bourgeoisie of the whole world rage, how much they deport or jail or even kill Spartacists and Bolsheviks—all this will no longer help. It will only serve

to enlighten the masses, help rid them of the old bourgeois-democratic prejudices and steel them in struggle. The victory of the proletarian revolution on a world scale is assured. The founding of an international Soviet republic is on the way. (*Stormy applause.*)

First published in 1920 in the
German and in 1921 in the
Russian editions of the
minutes of the
First Congress of the
Communist International

Collected Works,
Vol., 28, pp. 476-77

From Draft Programme of the R.C.P.(B.)⁸⁰

The Basic Tasks of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in Russia

In the Political Sphere

Prior to the capture of political power by the proletariat it was (obligatory) necessary to make use of bourgeois democracy, parliamentarism in particular, for the political education and organisation of the working masses; now that the proletariat has won political power and a higher type of democracy is being put into effect in the Soviet Republic, any step backward to bourgeois parliamentarism and bourgeois democracy would undoubtedly be reactionary service to the interests of the exploiters, the landowners and capitalists. Such catchwords as supposedly popular, national, general, extra-class but actually bourgeois democracy serve the interests of the exploiters alone, and as long as the land and other means of production remain private property the most democratic republic must inevitably remain a bourgeois dictatorship, a machine for the suppression of the overwhelming majority of working people by a handful of capitalists.

The historical task that has fallen to the lot of the Soviet Republic, a new type of state that is transitional until the state disappears altogether, is the following.

(1) The creation and development of universal mass organisations of precisely those classes that are oppressed under capitalism—the proletariat and semi-proletariat. A bourgeois-democratic republic at best permits the organisation of the exploited masses, by declaring them free to organise, but actually has always placed countless obsta-

cles in the way of their organisation, obstacles that were connected with the private ownership of the means of production in a way that made them irremovable. For the first time in history, Soviet power has not only greatly facilitated the organisation of the masses who were oppressed under capitalism, but has made that organisation the essential permanent basis of the entire state apparatus, local and central, from top to bottom. Only in this way is it possible to ensure democracy for the great majority of the population (the working people), i.e., actual participation in state administration, in contrast to the actual administration of the state mainly by members of the bourgeois classes as is the case in the most democratic bourgeois republics.

(2) The Soviet system of state administration gives a certain actual advantage to that section of the working people that all the capitalist development that preceded socialism has made the most concentrated, united, educated and steeled in the struggle, i.e., to the urban industrial proletariat. This advantage must be used systematically and unswervingly to counteract the narrow guild and narrow trade interests that capitalism fostered among the workers and which split them into competitive groups, by uniting the most backward and disunited masses of rural proletarians and semi-proletarians more closely with the advanced workers, by snatching them away from the influence of the village kulaks and village bourgeoisie, and organising and educating them for communist development.

(3) Bourgeois democracy that solemnly announced the equality of all citizens, in actual fact hypocritically concealed the domination of the capitalist exploiters and deceived the masses with the idea that the equality of exploiters and exploited is possible. The Soviet organisation of the state destroys this deception and this hypocrisy by the implementation of real democracy, i.e., the real equality of all working people, and by excluding the exploiters from the category of members of society possessing full rights. The experience of world history, the experience of

all revolts of the exploited classes against their exploiters shows the inevitability of long and desperate resistance of the exploiters in their struggle to retain their privileges. Soviet state organisation is adapted to the suppression of that resistance, for unless it is suppressed there can be no question of a victorious communist revolution.

(4) The more direct influence of the working masses on state structure and administration—i.e., a higher form of democracy—is also effected under the Soviet type of state, first, by the electoral procedure and the possibility of holding elections more frequently, and also by conditions for re-election and for the recall of deputies which are simpler and more comprehensible to the urban and rural workers than is the case under the best forms of bourgeois democracy;

(5) secondly, by making the economic, industrial unit (factory) and not a territorial division the primary electoral unit and the nucleus of the state structure under Soviet power. This closer contact between the state apparatus and the masses of advanced proletarians that capitalism has united, in addition to effecting a higher level of democracy, also makes it possible to effect profound socialist reforms.

(6) Soviet organisation has made possible the creation of armed forces of workers and peasants which are much more closely connected with the working and exploited people than before. If this had not been done it would have been impossible to achieve one of the basic conditions for the victory of socialism—the arming of the workers and the disarming of the bourgeoisie.

(7) Soviet organisation has developed incomparably farther and deeper that feature of bourgeois democracy which marks historically its great progressive nature as compared with medieval times, i.e., the participation of the people in the election of individuals to office. In none of the most democratic bourgeois states have the working masses ever been able to enjoy the electoral rights formally granted them by the bourgeoisie (who actually hinder their enjoyment) anywhere near as extensively, fre-

quently, universally, easily and simply as they are enjoyed under Soviet power. Soviet power has, at the same time, swept away those negative aspects of bourgeois democracy that the Paris Commune began to abolish, i.e., parliamentarism, or the separation of legislative and executive powers, the narrow, limited nature of which Marxism has long since indicated. By merging the two aspects of government the Soviets bring the state apparatus closer to the working people and remove the fence of the bourgeois parliament that fooled the masses with hypocritical signboards concealing the financial and stock-exchange deals of parliamentary businessmen and ensured the inviolability of the bourgeois apparatus of state administration.

(8) Soviet state organisation alone has enabled the proletarian revolution to smash the old bourgeois state apparatus at one blow and destroy it to the very foundations; had this not been done no start could have been made on socialist development. Those strongholds of the bureaucracy which everywhere, both under monarchies and in the most democratic bourgeois republics, has always kept the state bound to the interests of the landowners and capitalists, have been destroyed in present-day Russia. The struggle against the bureaucracy, however, is certainly not over in our country. The bureaucracy is trying to regain some of its positions and is taking advantage, on the one hand, of the unsatisfactory cultural level of the masses of the people and, on the other, of the tremendous, almost superhuman war efforts of the most developed section of the urban workers. The continuation of the struggle against the bureaucracy, therefore, is absolutely necessary, is imperative, to ensure the success of future socialist development.

(9) Work in this field is closely connected with the implementation of the chief historical purpose of Soviet power, i.e., to advance towards the final abolition of the state, and should consist of the following. First, every member of a Soviet must, without fail, do a certain job of state administration; secondly, these jobs must be con-

sistently changed, so that they embrace all aspects of government, all its branches; and, thirdly, literally all the working population must be drawn into independent participation in state administration by means of a series of gradual measures that are carefully selected and unfailingly implemented.

(10) By and large, the difference between bourgeois democracy and parliamentarism on the one hand, and Soviet or proletarian democracy on the other, boils down to this: the centre of gravity of the former is in its solemn and pompous declarations of numerous liberties and rights which the majority of the population, the workers and peasants, cannot enjoy to the full. Proletarian, or Soviet, democracy, on the contrary, has transferred the centre of gravity away from the declaration of rights and liberties for the entire people to the actual participation of none but the working people, who were oppressed and exploited by capital, in the administration of the state, the actual use of the best buildings and other premises for meetings and congresses, the best printing-works and the biggest warehouses (stocks) of paper for the education of those who were stultified and downtrodden under capitalism, and to providing a real (actual) opportunity for those masses gradually to free themselves from the burden of religious prejudices, etc., etc. It is precisely in making the benefits of culture, civilisation and democracy really available to the working and exploited people that Soviet power sees its most important work, work which it must continue unswervingly in the future.

The policy of the R.C.P. on the national question, unlike the bourgeois-democratic declaration of the equality of nations, which cannot be implemented under imperialism, is that of steadily drawing together and merging the proletarians and the working masses of all nations in their revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. Among the working people of the nations that entered into the Russian Empire the mistrust of the Great Russians that has been inherited from the epoch of tsarist and bourgeois Great-Russian imperialism is rapidly vanishing,

under the influence of their acquaintance with Soviet Russia, but that mistrust has not yet completely disappeared among all nations and among all sections of the working people. It is, therefore, necessary to exercise special caution in respect of national feelings and to ensure the pursuance of a policy of actual equality and freedom to secede so as to remove the grounds for this mistrust and achieve the close voluntary union of the Soviet republics of all nations. Aid to backward and weak nations must be increased by assisting the independent organisation and education of the workers and peasants of all nations in the struggle against medieval and bourgeois oppression and also by assisting in the development of the language and literature of nations that have been oppressed or have been underprivileged.

In respect of the policy on religion the task of the (R.C.P.) dictatorship of the proletariat must not be confined to decreeing the separation of the church from the state and the school from the church, that is, to measures promised by bourgeois democrats but never fully carried out anywhere in the world because of the many and varied connections actually existing between capital and religious propaganda. The proletarian dictatorship must completely destroy the connection between the exploiting classes—the landowners and capitalists—and the organisation of religious propaganda as something which keeps the masses in ignorance. The proletarian dictatorship must consistently effect the real emancipation of the working people from religious prejudices, doing so by means of propaganda and by raising the political consciousness of the masses but carefully avoiding anything that may hurt the feelings of the religious section of the population and serve to increase religious fanaticism.

In the sphere of public education, the object of the R.C.P. is to complete the work that began with the October Revolution in 1917 to convert the school from an instrument of the class rule of the bourgeoisie into an instrument for the overthrow of that rule and for the complete abolition of the division of society into classes.

In the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., in the period in which conditions are being prepared for the full realisation of communism, the school must be the vehicle, not merely of the general principles of communism but also of the ideological, organisational and educational influence of the proletariat on the semi-proletarian and non-proletarian sections of the working people, in order to train a generation that is fully capable of building communism.

The immediate tasks in this field are, for the present, the following.

(1) The implementation of free, obligatory general and polytechnical education (acquaintance with all the main branches of production theoretically and in practice) for all children of both sexes up to the age of 16.

(2) The closest connection between schooling and productive social labour.

(3) The provision of food, clothing, books and other teaching aids for all schoolchildren at the expense of the state.

(4) Greater agitation and propaganda among school-teachers.

(5) The training of new teaching staffs imbued with communist ideas.

(6) The working people must be drawn into active participation in the work of education (the development of the public education councils, mobilisation of the educated, etc.).

(7) All-round help on the part of Soviet power in the matter of the self-education and self-development of workers and working peasants (organisation of libraries, schools for adults, people's universities, courses of lectures, cinemas, studios, etc.).

(8) Development of the most extensive propaganda of communist ideas.

Insertion for Political Section of the Programme

To avoid making an incorrect generalisation of transient historical needs the R.C.P. must also explain to the working people that in the Soviet Republic the disfranchisement of a section of the citizens does not mean, as was the case in the majority of bourgeois-democratic republics, that a definite category of citizens are disfranchised for life. It applies only to the exploiters, to those who, in violation of the fundamental laws of the socialist Soviet Republic, persist in their efforts to cling to their exploiters' status and to preserve capitalist relations. Consequently, in the Soviet Republic, on the one hand, as socialism grows daily stronger and the number of those who are objectively able to remain exploiters or preserve capitalist relations is reduced, the number of disfranchised persons will automatically diminish. Even now the disfranchised persons in Russia constitute barely two or three per cent of the population. On the other hand, in the very near future, the cessation of foreign invasion and the completion of the expropriation of the expropriators may, under certain circumstances, create a situation where the proletarian state will choose other methods of suppressing the resistance of the exploiters and will introduce unrestricted universal suffrage.

Section of the Programme on National Relations

On the national question, the policy of the proletariat which has captured political power—unlike that of the bourgeois-democratic formal proclamation of equality of nations, which is impossible under imperialism—is persistently to bring about the real rapprochement and amalgamation of the workers and peasants of all nations in their revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. To achieve this object, the colonial and other nations

which are oppressed, or whose rights are restricted, must be completely liberated and granted the right to secede as a guarantee that the sentiment inherited from capitalism, the distrust of the working people of the various nations and the wrath which the workers of the oppressed nations feel towards the workers of the oppressor nations, will be fully dispelled and replaced by a conscious and voluntary alliance. The workers of those nations which under capitalism were oppressor nations must take exceptional care not to hurt the national sentiments of the oppressed nations (for example, the attitude of the Great Russians, Ukrainians and Poles towards the Jews, the attitude of the Tatars towards the Bashkirs, and so forth) and must not only promote the actual equality, but also the development of the language and literature of the working people of the formerly oppressed nations so as to remove all traces of distrust and alienation inherited from the epoch of capitalism.

First Paragraph of Section of the Programme on the Courts

On the road to communism through the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Communist Party, rejecting democratic slogans, completely abolishes also such organs of bourgeois rule as the old courts, and replaces them by the class courts of the workers and peasants. After taking all power into its hands, the proletariat puts forward, instead of the old vague formula, "Election of judges by the people", the class slogan, "Election of judges from the working people by none but the working people", and carries it into practice throughout the judicial system. In the election of judges from none but workers and peasants who do not employ wage-labour for profit, the Communist Party makes no distinction with regard to women but allows the two sexes completely equal rights both in electing judges and in exercising judicial functions. Having repealed the laws of the deposed governments, the Party gives the judges

elected by Soviet electors the slogan: enforce the will of the proletariat, apply its decrees, and in the absence of a suitable decree, or if the relevant decree is inadequate, take guidance from your socialist sense of justice, ignoring the laws of the deposed governments.

Section of the Programme Dealing with Public Education

In the sphere of public education, the object of the R.C.P. is to complete the work that began with the October Revolution in 1917 to convert the school from an instrument of the class rule of the bourgeoisie into an instrument for the overthrow of that rule and for the complete abolition of the division of society into classes. The schools must become an instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., a vehicle not merely of the general principles of communism but also of the ideological, organisational and educational influence of the proletariat on the semi-proletarian and non-proletarian sections of the working people with the object of completely suppressing the resistance of the exploiters and of building the communist system. The immediate tasks in this field are, for the present, the following:

(1) the further development of the initiative of the workers and working peasants in the sphere of education with the all-round assistance of the Soviet government;

(2) securing complete command not only over a section, or the majority, of the school-teachers, as is the case at present, but over all school-teachers by weeding out the incorrigible bourgeois counter-revolutionary elements and securing the conscientious application of communist principles (policy);

(3) the implementation of free, obligatory general and polytechnical education (acquaintance with all the main branches of production theoretically and in practice) for all children of both sexes up to the age of 16;

(4) the closest connection between schooling and productive social labour of the child;

(5) the provision of food, clothing, books and other teaching aids for all schoolchildren at the expense of the state;

(6) the working people must be drawn into active participation in the work of public education (the development of the public education councils, mobilisation of the educated, etc.);

or *ad 2*) (7) to secure the closest contact between school-teachers and the agitation and propaganda machinery of the R.C.P.

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Draft Programme section on
the national question
first published in 1925

Collected Works,
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125, 127, 131, 132-33

What is Soviet Power?

*Gramophone Recording of Speech*⁸¹

What is Soviet power? What is the essence of this new power, which people in most countries still will not, or cannot, understand? The nature of this power, which is attracting larger and larger numbers of workers in every country, is the following: in the past the country was, in one way or another, governed by the rich, or by the capitalists, but now, for the first time, the country is being governed by the classes, and moreover, by the masses of those classes, which capitalism formerly oppressed. Even in the most democratic and freest republics, as long as capital rules and the land remains private property, the government will always be in the hands of a small minority, nine-tenths of which consist of capitalists, or rich men.

In this country, in Russia, for the first time in the world history, the government of the country is so organised that only the workers and the working peasants, to the exclusion of the exploiters, constitute those mass organisations known as Soviets, and these Soviets wield all state power. That is why, in spite of the slander that the representatives of the bourgeoisie in all countries spread about Russia, the word "Soviet" has now become not only intelligible but popular all over the world, has become the favourite word of the workers and of all working people. And that is why, notwithstanding all the persecution to which the adherents of communism in the different countries are subjected, Soviet power must necessarily, inevi-

tably, and in the not distant future, triumph all over the world.

We know very well that there are still many defects in the organisation of Soviet power in this country. Soviet power is not a miracle-working talisman. It does not, overnight, heal all the evils of the past—illiteracy, lack of culture, the consequences of a barbarous war, the aftermath of predatory capitalism. But it does pave the way to socialism. It gives those who were formerly oppressed the chance to straighten their backs and to an ever-increasing degree to take the whole government of the country, the whole administration of the economy, the whole management of production, into their own hands.

Soviet power is the road to socialism that was discovered by the masses of the working people, and that is why it is the true road, that is why it is invincible.

Recording made at the end
of March 1919

Collected Works,
Vol. 29, pp. 248-49

Published on January 21,
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From *The Third International* and Its Place in History

A new era in world history has begun.

Mankind is throwing off the last form of slavery: capitalist, or wage, slavery.

By emancipating himself from slavery, man is for the first time advancing to real freedom.

How is it that one of the most backward countries of Europe was the first country to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, and to organise a Soviet republic? We shall hardly be wrong if we say that it is this contradiction between the backwardness of Russia and the "leap" she has made over bourgeois democracy to the highest form of democracy, to Soviet, or proletarian, democracy—it is this contradiction that has been one of the reasons (apart from the dead weight of opportunist habits and philistine prejudices that burdened the majority of the socialist leaders) why people in the West have had particular difficulty or have been slow in understanding the role of the Soviets.

The working people all over the world have instinctively grasped the significance of the Soviets as an instrument in the proletarian struggle and as a form of the proletarian state. But the "leaders", corrupted by opportunism, still continue to worship bourgeois democracy, which they call "democracy" in general.

Is it surprising that the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat has brought out primarily the "contradiction" between the backwardness of Russia and her

"leap" over bourgeois democracy? It would have been surprising had history granted us the establishment of a new form of democracy *without* a number of contradictions.

If any Marxist, or any person, indeed, who has a general knowledge of modern science, were asked whether it is likely that the transition of the different capitalist countries to the dictatorship of the proletariat will take place in an identical or harmoniously proportionate way, his answer would undoubtedly be in the negative. There never has been and never could be even, harmonious, or proportionate development in the capitalist world. Each country has developed more strongly first one, then another aspect or feature or group of features of capitalism and of the working-class movement. The process of development has been uneven.

When France was carrying out her great bourgeois revolution and rousing the whole European continent to a historically new life, Britain proved to be at the head of the counter-revolutionary coalition, although at the same time she was much more developed capitalistically than France. The British working-class movement of that period, however, brilliantly anticipated much that was contained in the future Marxism.

When Britain gave the world Chartism, the first broad, truly mass and politically organised proletarian revolutionary movement, bourgeois revolutions, most of them weak, were taking place on the European continent, and the first great civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie had broken out in France. The bourgeoisie defeated the various national contingents of the proletariat one by one, in different ways in different countries.

Britain was the model of a country in which, as Engels put it, the bourgeoisie had produced, alongside a bourgeois aristocracy, a very bourgeois upper stratum of the proletariat.⁸² For several decades this advanced capitalist country lagged behind in the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. France seemed to have exhausted the strength of the proletariat in two heroic working-class revolts of 1848

and 1871 against the bourgeoisie that made very considerable contributions to world-historical development. Leadership in the International of the working-class movement then passed to Germany; that was in the seventies of the nineteenth century, when she lagged economically behind Britain and France. But when Germany had outstripped these two countries economically, i.e., by the second decade of the twentieth century, the Marxist workers' party of Germany, that model for the whole world, found itself headed by a handful of utter scoundrels, the most filthy blackguards—from Scheidemann and Noske to David and Legien—loathsome hangmen drawn from the workers' ranks who had sold themselves to the capitalists, who were in the service of the monarchy and the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

World history is leading unswervingly towards the dictatorship of the proletariat, but is doing so by paths that are anything but smooth, simple and straight.

When Karl Kautsky was still a Marxist and not the renegade from Marxism he became when he began to champion unity with the Scheidemanns and to support bourgeois democracy against Soviet, or proletarian, democracy, he wrote an article—this was at the turn of the century—entitled "The Slavs and Revolution". In this article he traced the historical conditions that pointed to the possibility of leadership in the world revolutionary movement passing to the Slavs.

And so it has. Leadership in the revolutionary proletarian International has passed for a time—for a short time, it goes without saying—to the Russians, just as at various periods of the nineteenth century it was in the hands of the British, then of the French, then of the Germans.

I have had occasion more than once to say that it was easier for the Russians than for the advanced countries *to begin* the great proletarian revolution, but that it will be more difficult for them *to continue* it and carry it to final victory, in the sense of the complete organisation of a socialist society.

It was easier for us to begin, firstly, because the unusual—for twentieth-century Europe—political backwardness of the tsarist monarchy gave unusual strength to the revolutionary onslaught of the masses. Secondly, Russia's backwardness merged in a peculiar way the proletarian revolution against the bourgeoisie with the peasant revolution against the landowners. That is what we started from in October 1917, and we would not have achieved victory so easily then if we had not. As long ago as 1856, Marx spoke, in reference to Prussia, of the possibility of a peculiar combination of proletarian revolution and peasant war.⁶³ From the beginning of 1905 the Bolsheviks advocated the idea of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. Thirdly, the 1905 revolution contributed enormously to the political education of the worker and peasant masses, because it familiarised their vanguard with "the last word" of socialism in the West and also because of the revolutionary *action* of the masses. Without such a "dress rehearsal" as we had in 1905, the revolutions of 1917—both the bourgeois, February revolution, and the proletarian, October revolution—would have been impossible. Fourthly, Russia's geographical conditions permitted her to hold out longer than other countries could have done against the superior military strength of the capitalist, advanced countries. Fifthly, the specific attitude of the proletariat towards the peasantry facilitated the transition from the bourgeois revolution to the socialist revolution, made it easier for the urban proletarians to influence the semi-proletarian, poorer sections of the rural working people. Sixthly, long schooling in strike action and the experience of the European mass working-class movement facilitated the emergence—in a profound and rapidly intensifying revolutionary situation—of such a unique form of proletarian revolutionary organisation as the *Soviets*.

This list, of course, is incomplete; but it will suffice for the time being.

Soviet, or proletarian, democracy was born in Russia. Following the Paris Commune a second epoch-making

step was taken. The proletarian and peasant Soviet Republic has proved to be the first stable socialist republic in the world. As a *new type of state* it cannot die. It no longer stands alone.

For the continuance and completion of the work of building socialism, much, very much is still required. Soviet republics in more developed countries, where the proletariat has greater weight and influence, have every chance of surpassing Russia once they take the path of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The bankrupt Second International is now dying and rotting alive. Actually, it is playing the role of lackey to the world bourgeoisie. It is a truly yellow International. Its foremost ideological leaders, such as Kautsky, laud *bourgeois* democracy and call it "democracy" in general, or—what is still more stupid and still more crude—"pure democracy".

Bourgeois democracy has outlived its day, just as the Second International has, though the International performed historically necessary and useful work when the task of the moment was to train the working-class masses within the framework of this bourgeois democracy.

No bourgeois republic, however democratic, ever was or could have been anything but a machine for the suppression of the working people by capital, an instrument of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, the political rule of capital. The democratic bourgeois republic promised and proclaimed majority rule, but it could never put this into effect as long as private ownership of the land and other means of production existed.

"Freedom" in the bourgeois-democratic republic was actually freedom *for the rich*. The proletarians and working peasants could and should have utilised it for the purpose of preparing their forces to overthrow capital, to overcome bourgeois democracy, but *in fact* the working masses were, as a general rule, unable to enjoy democracy under capitalism.

Soviet, or proletarian, democracy has for the first time in the world created *democracy* for the masses, for the

working people, for the factory workers and small peasants.

Never yet has the world seen political power wielded by the *majority* of the population, power *actually* wielded by this majority, as it is in the case of Soviet rule.

It suppresses the "freedom" of the exploiters and their accomplices; it deprives them of "freedom" to exploit, "freedom" to batten on starvation, "freedom" to fight for the restoration of the rule of capital, "freedom" to compact with the foreign bourgeoisie against the workers and peasants of their own country.

Let the Kautskys champion such freedom. Only a renegade from Marxism, a renegade from socialism can do so.

In nothing is the bankruptcy of the ideological leaders of the Second International, people like Hilferding and Kautsky, so strikingly expressed as in their utter inability to understand the significance of Soviet, or proletarian, democracy, its relation to the Paris Commune, its place in history, its necessity as a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The newspaper *Die Freiheit*, organ of the "Independent" (alias middle-class, philistine, petty-bourgeois) German Social-Democratic Party, in its issue No. 74 of February 11, 1919, published a manifesto "To the Revolutionary Proletariat of Germany".

This manifesto is signed by the Party executive and by all its members in the National Assembly, the German variety of our Constituent Assembly.

This manifesto accuses the Scheidemanns of wanting to abolish the *Workers' Councils*, and proposes—don't laugh!—that the Councils be *combined* with the Assembly, that the Councils be granted certain political rights, a certain place in the Constitution.

To reconcile, to unite the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat! How simple! What a brilliantly philistine idea!

The only pity is that it was tried in Russia, under Kerensky, by the united Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolu-

tionaries, those petty-bourgeois democrats who imagine themselves socialists.

Anyone who has read Marx and failed to understand that in capitalist society, at every acute moment, in every serious class conflict, the alternative is either the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat, has understood nothing of either the economic or the political doctrines of Marx.

But the brilliantly philistine idea of Hilferding, Kautsky and Co. of peacefully combining the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat requires special examination, if exhaustive treatment is to be given to the economic and political absurdities with which this most remarkable and comical manifesto of February 11 is packed. That will have to be put off for another article.⁸⁴

Moscow, April 15, 1919

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From A Great Beginning

Heroism of the Workers in the Rear. "Communist Subbotniks"

As I have had occasion to point out more than once, among other occasions in the speech I delivered at a session of the Petrograd Soviet on March 12, the dictatorship of the proletariat is not only the use of force against the exploiters, and not even mainly the use of force. The economic foundation of this use of revolutionary force, the guarantee of its effectiveness and success is the fact that the proletariat represents and creates a higher type of social organisation of labour compared with capitalism. This is what is important, this is the source of the strength and the guarantee that the final triumph of communism is inevitable.

The feudal organisation of social labour rested on the discipline of the bludgeon, while the working people, robbed and tyrannised by a handful of landowners, were utterly ignorant and downtrodden. The capitalist organisation of social labour rested on the discipline of hunger, and, notwithstanding all the progress of bourgeois culture and bourgeois democracy, the vast mass of the working people in the most advanced, civilised and democratic republics remained an ignorant and downtrodden mass of wage-slaves or oppressed peasants, robbed and tyrannised by a handful of capitalists. The communist organisation of social labour, the first step towards which is socialism, rests, and will do so more and more as time goes on, on the free and conscious discipline of the working people

themselves who have thrown off the yoke both of the landowners and capitalists.

This new discipline does not drop from the skies, nor is it born from pious wishes; it grows out of the material conditions of large-scale capitalist production, and out of them alone. Without them it is impossible. And the repository, or the vehicle, of these material conditions is a definite historical class, created, organised, united, trained, educated and hardened by large-scale capitalism. This class is the proletariat.

If we translate the Latin, scientific, historico-philosophical term "dictatorship of the proletariat" into simpler language, it means just the following:

Only a definite class, namely, the urban workers and the factory, industrial workers in general, is able to lead the whole mass of the working and exploited people in the struggle to throw off the yoke of capital, in actually carrying it out, in the struggle to maintain and consolidate the victory, in the work of creating the new, socialist social system and in the entire struggle for the complete abolition of classes. (Let us observe in parenthesis that the only scientific distinction between socialism and communism is that the first term implies the first stage of the new society arising out of capitalism, while the second implies the next and higher stage.)

The mistake the "Berne" yellow International⁸⁵ makes is that its leaders accept the class struggle and the leading role of the proletariat only in word and are afraid to think it out to its logical conclusion. They are afraid of that inevitable conclusion which particularly terrifies the bourgeoisie, and which is absolutely unacceptable to them. They are afraid to admit that the dictatorship of the proletariat is *also* a period of class struggle, which is inevitable as long as classes have not been abolished, and which changes in form, being particularly fierce and particularly peculiar in the period immediately following the overthrow of capital. The proletariat does not cease the class struggle after it has captured political power, but continues it until classes are abolished—of course,

under different circumstances, in different form and by different means.

And what does the "abolition of classes" mean? All those who call themselves socialists recognise this as the ultimate goal of socialism, but by no means all give thought to its significance. Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy.

Clearly, in order to abolish classes completely, it is not enough to overthrow the exploiters, the landowners and capitalists, not enough to abolish *their* rights of ownership; it is necessary also to abolish *all* private ownership of the means of production, it is necessary to abolish the distinction between town and country, as well as the distinction between manual workers and brain workers. This requires a very long period of time. In order to achieve this an enormous step forward must be taken in developing the productive forces; it is necessary to overcome the resistance (frequently passive, which is particularly stubborn and particularly difficult to overcome) of the numerous survivals of small-scale production; it is necessary to overcome the enormous force of habit and conservatism which are connected with these survivals.

The assumption that all "working people" are equally capable of doing this work would be an empty phrase, or the illusion of an antediluvian, pre-Marxist socialist; for this ability does not come of itself but grows historically, and grows *only* out of the material conditions of large-scale capitalist production. This ability, at the beginning of the road from capitalism to socialism, is possessed by the

proletariat *alone*. It is capable of fulfilling the gigantic task that confronts it, first, because it is the strongest and most advanced class in civilised societies; secondly, because in the most developed countries it constitutes the majority of the population, and thirdly, because in backward capitalist countries, like Russia, the majority of the population consists of semi-proletarians, i.e., of people who regularly live in a proletarian way part of the year, who regularly earn a part of their means of subsistence as wage-workers in capitalist enterprises.

Those who try to solve the problems involved in the transition from capitalism to socialism on the basis of general talk about liberty, equality, democracy in general, equality of labour democracy, etc. (as Kautsky, Martov and other heroes of the Berne yellow International do), thereby only reveal their petty-bourgeois, philistine nature and ideologically slavishly follow in the wake of the bourgeoisie. The correct solution of this problem can be found only in a concrete study of the specific relations between the specific class which has conquered political power, namely, the proletariat, and the whole non-proletarian, and also semi-proletarian, mass of the working population—relations which do not take shape in fantastically harmonious, "ideal" conditions, but in the real conditions of the frantic resistance of the bourgeoisie which assumes many and diverse forms.

The vast majority of the population—and all the more so of the working population—of any capitalist country, including Russia, have thousands of times experienced, themselves and through their kith and kin, the oppression of capital, the plunder and every sort of tyranny it perpetrates. The imperialist war, i.e., the slaughter of ten million people in order to decide whether British or German capital was to have supremacy in plundering the whole world, has greatly intensified these ordeals, has increased and deepened them, and has made the people realise their meaning. Hence the inevitable sympathy displayed by the vast majority of the population, particularly the working people, for the proletariat, because it is with heroic cour-

age and revolutionary ruthlessness throwing off the yoke of capital, overthrowing the exploiters, suppressing their resistance, and shedding its blood to pave the road for the creation of the new society, in which there will be no room for exploiters.

Great and inevitable as may be their petty-bourgeois vacillations and their tendency to go back to bourgeois "order", under the "wing" of the bourgeoisie, the non-proletarian and semi-proletarian mass of the working population cannot but recognise the moral and political authority of the proletariat, who are not only overthrowing the exploiters and suppressing their resistance, but are building a new and higher social bond, a social discipline, the discipline of class-conscious and united working people, who know no yoke and no authority except the authority of their own unity, of their own, more class-conscious, bold, solid, revolutionary and steadfast vanguard.

In order to achieve victory, in order to build and consolidate socialism, the proletariat must fulfil a twofold or dual task: first, it must, by its supreme heroism in the revolutionary struggle against capital, win over the entire mass of the working and exploited people; it must win them over, organise them and lead them in the struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie and utterly suppress their resistance. Secondly, it must lead the whole mass of the working and exploited people, as well as all the petty-bourgeois groups, on to the road of new economic development, towards the creation of a new social bond, a new labour discipline, a new organisation of labour, which will combine the last word in science and capitalist technology with the mass association of class-conscious workers creating large-scale socialist industry.

The second task is more difficult than the first, for it cannot possibly be fulfilled by single acts of heroic fervour; it requires the most prolonged, most persistent and most difficult mass heroism in *plain, everyday* work. But this task is more essential than the first, because, in the last analysis, the deepest source of strength for victories

over the bourgeoisie and the sole guarantee of the durability and permanence of these victories can only be a new and higher mode of social production, the substitution of large-scale socialist production for capitalist and petty-bourgeois production.

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The State

A Lecture Delivered
at the Sverdlov University
July 11, 1919⁸⁶

Comrades, according to the plan you have adopted and which has been conveyed to me, the subject of today's talk is the state. I do not know how familiar you are already with this subject. If I am not mistaken your courses have only just begun and this is the first time you will be tackling this subject systematically. If that is so, then it may very well happen that in the first lecture on this difficult subject I may not succeed in making my exposition sufficiently clear and comprehensible to many of my listeners. And if this should prove to be the case, I would request you not to be perturbed by the fact, because the question of the state is a most complex and difficult one, perhaps one that more than any other has been confused by bourgeois scholars, writers and philosophers. It should not therefore be expected that a thorough understanding of this subject can be obtained from one brief talk, at a first sitting. After the first talk on this subject you should make a note of the passages which you have not understood or which are not clear to you, and return to them a second, a third and a fourth time, so that what you have not understood may be further supplemented and elucidated later, both by reading and by various lectures and talks. I hope that we may manage to meet once again and that we shall then be able to exchange opinions on all supplementary questions and

see what has remained most unclear. I also hope that in addition to talks and lectures you will devote some time to reading at least a few of the most important works of Marx and Engels. I have no doubt that these most important works are to be found in the lists of books and in the handbooks which are available in your library for the students of the Soviet and Party school; and although, again, some of you may at first be dismayed by the difficulty of the exposition, I must again warn you that you should not let this worry you; what is unclear at a first reading will become clear at a second reading, or when you subsequently approach the question from a somewhat different angle. For I once more repeat that the question is so complex and has been so confused by bourgeois scholars and writers that anybody who desires to study it seriously and master it independently must attack it several times, return to it again and again and consider it from various angles in order to attain a clear, sound understanding of it. Because it is such a fundamental, such a basic question in all politics, and because not only in such stormy and revolutionary times as the present, but even in the most peaceful times, you will come across it every day in any newspaper in connection with any economic or political question it will be all the easier to return to it. Every day, in one context or another, you will be returning to the question: what is the state, what is its nature, what is its significance and what is the attitude of our Party, the party that is fighting for the overthrow of capitalism, the Communist Party—what is its attitude to the state? And the chief thing is that you should acquire, as a result of your reading, as a result of the talks and lectures you will hear on the state, the ability to approach this question independently, since you will be meeting with it on the most diverse occasions, in connection with the most trifling questions, in the most unexpected contexts and in discussions and disputes with opponents. Only when you learn to find your way about independently in this question may you consider yourself sufficiently confirmed in your convictions and able with

sufficient success to defend them against anybody and at any time.

After these brief remarks, I shall proceed to deal with the question itself—what is the state, how did it arise and fundamentally what attitude to the state should be displayed by the party of the working class, which is fighting for the complete overthrow of capitalism—the Communist Party?

I have already said that you are not likely to find another question which has been so confused, deliberately and unwittingly, by representatives of bourgeois science, philosophy, jurisprudence, political economy and journalism, as the question of the state. To this day it is very often confused with religious questions; not only those professing religious doctrines (it is quite natural to expect it of them), but even people who consider themselves free from religious prejudice, very often confuse the specific question of the state with questions of religion and endeavour to build up a doctrine—very often a complex one, with an ideological, philosophical approach and argumentation—which claims that the state is something divine, something supernatural, that it is a certain force by virtue of which mankind has lived, that it is a force of divine origin which confers on people, or can confer on people, or which brings with it something that is not of man, but is given him from without. And it must be said that this doctrine is so closely bound up with the interests of the exploiting classes—the landowners and the capitalists—so serves their interests, has so deeply permeated all the customs, views and science of the gentlemen who represent the bourgeoisie, that you will meet with vestiges of it on every hand, even in the view of the state held by the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, although they are convinced that they can regard the state with sober eyes and reject indignantly the suggestion that they are under the sway of religious prejudices. This question has been so confused and complicated because it affects the interests of the ruling classes more than any other question (yielding place in this respect only to the foundations

of economic science). The doctrine of the state serves to justify social privilege, the existence of exploitation, the existence of capitalism—and that is why it would be the greatest mistake to expect impartiality on this question, to approach it in the belief that people who claim to be scientific can give you a purely scientific view on the subject. In the question of the state, in the doctrine of the state, in the theory of the state, when you have become familiar with it and have gone into it deeply enough, you will always discern the struggle between different classes, a struggle which is reflected or expressed in a conflict of views on the state, in the estimate of the role and significance of the state.

To approach this question as scientifically as possible we must cast at least a fleeting glance back on the history of the state, its emergence and development. The most reliable thing in a question of social science, and one that is most necessary in order really to acquire the habit of approaching this question correctly and not allowing oneself to get lost in the mass of detail or in the immense variety of conflicting opinion—the most important thing if one is to approach this question scientifically is not to forget the underlying historical connection, to examine every question from the standpoint of how the given phenomenon arose in history and what were the principal stages in its development, and, from the standpoint of its development, to examine what it has become today.

I hope that in studying this question of the state you will acquaint yourselves with Engels's book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. This is one of the fundamental works of modern socialism, every sentence of which can be accepted with confidence, in the assurance that it has not been said at random but is based on immense historical and political material. Undoubtedly, not all the parts of this work have been expounded in an equally popular and comprehensible way; some of them presume a reader who already possesses a certain knowledge of history and economics. But I again repeat that you should not be perturbed if on reading this work you do

not understand it at once. Very few people do. But returning to it later, when your interest has been aroused, you will succeed in understanding the greater part, if not the whole of it. I refer to this book because it gives the correct approach to the question in the sense mentioned. It begins with a historical sketch of the origin of the state.

This question, like every other—for example, that of the origin of capitalism, the exploitation of man by man, socialism, how socialism arose, what conditions gave rise to it—can be approached soundly and confidently only if we cast a glance back on the history of its development as a whole. In connection with this problem it should first of all be noted that the state has not always existed. There was a time when there was no state. It appears wherever and whenever a division of society into classes appears, whenever exploiters and exploited appear.

Before the first form of exploitation of man by man arose, the first form of division into classes—slave-owners and slaves—there existed the patriarchal family, or, as it is sometimes called, the *clan* family. (Clan—tribe; at the time people of one kin lived together.) Fairly definite traces of these primitive times have survived in the life of many primitive peoples; and if you take any work whatsoever on primitive civilisation, you will always come across more or less definite descriptions, indications and recollections of the fact that there was a time, more or less similar to primitive communism, when the division of society into slave-owners and slaves did not exist. And in those times there was no state, no special apparatus for the systematic application of force and the subjugation of people by force. It is such an apparatus that is called the state.

In primitive society, when people lived in small family groups and were still at the lowest stages of development, in a condition approximating to savagery—an epoch from which modern, civilised human society is separated by several thousand years—there were yet no signs of the existence of a state. We find the predominance of custom, authority, respect, the power enjoyed by the elders of the

clan; we find this power sometimes accorded to women—the position of women then was not like the downtrodden and oppressed condition of women today—but nowhere do we find a special *category* of people set apart to rule others and who, for the sake and purpose of rule, systematically and permanently have at their disposal a certain apparatus of coercion, an apparatus of violence, such as is represented at the present time, as you all realise, by armed contingents of troops, prisons and other means of subjugating the will of others by force—all that which constitutes the essence of the state.

If we get away from what are known as religious teachings, from the subtleties, philosophical arguments and various opinions advanced by bourgeois scholars, if we get away from these and try to get at real core of the matter, we shall find that the state really does amount to such an apparatus of rule which stands outside society as a whole. When there appears such a special group of men occupied solely with government, and who in order to rule need a special apparatus of coercion to subjugate the will of others by force—prisons, special contingents of men, armies, etc.—then there appears the state.

But there was a time when there was no state, when general ties, the community itself, discipline and the ordering of work were maintained by force of custom and tradition, by the authority or the respect enjoyed by the elders of the clan or by women—who in those times not only frequently enjoyed a status equal to that of men, but not infrequently enjoyed an even higher status—and when there was no special category of persons who were specialists in ruling. History shows that the state as a special apparatus for coercing people arose wherever and whenever there appeared a division of society into classes, that is, a division into groups of people some of which were permanently in a position to appropriate the labour of others, where some people exploited others.

And this division of society into classes must always be clearly borne in mind as a fundamental fact of history. The development of all human societies for thousands of

years, in all countries without exception, reveals a general conformity to law, a regularity and consistency; so that at first we had a society without classes—the original patriarchal, primitive society, in which there were no aristocrats; then we had a society based on slavery—a slave-owning society. The whole of modern, civilised Europe has passed through this stage—slavery ruled supreme two thousand years ago. The vast majority of peoples of the other parts of the world also passed through this stage. Traces of slavery survive to this day among the less developed peoples; you will find the institution of slavery in Africa, for example, at the present time. The division into slave-owners and slaves was the first important class division. The former group not only owned all the means of production—the land and the implements, however poor and primitive they may have been in those times—but also owned people. This group was known as slave-owners, while those who laboured and supplied labour for others were known as slaves.

This form was followed in history by another—feudalism. In the great majority of countries slavery in the course of its development evolved into serfdom. The fundamental division of society was now into feudal lords and peasant serfs. The form of relations between people changed. The slave-owners had regarded the slaves as their property; the law had confirmed this view and regarded the slave as a chattel completely owned by the slave-owner. As far as the peasant serf was concerned, class oppression and dependence remained, but it was not considered that the feudal lord owned the peasants as chattels, but that he was only entitled to their labour, to the obligatory performance of certain services. In practice, as you know, serfdom, especially in Russia where it survived longest of all and assumed the crudest forms, in no way differed from slavery.

Further, with the development of trade, the appearance of the world market and the development of money circulation, a new class arose within feudal society—the capitalist class. From the commodity, the exchange of

commodities and the rise of the power of money, there derived the power of capital. During the eighteenth century, or rather, from the end of the eighteenth century and during the nineteenth century, revolutions took place all over the world. Feudalism was abolished in all the countries of Western Europe. Russia was the last country in which this took place. In 1861 a radical change took place in Russia as well; as a consequence of this one form of society was replaced by another—feudalism was replaced by capitalism, under which division into classes remained, as well as various traces and remnants of serfdom, but fundamentally the division into classes assumed a different form.

The owners of capital, the owners of the land and the owners of the factories in all capitalist countries constituted and still constitute an insignificant minority of the population who have complete command of the labour of the whole people, and, consequently, command, oppress and exploit the whole mass of labourers, the majority of whom are proletarians, wage-workers, who procure their livelihood in the process of production only by the sale of their own worker's hands, their labour-power. With the transition to capitalism, the peasants, who had been disunited and downtrodden in feudal times, were converted partly (the majority) into proletarians, and partly (the minority) into wealthy peasants who themselves hired labourers and who constituted a rural bourgeoisie.

This fundamental fact—the transition of society from primitive forms of slavery to serfdom and finally to capitalism—you must always bear in mind, for only by remembering this fundamental fact, only by examining all political doctrines placed in this fundamental scheme, will you be able properly to appraise these doctrines and understand what they refer to; for each of these great periods in the history of mankind, slave-owning, feudal and capitalist, embraces scores and hundreds of centuries and presents such a mass of political forms, such a variety of political doctrines, opinions and revolutions, that this extreme diversity and immense variety (especially in con-

nection with the political, philosophical and other doctrines of bourgeois scholars and politicians) can be understood only by firmly holding, as to a guiding thread, to this division of society into classes, this change in the forms of class rule, and from this standpoint examining all social questions—economic, political, spiritual, religious, etc.

If you examine the state from the standpoint of this fundamental division, you will find that before the division of society into classes, as I have already said, no state existed. But as the social division into classes arose and took firm root, as class society arose, the state also arose and took firm root. The history of mankind knows scores and hundreds of countries that have passed or are still passing through slavery, feudalism and capitalism. In each of these countries, despite the immense historical changes that have taken place, despite all the political vicissitudes and all the revolutions due to this development of mankind, to the transition from slavery through feudalism to capitalism and to the present world-wide struggle against capitalism, you will always discern the emergence of the state. It has always been a certain apparatus which stood outside society and consisted of a group of people engaged solely, or almost solely, or mainly, in ruling. People are divided into the ruled, and into specialists in ruling, those who rise above society and are called rulers, statesmen. This apparatus, this group of people who rule others, always possesses certain means of coercion, of physical force, irrespective of whether this violence over people is expressed in the primitive club, or in more perfected types of weapons in the epoch of slavery, or in the fire-arms which appeared in the Middle Ages, or, finally, in modern weapons, which in the twentieth century are technical marvels and are based entirely on the latest achievements of modern technology. The methods of violence changed, but whenever there was a state there existed in every society a group of persons who ruled, who commanded, who dominated and who in order to maintain their power possessed an apparatus of physical coercion, an apparatus of violence, with those weapons which cor-

responded to the technical level of the given epoch. And by examining these general phenomena, by asking ourselves why no state existed when there were no classes, when there were no exploiters and exploited, and why it appeared when classes appeared—only in this way shall we find a definite answer to the question of what is the nature and significance of the state.

The state is a machine for maintaining the rule of one class over another. When there were no classes in society, when, before the epoch of slavery, people laboured in primitive conditions of greater equality, in conditions when the productivity of labour was still at its lowest, and when primitive man could barely procure the wherewithal for the crudest and most primitive existence, a special group of people whose function is to rule and to dominate the rest of society, had not and could not yet have emerged. Only when the first form of the division of society into classes appeared, only when slavery appeared, when a certain class of people, by concentrating on the crudest forms of agricultural labour, could produce a certain surplus, when this surplus was not absolutely essential for the most wretched existence of the slave and passed into the hands of the slave-owner, when in this way the existence of this class of slave-owners was secure—then in order that it might take firm root it was necessary for a state to appear.

And it did appear—the slave-owning state, an apparatus which gave the slave-owners power and enabled them to rule over the slaves. Both society and the state were then on a much smaller scale than they are now, they possessed incomparably poorer means of communication—the modern means of communication did not then exist. Mountains, rivers and seas were immeasurably greater obstacles than they are now, and the state took shape within far narrower geographical boundaries. A technically weak state apparatus served a state confined within relatively narrow boundaries and with a narrow range of action. Nevertheless, there did exist an apparatus which compelled the slaves to remain in slavery, which kept one part

of society subjugated to and oppressed by another. It is impossible to compel the greater part of society to work systematically for the other part of society without a permanent apparatus of coercion. So long as there were no classes, there was no apparatus of this sort. When classes appeared, everywhere and always, as the division grew and took firmer hold, there also appeared a special institution—the state. The forms of state were extremely varied. As early as the period of slavery we find diverse forms of the state in the countries that were the most advanced, cultured and civilised according to the standards of the time—for example, in ancient Greece and Rome—which were based entirely on slavery. At that time there was already a difference between monarchy and republic, between aristocracy and democracy. A monarchy is the power of a single person, a republic is the absence of any non-elected authority; an aristocracy is the power of a relatively small minority, a democracy is the power of the people (democracy in Greek literally means the power of the people). All these differences arose in the epoch of slavery. Despite these differences, the state of the slave-owning epoch was a slave-owning state, irrespective of whether it was a monarchy or a republic, aristocratic or democratic.

In every course on the history of ancient times, in any lecture on this subject, you will hear about the struggle which was waged between the monarchical and republican states. But the fundamental fact is that the slaves were not regarded as human beings—not only were they not regarded as citizens, they were not even regarded as human beings. Roman law regarded them as chattels. The law of manslaughter, not to mention the other laws for the protection of the person, did not extend to slaves. It defended only the slave-owners, who were alone recognised as citizens with full rights. But whether a monarchy was instituted or a republic, it was a monarchy of the slave-owners or a republic of the slave-owners. All rights were enjoyed by the slave-owners, while the slave was a chattel in the eyes of the law; and not only could any sort of

violence be perpetrated against a slave, but even the killing of a slave was not considered a crime. Slave-owning republics differed in their internal organisation, there were aristocratic republics and democratic republics. In an aristocratic republic only a small number of privileged persons took part in the elections; in a democratic republic everybody took part—but everybody meant only the slave-owners, that is, everybody except the slaves. This fundamental fact must be borne in mind, because it throws more light than any other on the question of the state and clearly demonstrates the nature of the state.

The state is a machine for the oppression of one class by another, a machine for holding in obedience to one class other, subordinated classes. There are various forms of this machine. The slave-owning state could be a monarchy, an aristocratic republic or even a democratic republic. In fact the forms of government varied extremely, but their essence was always the same: the slaves enjoyed no rights and constituted an oppressed class; they were not regarded as human beings. We find the same thing in the feudal state.

The change in the form of exploitation transformed the slave-owning state into the feudal state. This was of immense importance. In slave-owning society the slave enjoyed no rights whatever and was not regarded as a human being; in feudal society the peasant was bound to the soil. The chief distinguishing feature of serfdom was that the peasants (and at that time the peasants constituted the majority; the urban population was still very small) were considered bound to the land—this is the very basis of “serfdom”. The peasant might work a definite number of days for himself on the plot assigned to him by the landlord; on the other days the peasant serf worked for his lord. The essence of class society remained—society was based on class exploitation. Only the owners of the land could enjoy full rights; the peasants had no rights at all. In practice their condition differed very little from the condition of slaves in the slave-owning state. Nevertheless, a wider road was opened for their emancipation, for the

emancipation of the peasants, since the peasant serf was not regarded as the direct property of the lord. He could work part of his time on his own plot, could, so to speak, belong to himself to some extent; and with the wider opportunities for the development of exchange and trade relations the feudal system steadily disintegrated and the scope of emancipation of the peasantry steadily widened. Feudal society was always more complex than slave society. There was a greater development of trade and industry, which even in those days led to capitalism. In the Middle Ages feudalism predominated. And here too the forms of state varied, here too we find both the monarchy and the republic, although the latter was much more weakly expressed. But always the feudal lord was regarded as the only ruler. The peasant serfs were deprived of absolutely all political rights.

Neither under slavery nor under the feudal system could a small minority of people dominate over the vast majority without coercion. History is full of the constant attempts of the oppressed classes to throw off oppression. The history of slavery contains records of wars of emancipation from slavery which lasted for decades. Incidentally, the name "Spartacist" now adopted by the German Communists—the only German party which is really fighting against the yoke of capitalism—was adopted by them because Spartacus was one of the most prominent heroes of one of the greatest revolts of slaves, which took place about two thousand years ago. For many years the seemingly omnipotent Roman Empire, which rested entirely on slavery, experienced the shocks and blows of a widespread uprising of slaves who armed and united to form a vast army under the leadership of Spartacus. In the end they were defeated, captured and put to torture by the slave-owners. Such civil wars mark the whole history of the existence of class society. I have just mentioned an example of the greatest of these civil wars in the epoch of slavery. The whole epoch of feudalism is likewise marked by constant uprisings of the peasants. For example, in Germany in the Middle Ages the struggle

between the two classes—the landlords and the serfs—assumed wide proportions and was transformed into a civil war of the peasants against the landowners. You are all familiar with similar examples of repeated uprisings of the peasants against the feudal landowners in Russia.

In order to maintain their rule and to preserve their power, the feudal lords had to have an apparatus by which they could unite under their subjugation a vast number of people and subordinate them to certain laws and regulations; and all these laws fundamentally amounted to one thing—the maintenance of the power of the lords over the peasant serfs. And this was the feudal state, which in Russia, for example, or in quite backward Asiatic countries (where feudalism prevails to this day) differed in form—it was either a republic or a monarchy. When the state was a monarchy, the rule of one person was recognised; when it was a republic, the participation of the elected representatives of landowning society was in one degree or another recognised—this was in feudal society. Feudal society represented a division of classes under which the vast majority—the peasant serfs—were completely subjected to an insignificant minority—the owners of the land.

The development of trade, the development of commodity exchange, led to the emergence of a new class—the capitalists. Capital took shape as such at the close of the Middle Ages, when, after the discovery of America, world trade developed enormously, when the quantity of precious metals increased, when silver and gold became the medium of exchange, when money circulation made it possible for individuals to possess tremendous wealth. Silver and gold were recognised as wealth all over the world. The economic power of the landowning class declined and the power of the new class—the representatives of capital—developed. The reconstruction of society was such that all citizens seemed to be equal, the old division into slave-owners and slaves disappeared, all were regarded as equal before the law irrespective of what capital each owned;

whether he owned land as private property, or was a poor man who owned nothing but his labour-power—all were equal before the law. The law protects everybody equally; it protects the property of those who have it from attack by the masses who, possessing no property, possessing nothing but their labour-power, grow steadily impoverished and ruined and become converted into proletarians. Such is capitalist society.

I cannot dwell on it in detail. You will return to this when you come to discuss the Programme of the Party—you will then hear a description of capitalist society. This society advanced against serfdom, against the old feudal system, under the slogan of liberty. But it was liberty for those who owned property. And when feudalism was shattered, which occurred at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century—in Russia it occurred later than in other countries, in 1861—the feudal state was then superseded by the capitalist state, which proclaims liberty for the whole people as its slogan, which declares that it expresses the will of the whole people and denies that it is a class state. And here there developed a struggle between the socialists, who are fighting for the liberty of the whole people, and the capitalist state—a struggle which has led to the creation of the Soviet Socialist Republic and which is going on throughout the world.

To understand the struggle that has been started against world capital, to understand the nature of the capitalist state, we must remember that when the capitalist state advanced against the feudal state it entered the fight under the slogan of liberty. The abolition of feudalism meant liberty for the representatives of the capitalist state and served their purpose, inasmuch as serfdom was breaking down and the peasants had acquired the opportunity of owning as their full property the land which they had purchased for compensation or in part by quit-rent—this did not concern the state: it protected property irrespective of its origin, because the state was founded on private property. The peasants became private owners in all the modern, civilised states. Even when the landowner surren-

dered part of his land to the peasant, the state protected private property, rewarding the landowner by compensation, by letting him take money for the land. The state as it were declared that it would fully preserve private property, and it accorded it every support and protection. The state recognised the property rights of every merchant, industrialist and manufacturer. And this society, based on private property, on the power of capital, on the complete subjection of the propertyless workers and labouring masses of the peasantry, proclaimed that its rule was based on liberty. Combating feudalism, it proclaimed freedom of property and was particularly proud of the fact that the state had ceased, supposedly, to be a class state.

Yet the state continued to be a machine which helped the capitalists to hold the poor peasants and the working class in subjection. But in outward appearance it was free. It proclaimed universal suffrage, and declared through its champions, preachers, scholars and philosophers, that it was not a class state. Even now, when the Soviet Socialist Republics have begun to fight the state, they accuse us of violating liberty, of building a state based on coercion, on the suppression of some by others, whereas they represent a popular, democratic state. And now, when the world socialist revolution has begun, and when the revolution has succeeded in some countries, when the fight against world capital has grown particularly acute, this question of the state has acquired the greatest importance and has become, one might say, the most burning one, the focus of all present-day political questions and political disputes.

Whichever party we take in Russia or in any of the more civilised countries, we find that nearly all political disputes, disagreements and opinions now centre around the conception of the state. Is the state in a capitalist country, in a democratic republic—especially one like Switzerland or the U.S.A.—in the freest democratic republics, an expression of the popular will, the sum total of the general decision of the people, the expression of the national will, and so forth; or is the state a machine that

enables the capitalists of those countries to maintain their power over the working class and the peasantry? That is the fundamental question around which all political disputes all over the world now centre. What do they say about Bolshevism? The bourgeois press abuses the Bolsheviks. You will not find a single newspaper that does not repeat the hackneyed accusation that the Bolsheviks violate popular rule. If our Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries in their simplicity of heart (perhaps it is not simplicity, or perhaps it is the simplicity which the proverb says is worse than robbery) think that they discovered and invented the accusation that the Bolsheviks have violated liberty and popular rule, they are ludicrously mistaken. Today every one of the richest newspapers in the richest countries, which spend tens of millions on their distribution and disseminate bourgeois lies and imperialist policy in tens of millions of copies—every one of these newspapers repeats these basic arguments and accusations against Bolshevism, namely, that the U.S.A., Britain and Switzerland are advanced states based on popular rule, whereas the Bolshevik republic is a state of bandits in which liberty is unknown, and that the Bolsheviks have violated the idea of popular rule and have even gone so far as to disperse the Constituent Assembly.⁸⁷ These terrible accusations against the Bolsheviks are repeated all over the world. These accusations lead us directly to the question—what is the state? In order to understand these accusations, in order to study them and have a fully intelligent attitude towards them, and not to examine them on hearsay but with a firm opinion of our own, we must have a clear idea of what the state is. We have before us capitalist states of every kind and all the theories in defence of them which were created before the war. In order to answer the question properly we must critically examine all these theories and views.

I have already advised you to turn for help to Engels's book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. This book says that every state in which private ownership of the land and means of production exists in

which capital dominates, however democratic it may be, is a capitalist state, a machine used by the capitalists to keep the working class and the poor peasants in subjection; while universal suffrage, a Constituent Assembly, a parliament are merely a form, a sort of promissory note, which does not change the real state of affairs.

The forms of domination of the state may vary: capital manifests its power in one way where one form exists, and in another way where another form exists—but essentially the power is in the hands of capital, whether there are voting qualifications or some other rights or not, or whether the republic is a democratic one or not—in fact, the more democratic it is the cruder and more cynical is the rule of capitalism. One of the most democratic republics in the world is the United States of America, yet nowhere (and those who have been there since 1905 probably know it) is the power of capital, the power of a handful of multimillionaires over the whole of society, so crude and so openly corrupt as in America. Once capital exists, it dominates the whole of society, and no democratic republic, no franchise can change its nature.

The democratic republic and universal suffrage were an immense progressive advance as compared with feudalism: they have enabled the proletariat to achieve its present unity and solidarity, to form those firm and disciplined ranks which are waging a systematic struggle against capital. There was nothing even approximately resembling this among the peasant serfs, not to speak of the slaves. The slaves, as we know, revolted, rioted, started civil wars, but they could never create a class-conscious majority and parties to lead the struggle, they could not clearly realise what their aims were, and even in the most revolutionary moments of history they were always pawns in the hands of the ruling classes. The bourgeois republic, parliament, universal suffrage—all represent great progress from the standpoint of the world development of society. Mankind moved towards capitalism, and it was capitalism alone which, thanks to urban culture, enabled

the oppressed proletarian class to become conscious of itself and to create the world working-class movement, the millions of workers organised all over the world in parties—the socialist parties which are consciously leading the struggle of the masses. Without parliamentarism, without an electoral system, this development of the working class would have been impossible. That is why all these things have acquired such great importance in the eyes of the broad masses of people. That is why a radical change seems to be so difficult. It is not only the conscious hypocrites, scientists and priests that uphold and defend the bourgeois lie that the state is free and that it is its mission to defend the interests of all; so also do a large number of people who sincerely adhere to the old prejudices and who cannot understand the transition from the old, capitalist society to socialism. Not only people who are directly dependent on the bourgeoisie, not only those who live under the yoke of capital or who have been bribed by capital (there are a large number of all sorts of scientists, artists, priests, etc., in the service of capital), but even people who are simply under the sway of the prejudice of bourgeois liberty, have taken up arms against Bolshevism all over the world because when the Soviet Republic was founded it rejected these bourgeois lies and openly declared: you say your state is free, whereas in reality, as long as there is private property, your state, even if it is a democratic republic, is nothing but a machine used by the capitalists to suppress the workers, and the freer the state, the more clearly is this expressed. Examples of this are Switzerland in Europe and the United States in America. Nowhere does capital rule so cynically and ruthlessly, and nowhere is it so clearly apparent, as in these countries, although they are democratic republics, no matter how prettily they are painted and notwithstanding all the talk about labour democracy and the equality of all citizens. The fact is that in Switzerland and the United States capital dominates, and every attempt of the workers to achieve the slightest real improvement in their condition is immediately met by civil war. There are fewer soldiers, a smaller standing army,

in these countries—Switzerland has a militia and every Swiss has a gun at home, while in America there was no standing army until quite recently—and so when there is a strike the bourgeoisie arms, hires soldiery and suppresses the strike; and nowhere is this suppression of the working-class movement accompanied by such ruthless severity as in Switzerland and the U.S.A., and nowhere does the influence of capital in parliament manifest itself as powerfully as in these countries. The power of capital is everything, the stock exchange is everything, while parliament and elections are marionettes, puppets. . . . But the eyes of the workers are being opened more and more, and the idea of Soviet government is spreading farther and farther afield, especially after the bloody carnage we have just experienced. The necessity for a relentless war on the capitalists is becoming clearer and clearer to the working class.

Whatever guise a republic may assume, however democratic it may be, if it is a bourgeois republic, if it retains private ownership of the land and factories, and if private capital keeps the whole of society in wage-slavery, that is, if the republic does not carry out what is proclaimed in the Programme of our Party and in the Soviet Constitution, then this state is a machine for the suppression of some people by others. And we shall place this machine in the hands of the class that is to overthrow the power of capital. We shall reject all the old prejudices about the state meaning universal equality—for that is a fraud: as long as there is exploitation there cannot be equality. The landowner cannot be the equal of the worker, or the hungry man the equal of the full man. This machine called the state, before which people bowed in superstitious awe, believing the old tales that it means popular rule, tales which the proletariat declares to be a bourgeois lie—this machine the proletariat will smash. So far we have deprived the capitalists of this machine and have taken it over. We shall use this machine, or bludgeon, to destroy all exploitation. And when the possibility of exploitation no longer exists anywhere in the world, when there are

no longer owners of land and owners of factories, and when there is no longer a situation in which some gorge while others starve, only when the possibility of this no longer exists shall we consign this machine to the scrap-heap. Then there will be no state and no exploitation. Such is the view of our Communist Party. I hope that we shall return to this subject in subsequent lectures, return to it again and again.

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Collected Works,
Vol. 29, pp. 470-88

Soviet Power and the Status of Women

The second anniversary of Soviet power is an occasion for taking stock of what has been done during this period and for reflecting on the significance and the aims of the revolution that has been accomplished.

The bourgeoisie and its supporters charge us with having violated democracy. We, on the other hand, assert that the Soviet revolution has given an unprecedented impulse to the development of democracy in breadth and in depth, democracy, that is, for the working people oppressed by capitalism, democracy for the overwhelming majority of the people, socialist democracy (for the working people), as distinct from bourgeois democracy (for the exploiters, for the capitalists, for the rich).

Who is right?

To give proper thought to this question and achieve a deeper understanding of it one must take stock of the experience of these two years and make better preparations for further development.

The status of women makes clear in the most striking fashion the difference between bourgeois and socialist democracy and furnishes a most effective reply to the question posed.

In a bourgeois republic (i.e., where there is private ownership of land, factories, shares, etc.), be it the most democratic republic, women have never had rights fully equal to those of men, *anywhere in the world, in any one*

of the more advanced countries. And this despite the fact that more than 125 years have passed since the great French (bourgeois-democratic) Revolution.

In words bourgeois democracy promises equality and freedom, but in practice *not a single* bourgeois republic, even the more advanced, has granted women (half the human race) and men complete equality in the eyes of the law, or delivered women from dependence on and the oppression of the male.

Bourgeois democracy is the democracy of pompous phrases, solemn words, lavish promises and high-sounding slogans about *freedom and equality*, but in practice all this cloaks the lack of freedom and the inequality of women, the lack of freedom and the inequality for the working and exploited people.

Soviet or socialist democracy sweeps away these pompous but false words and declares ruthless war on the hypocrisy of "democrats", landowners, capitalists and farmers with bursting bins, who are piling up wealth by selling surplus grain to the starving workers at profiteering prices.

Down with this foul lie! There is no "equality", nor can there be, of oppressed and oppressor, exploited and exploiter. There is no real "freedom", nor can there be, so long as women are handicapped by men's legal privileges, so long as there is no freedom for the worker from the yoke of capital, no freedom for the labouring peasant from the yoke of the capitalist, landowner and merchant.

Let the liars and the hypocrites, the obtuse and the blind, the bourgeois and their supporters, try to deceive the people with talk about freedom in general, about equality in general and about democracy in general.

We say to the workers and peasants—tear the mask from these liars, open the eyes of the blind. Ask them:

Is there equality of the two sexes?

Which nation is the equal of which?

Which class is the equal of which?

Freedom from what yoke or from the yoke of which class? Freedom for which class?

He who speaks about politics, democracy and freedom, about equality, about socialism, *without posing* these questions, without giving them priority, who does not fight against hushing them up, concealing and blunting them, is the worst enemy of the working people, a wolf in sheep's clothing, the rabid opponent of the workers and peasants, a lackey of the landowners, the tsars and the capitalists.

In the course of two years of Soviet power in one of the most backward countries of Europe more has been done to emancipate woman, to make her the equal of the "strong" sex, than has been done during the past 130 years by all the advanced, enlightened, "democratic" republics of the world taken together.

Education, culture, civilisation, freedom—all these high-sounding words are accompanied in all the capitalist, bourgeois republics of the world with incredibly foul, disgustingly vile, bestially crude laws that make women unequal in marriage and divorce, that make the child born out of wedlock and the "legally born" child unequal and that give privileges to the male and humiliate and degrade womankind.

The yoke of capital, the oppression of "sacred private property", the despotism of philistine obtuseness, the avarice of the small property-owner—these are the things that have prevented the most democratic bourgeois republics from abolishing these foul and filthy laws.

The Soviet Republic, the republic of workers and peasants, wiped out these laws at one stroke and did not leave standing a single stone of the edifice of bourgeois lies and bourgeois hypocrisy.

Down with this lie! Down with the liars who speak about freedom and equality *for all*, while there is an oppressed sex, oppressing classes, private ownership of capital and shares and people with bursting bins who use their surplus grain to enslave the hungry. Instead of freedom for all, instead of equality for all, let there be *struggle* against the oppressors and exploiters, *let the opportunity* to oppress and exploit *be abolished*. That is our slogan!

Freedom and equality for the oppressed sex!

Freedom and equality for the workers and labouring peasants!

Struggle against the oppressors, struggle against the capitalists, struggle against the kulak profiteers!

This is our fighting slogan, this is our proletarian truth, the truth of the fight against capital, the truth that we hurl in the face of the world of capital with its honeyed, hypocritical and pompous phrases about freedom and equality *in general*, about freedom and equality *for all*.

And it is because we have laid bare this hypocrisy, because, with revolutionary vigour, we are ensuring freedom and full rights for the oppressed working people, against the oppressors, against the capitalists, against the kulaks—precisely because of this Soviet rule has become so dear to the workers of the whole world.

It is because of this, the sympathies of the working masses, the sympathies of the oppressed and exploited in all countries of the world are with us on this occasion of the second anniversary of Soviet rule.

Because of this, on the occasion of the second anniversary of Soviet rule, despite the famine and cold, despite all the suffering caused by the imperialists' invasion of the Russian Soviet Republic, we are fully convinced of the justness of our cause, firmly convinced of the inevitable victory of Soviet power on a world scale.

Pravda No. 249,
November 6, 1919

Collected Works,
Vol. 30, pp. 120-23

From "Left-Wing" Communism— an Infantile Disorder⁸⁸

VI

Should Revolutionaries Work in Reactionary Trade Unions?

The German "Lefts" consider that, as far as they are concerned, the reply to this question is an unqualified negative. In their opinion, declamations and angry outcries (such as uttered by K. Horner in a particularly "solid" and particularly stupid manner) against "reactionary" and "counter-revolutionary" trade unions are sufficient "proof" that it is unnecessary and even inexcusable for revolutionaries and Communists to work in yellow, social-chauvinist, compromising and counter-revolutionary trade unions of the Legien type.

However firmly the German "Lefts" may be convinced of the revolutionism of such tactics, the latter are in fact fundamentally wrong, and contain nothing but empty phrases.

To make this clear, I shall begin with our own experience, in keeping with the general plan of the present pamphlet, which is aimed at applying to Western Europe whatever is universally practicable, significant and relevant in the history and the present-day tactics of Bolshevism.

In Russia today, the connection between leaders, party, class and masses, as well as the attitude of the dictatorship of the proletariat and its party to the trade unions, are concretely as follows: the dictatorship is exercised by the proletariat organised in the Soviets; the proletariat is guided by the Communist Party of Bolsheviks, which, accord-

ing to the figures of the latest Party Congress (April 1920), has a membership of 611,000. The membership varied greatly both before and after the October Revolution, and used to be much smaller, even in 1918 and 1919.⁸⁹ We are apprehensive of an excessive growth of the Party, because careerists and charlatans, who deserve only to be shot, inevitably do all they can to insinuate themselves into the ranks of the ruling party. The last time we opened wide the doors of the Party—to workers and peasants only—was when (in the winter of 1919) Yudenich was within a few versts of Petrograd, and Denikin was in Orel (about 350 versts from Moscow), i.e., when the Soviet Republic was in mortal danger, and when adventurers, careerists, charlatans and unreliable persons generally could not possibly count on making a profitable career (and had more reason to expect the gallows and torture) by joining the Communists. The Party, which holds annual congresses (the most recent on the basis of one delegate per 1,000 members), is directed by a Central Committee of nineteen elected at the Congress, while the current work in Moscow has to be carried on by still smaller bodies, known as the Organising Bureau and the Political Bureau, which are elected at plenary meetings of the Central Committee, five members of the Central Committee to each bureau. This, it would appear, is a full-fledged "oligarchy". No important political or organisational question is decided by any state institution in our republic without the guidance of the Party's Central Committee.

In its work, the Party relies directly on the *trade unions*, which, according to the data of the last congress (April 1920), now have a membership of over four million and are formally *non-Party*. Actually, all the directing bodies of the vast majority of the unions, and primarily, of course, of the all-Russia general trade union centre or bureau (the All-Russia Central Council of Trade Unions), are made up of Communists and carry out all the directives of the Party. Thus, on the whole, we have a formally non-communist, flexible and relatively wide and very powerful proletarian apparatus, by means of which the

Party is closely linked-up with the *class* and the *masses*, and by means of which, under the leadership of the Party, the *class dictatorship* is exercised. Without close contacts with the trade unions, and without their energetic support and devoted efforts, not only in economic, *but also in military* affairs, it would of course have been impossible for us to govern the country and to maintain the dictatorship for two and a half months, let alone two and a half years. In practice, these very close contacts naturally call for highly complex and diversified work in the form of propaganda, agitation, timely and frequent conferences, not only with the leading trade union workers, but with influential trade union workers generally; they call for a determined struggle against the Mensheviks, who still have a certain though very small following to whom they teach all kinds of counter-revolutionary machinations, ranging from an ideological defence of (*bourgeois*) democracy and the preaching that the trade unions should be "independent" (independent of proletarian state power!) to sabotage of proletarian discipline, etc., etc.

We consider that contacts with the "masses" through the trade unions are not enough. In the course of our revolution, practical activities have given rise to such institutions as *non-Party workers' and peasants' conferences*, and we strive by every means to support, develop and extend this institution in order to be able to observe the temper of the masses, come closer to them, meet their requirements, promote the best among them to state posts, etc. Under a recent decree on the transformation of the People's Commissariat of State Control into the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, non-Party conferences of this kind have been empowered to select members of the State Control to carry out various kinds of investigations, etc.

Then, of course, all the work of the Party is carried on through the Soviets, which embrace the working masses, irrespective of occupation. The district congresses of Soviets are *democratic* institutions, the like of which even the best of the democratic republics of the bourgeois world have never known; through these congresses (whose pro-

ceedings the Party endeavours to follow with the closest attention), as well as by continually appointing class-conscious workers to various posts in the rural districts, the proletariat exercises its role of leader of the peasantry, gives effect to the dictatorship of the urban proletariat, wages a systematic struggle against the rich, bourgeois, exploiting and profiteering peasantry, etc.

Such is the general mechanism of the proletarian state power viewed "from above", from the standpoint of the practical implementation of the dictatorship. We hope that the reader will understand why the Russian Bolshevik, who has known this mechanism for twenty-five years and has seen it develop out of small, illegal and underground circles, cannot help regarding all this talk about "from above" or "from below", about the dictatorship of leaders or the dictatorship of the masses, etc., as ridiculous and childish nonsense, something like discussing whether a man's left leg or right arm is of greater use to him.

We cannot but regard as equally ridiculous and childish nonsense the pompous, very learned, and frightfully revolutionary disquisitions of the German Lefts to the effect that Communists cannot and should not work in reactionary trade unions, that it is permissible to turn down such work, that it is necessary to withdraw from the trade unions and create a brand-new and immaculate "Workers' Union" invented by very pleasant (and, probably, for the most part very youthful) Communists, etc., etc.

Capitalism inevitably leaves socialism the legacy, on the one hand, of the old trade and craft distinctions among the workers, distinctions evolved in the course of centuries; on the other hand, trade unions, which only very slowly, in the course of years and years, can and will develop into broader industrial unions with less of the craft union about them (embracing entire industries, and not only crafts, trades and occupations), and later proceed, through these industrial unions, to eliminate the division of labour among people, to educate and school people, give them *all-round development and an all-round training*, so that they *are able to do everything*. Communism is ad-

vancing and must advance towards that goal, and *will reach* it, but only after very many years. To attempt in practice, today, to anticipate this future result of a fully developed, fully stabilised and constituted, fully comprehensive and mature communism would be like trying to teach higher mathematics to a child of four.

We can (and must) begin to build socialism, not with abstract human material, or with human material specially prepared by us, but with the human material bequeathed to us by capitalism. True, that is no easy matter, but no other approach to this task is serious enough to warrant discussion.

The trade unions were a tremendous step forward for the working class in the early days of capitalist development, inasmuch as they marked a transition from the workers' disunity and helplessness to the *rudiments* of class organisation. When the *revolutionary party of the proletariat*, the *highest* form of proletarian class organisation, began to take shape (and the Party will not merit the name until it learns to weld the leaders into one indivisible whole with the class and the masses) the trade unions inevitably began to reveal *certain* reactionary features, a certain craft narrow-mindedness, a certain tendency to be non-political, a certain inertness, etc. However, the development of the proletariat did not, and could not, proceed anywhere in the world otherwise than through the trade unions, through reciprocal action between them and the party of the working class. The proletariat's conquest of political power is a gigantic step forward for the proletariat as a class, and the Party must more than ever and in a new way, not only in the old, educate and guide the trade unions, at the same time bearing in mind that they are and will long remain an indispensable "school of communism" and a preparatory school that trains proletarians to exercise their dictatorship, an indispensable organisation of the workers for the gradual transfer of the management of the whole economic life of the country to the working class (and not to the separate trades), and later to all the working people.

In the sense mentioned above, a *certain* "reactionism" in the trade unions is *inevitable* under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Not to understand this means a complete failure to understand the fundamental conditions of the *transition* from capitalism to socialism. It would be egregious folly to fear *this* "reactionism" or to try to *evade* or leap over it, for it would mean fearing that function of the proletarian vanguard which consists in training, educating, enlightening and drawing into the new life the most backward strata and masses of the working class and the peasantry. On the other hand, it would be a still graver error to postpone the achievement of the dictatorship of the proletariat until a time when there will not be a single worker with a narrow-minded craft outlook, or with craft and craft-union prejudices. The art of politics (and the Communist's correct understanding of his tasks) consists in correctly gauging the conditions and the moment when the vanguard of the proletariat can successfully assume power, when it is able—during and after the seizure of power—to win adequate support from sufficiently broad strata of the working class and of the non-proletarian working masses, and when it is able thereafter to maintain, consolidate and extend its rule by educating, training and attracting ever broader masses of the working people.

Further. In countries more advanced than Russia, a certain reactionism in the trade unions has been and was bound to be manifested in a far greater measure than in our country. Our Mensheviks found support in the trade unions (and to some extent still do so in a small number of unions), as a result of the latter's craft narrow-mindedness, craft selfishness and opportunism. The Mensheviks of the West have acquired a much firmer footing in the trade unions; there the *craft-union, narrow-minded, selfish, case-hardened, covetous and petty-bourgeois "labour-aristocracy", imperialist-minded and imperialist-corrupted*, has developed into a much stronger section than in our country. That is incontestable. The struggle against the Gomperses, and against the Jouhaux, Hendersons, Merheims, Legiens and Co. in Western Europe is much more

difficult than the struggle against our Mensheviks, who are an *absolutely homogeneous* social and political type. This struggle must be waged ruthlessly, and it must unfailingly be brought—as we brought it—to a point when all the incorrigible leaders of opportunism and social-chauvinism are completely discredited and driven out of the trade unions. Political power cannot be captured (and the attempt to capture it should not be made) until the struggle has reached a *certain* stage. This "certain stage" will be *different* in different countries and in different circumstances; it can be correctly gauged only by thoughtful, experienced and knowledgeable political leaders of the proletariat in each particular country. (In Russia the elections to the Constituent Assembly in November 1917, a few days after the proletarian revolution of October 25, 1917, were one of the criteria of the success of this struggle. In these elections the Mensheviks were utterly defeated; they received 700,000 votes—1,400,000 if the vote in Transcaucasia is added—as against 9,000,000 votes polled by the Bolsheviks. See my article, "The Constituent Assembly Elections and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat",* in the *Communist International*⁹⁰ No. 7-8.)

We are waging a struggle against the "labour aristocracy" in the name of the masses of the workers and in order to win them over to our side; we are waging the struggle against the opportunist and social-chauvinist leaders in order to win the working class over to our side. It would be absurd to forget this most elementary and most self-evident truth. Yet it is this very absurdity that the German "Left" Communists perpetrate when, *because* of the reactionary and counter-revolutionary character of the trade union *top leadership*, they jump to the conclusion that . . . we must withdraw from the trade unions, refuse to work in them, and create new and *artificial* forms of labour organisation! This is so unpardonable a blunder that it is tantamount to the greatest service Communists could render the bourgeoisie. Like all the opportunist,

* See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, pp. 253-75.—Ed.

social-chauvinist, and Kautskyite trade union leaders, our Mensheviks are nothing but "agents of the bourgeoisie in the working-class movement" (as we have always said the Mensheviks are), or "labour lieutenants of the capitalist class", to use the splendid and profoundly true expression of the followers of Daniel De Leon in America. To refuse to work in the reactionary trade unions means leaving the insufficiently developed or backward masses of workers under the influence of the reactionary leaders, the agents of the bourgeoisie, the labour aristocrats, or "workers who have become completely bourgeois" (cf. Engels's letter to Marx in 1858 about the British workers⁹¹).

This ridiculous "theory" that Communists should not work in reactionary trade unions reveals with the utmost clarity the frivolous attitude of the "Left" Communists towards the question of influencing the "masses", and their misuse of clamour about the "masses". If you want to help the "masses" and win the sympathy and support of the "masses", you should not fear difficulties, or pinpricks, chicanery, insults and persecution from the "leaders" (who, being opportunists and social-chauvinists, are in most cases directly or indirectly connected with the bourgeoisie and the police), but must absolutely *work wherever the masses are to be found*. You must be capable of any sacrifice, of overcoming the greatest obstacles, in order to carry on agitation and propaganda systematically, perseveringly, persistently and patiently in those institutions, societies and associations—even the most reactionary—in which proletarian or semi-proletarian masses are to be found. The trade unions and the workers' cooperatives (the latter sometimes, at least) are the very organisations in which the masses are to be found. According to figures quoted in the Swedish paper *Folkets Dagblad Politiken*⁹² of March 10, 1920, the trade union membership in Great Britain increased from 5,500,000 at the end of 1917 to 6,600,000 at the end of 1918, an increase of 19 per cent. Towards the close of 1919, the membership was estimated at 7,500,000. I have not got the corresponding figures for France and Germany to hand, but absolutely incontestable and gener-

ally known facts testify to a rapid rise in the trade union membership in these countries too.

These facts make crystal clear something that is confirmed by thousands of other symptoms, namely, that class-consciousness and the desire for organisation are growing among the proletarian masses, among the rank and file, among the backward elements. Millions of workers in Great Britain, France and Germany are *for the first time* passing from a complete lack of organisation to the elementary, lowest, simplest, and (to those still thoroughly imbued with bourgeois-democratic prejudices) most easily comprehensible form of organisation, namely, the trade unions; yet the revolutionary but imprudent Left Communists stand by, crying out "the masses", "the masses!" but *refusing to work within the trade unions*, on the pretext that they are "reactionary", and invent a brand-new, immaculate little "Workers' Union", which is guiltless of bourgeois-democratic prejudices and innocent of craft or narrow-minded craft-union sins, a union which, they claim, will be (!) a broad organisation. "Recognition of the Soviet system and the dictatorship" will be the *only* (!) condition of membership. (See the passage quoted above.)

It would be hard to imagine any greater ineptitude or greater harm to the revolution than that caused by the "Left" revolutionaries! Why, if we in Russia today, after two and a half years of unprecedented victories over the bourgeoisie of Russia and the Entente, were to make "recognition of the dictatorship" a condition of trade union membership, we would be doing a very foolish thing, damaging our influence among the masses, and helping the Mensheviks. The task devolving on Communists is to *convince* the backward elements, to work *among* them, and not to *fence themselves off* from them with artificial and childish "Left" slogans.

There can be no doubt that the Gomperses, the Hendersons, the Jouhaux and the Legiens are very grateful to those "Left" revolutionaries who, like the German opposition "on principle" (heaven preserve us from such "principles"!), or like some of the revolutionaries in the Ameri-

can Industrial Workers of the World,⁹³ advocate quitting the reactionary trade unions and refusing to work in them. These men, the "leaders" of opportunism, will no doubt resort to every device of bourgeois diplomacy and to the aid of bourgeois governments, the clergy, the police and the courts, to keep Communists out of the trade unions, oust them by every means, make their work in the trade unions as unpleasant as possible, and insult, bait and persecute them. We must be able to stand up to all this, agree to make any sacrifice, and even—if need be—to resort to various stratagems, artifices and illegal methods, to evasions and subterfuges, as long as we get into the trade unions, remain in them, and carry on communist work within them at all costs. Under tsarism we had no "legal opportunities" whatsoever until 1905. However, when Zubatov, agent of the secret police, organised Black-Hundred workers' assemblies and workingmen's societies for the purpose of trapping revolutionaries and combating them, we sent members of our Party to these assemblies and into these societies (I personally remember one of them, Comrade Babushkin, a leading St. Petersburg factory worker, shot by order of the tsar's generals in 1906). They established contacts with the masses, were able to carry on their agitation, and succeeded in wresting workers from the influence of Zubatov's agents.* Of course, in Western Europe, which is imbued with most deep-rooted legalistic, constitutionalist and bourgeois-democratic prejudices, this is more difficult of achievement. However, it can and must be carried out, and systematically at that.

The Executive Committee of the Third International must, in my opinion, positively condemn, and call upon the next congress of the Communist International to condemn both the policy of refusing to work in reactionary trade unions in general (explaining in detail why such

* The Gomperses, Hendersons, Jouhaux and Legiens are nothing but Zubatovs, differing from our Zubatov only in their European garb and polish, and the civilised, refined and democratically suave manner of conducting their despicable policy.

refusal is unwise, and what extreme harm it does to the cause of the proletarian revolution) and, in particular, the line of conduct of some members of the Communist Party of Holland, who—whether directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly, wholly or partly, it does not matter—have supported this erroneous policy. The Third International must break with the tactics of the Second International; it must not evade or play down points at issue, but must pose them in a straightforward fashion. The whole truth has been put squarely to the "Independents" (the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany)⁹⁴; the whole truth must likewise be put squarely to the "Left" Communists.

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Notes

- ¹ *Black Hundreds*—monarchist gangs organised by the tsarist police to fight the revolutionary movement in Russia. p. 7
- ² The Lena Goldfields were owned by British capitalists, and their partners were Russian capitalists, including members of the tsar's family. On April 4 (17), 1912, the tsarist police opened fire on a peaceful demonstration of striking Lena Goldfields workers, killing 270 and injuring 150. In reply to the bloody Lena events protest demonstrations, meetings and strikes involving hundreds of thousands of workers took place all over the country. p. 8
- ³ *Cadets (Constitutional-Democratic Party)*—the leading party of the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie in Russia, founded in October 1905. Its membership included representatives of the bourgeoisie, the landowners and bourgeois intellectuals. The Cadets called themselves the "people's freedom" party, but in practice tried to effect a compromise with the autocracy to preserve tsarism as a constitutional monarchy. During the First World War they supported the predatory policy of the tsarist government. After the bourgeois-democratic revolution of February 1917 the party acquired a leading position in the bourgeois Provisional Government as the result of an agreement with the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik leadership of the Petrograd Soviet; they pursued a counter-revolutionary policy. After the Great October Socialist Revolution the Cadets took part in all armed counter-revolutionary acts and in the campaigns of the interventionists. When the interventionist and whiteguard armies were routed they fled abroad and continued their anti-Soviet activities. p. 8

⁴ *Cultural-national autonomy*—an opportunist programme on the national question proposed in the 1890s by Austrian Social-Democrats Otto Bauer and Karl Renner. The programme consisted essentially in that in a given country people of the same nationality, irrespective of the part of the country where they lived, should form an autonomous national union to whose jurisdiction the state should transfer the schools (separate schools for children of different nationalities) and other branches of education and culture. Had this programme been implemented it would have resulted in strengthening the influence of the clergy and reactionary nationalist ideology in every national group and would have impeded the organisation of the working class by deepening the division of the workers according to nationalities. In Russia the slogan of cultural-national autonomy was supported by the liquidators, Bundists and Georgian Mensheviks.

Lenin sharply criticised the slogan of cultural-national autonomy in a number of articles and showed that it was based on an idea that was thoroughly bourgeois and thoroughly false, namely, the idea of "securing the separation of all nations from one another by means of a special state institution" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 20, p. 35). p. 8

- ⁵ This article exposes the Left-opportunist, non-Marxist and sectarian views of the so-called *imperialist Economists*—representatives of a Left-opportunist trend that arose among the Social-Democrats during the First World War. Like the Economists in the Russian Social-Democratic movement, who asserted in 1894-1902 that there was no need for the working class to wage a political struggle, the struggle for democracy, the "imperialist Economists" distorted the Marxist conception of imperialism and rejected the need for the struggle for democracy in conditions of monopoly capitalism, the slogan of the right of nations to self-determination, and advocated a semi-anarchist attitude towards the state. Such was the stand taken by Y. Pyatakov, N. Bukharin, Y. Bosh and a number of Left Social-Democrats in Holland, Poland, Germany, the U.S.A. and the Scandinavian countries.
- Lenin called "imperialist Economism" a parody of Marxism and described it as unadulterated dogmatism and sectarianism in the international socialist movement. p. 9
- ⁶ Lenin wrote his book *The State and Revolution* while in hiding (in Razliv Station and in Helsingfors) in August-September 1917. It was the result of a vast amount of research done by Lenin in a relatively short time, mainly in January and February 1917. p. 11
- ⁷ *Die Neue Zeit (New Times)*—theoretical magazine of the German Social-Democratic Party published in Stuttgart from 1883 to 1923. p. 11

⁸ See Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme" in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1976, p. 26.

The Gotha Programme is also quoted on pages 13, 14, 20, 21, 22 and 23 of this pamphlet (ibid., pp. 26, 17 and 19). p. 13

⁹ See Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1976, p. 126. p. 14

¹⁰ See Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1976, p. 221. p. 16

¹¹ This refers to Mikhail Ivanovich Tugan-Baranovsky. p. 22

¹² *Shylock*—a character from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*; an avaricious usurer who demanded a pound of his debtor's flesh which the latter was liable to forfeit. p. 25

¹³ The reference is to *Ocherki Bursy* by N. G. Pomyalovsky. p. 25

¹⁴ *Cossacks*—originally, a free people formed of serf peasants who had fled from feudal bondage, and urban poor. Settled in the border regions of the Russian state (the Don, Yaik, and Dnieper).

By the eighteenth century, the Cossacks had become farmers who performed military services for the state on favourable terms. They formed special units. The autocracy also used them to fight the revolutionary movement. p. 32

¹⁵ *Officer cadets*—students of officer-training schools in tsarist Russia. p. 32

¹⁶ *Committee of Salvation (Committee of Public Safety)* was set up on October 25 (November 7), 1917 in Moscow to fight the Soviets, and led the counter-revolutionary revolt of officer cadets which broke out on October 28 (November 10). The revolt was crushed on November 2 (15), and the Committee capitulated to the Moscow Revolutionary Military Committee. p. 32

¹⁷ *Constituent Assembly* was convened on January 5, 1918. Owing to the elections having been held according to the lists drawn up prior to the October Revolution, the composition of the Assembly reflected a past stage in the country's development when representatives of the Menshevik, Socialist-Revolutionary and Cadet parties had been in power. This created a tremendous difference between the will of the majority of the people as expressed by the establishment of Soviet power and the Soviet decrees, and the policy pursued by that part of the Constituent Assembly led by the S.R.s, Mensheviks and Cadets, who represented the interests of the bourgeoisie and the kulaks. The Constituent Assembly was dis-

solved by order of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on January 6 (19), 1918, after having refused to discuss the Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People and to approve the decrees adopted at the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets on peace, land and the transfer of power to the Soviets. p. 35

¹⁸ *Socialist-Revolutionaries (S.R.s)*—the name of the petty-bourgeois party that took shape in Russia in late 1901 and early 1902 as a result of the merging of various Narodnik groups and circles. The S.R.s did not recognise the class distinctions between the proletarians and the petty proprietors, they ignored the class differentiation and the contradictions within the peasantry and rejected the idea of the guiding role of the proletariat in the revolution.

Their tactics of individual terrorism, advocated as the chief means of struggle against the autocracy, was greatly detrimental to the revolutionary movement and hampered the organisation of the masses for the revolutionary struggle.

The agrarian programme of the S.R.s envisaged the abolition of private property in land; the land was to be transferred to the village communes on the basis of the labour principle of equalitarian tenure, and also the development of various co-operatives.

There was nothing socialist in this programme, which the S.R.s termed "socialisation of the land" since the abolition of private property only in land, as Lenin showed, would not abolish the rule of capital and would not deliver the masses from impoverishment. The demand for the abolition of landed proprietorship was a real, historically progressive measure in the S.-R. agrarian programme since this demand expressed the interests and aspirations of the peasants during the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

The class differentiation of the peasantry led, in the final analysis, to the ideological and political instability of the S.R.s, to the confusion of their efforts at organisation, and to their constant wavering between the liberal bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

In the years of the first Russian revolution (1905-07) the S.-R. party split: its Right wing formed a legal Trudovik Popular Socialist Party close to the Cadets, while its Left wing founded a semi-anarchist union of "maximalists".

After the victory of the February bourgeois-democratic revolution in 1917, the S.R.s together with the Mensheviks and the Cadets were the mainstay of the counter-revolutionary bourgeois-landowner Provisional Government, and their leaders (Kerensky, Avksentyev and Chernov) were members of it.

At the end of November 1917, the Left wing of the party formed the independent party of Left S.R.s. In an attempt to preserve their influence over the mass of the peasants, the Left S.R.s formally recognised Soviet power and came to an agreement with the Bolsheviks, but as the class struggle developed in the countryside they joined the struggle against Soviet power.

During the period of foreign intervention and civil war, the S.R.s carried on subversive, counter-revolutionary activities and gave whole-hearted support to the interventionists and the white-guard generals; they participated in counter-revolutionary plots, organised terrorist acts against individuals prominent in the Soviet state and the Communist Party. After the Civil War the S.R.s continued their hostile acts against the Soviet state. p. 36

¹⁹ Lenin refers to the Extraordinary All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Peasants' Deputies held from November 11 to 25 (November 24 to December 8), 1917. p. 37

²⁰ *The Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People*—on January 3 (16), 1918, Lenin submitted this Declaration to the All-Russia Central Executive Committee. The text adopted unanimously by the Committee was somewhat different from Lenin's original draft. On January 5 (18) the Declaration was submitted by the Bolshevik group, in the name of Soviet power, to the Constituent Assembly for its consideration. The counter-revolutionary Constituent Assembly refused to discuss the Declaration, after which the Bolshevik group walked out. On January 12 (25), 1918, the Declaration was approved by the Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets and subsequently formed part of the Soviet Constitution. p. 38

²¹ On December 6 (19), 1917, the Finnish Diet adopted a declaration of Finland's independence. In accordance with the nationalities policy of the Soviet state, the Council of People's Commissars, on December 18 (31), 1917, issued a decree on Finland's independence. On December 22, 1917 (January 4, 1918), the decree on Finland's independence was approved by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee.

The Soviet Government in the latter half of December 1917 proposed to the Persian Government that a joint plan for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Persia be elaborated. All Russian troops were withdrawn from Persia in March 1918.

The Decree on Turkish Armenia was discussed at a meeting of the Council of People's Commissars on December 23, 1917 (January 5, 1918) and approved by that body on December 29, 1917 (January 11, 1918).

The population of the territory of "Turkish Armenia" occupied by Russian troops during the First World War was granted the right of self-determination, inclusive of the right to secede. In February 1918 Turkish troops again occupied "Turkish Armenia" and deprived the people of their right to self-determination. p. 40

²² *The Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies* was held in Petrograd from January 10

to 18 (23 to 31), 1918. At the opening were 707 delegates, 441 of them Bolsheviks. On January 13 (26), it was joined by the delegates to the Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Peasants' Deputies. Together with late arrivals there was a total of 1,587 delegates at the final sitting.

The Congress discussed Y. M. Sverdlov's report on the activity of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee. Lenin reported to the Congress on the activity of the Council of People's Commissars. In the debates the Mensheviks and Right Socialist-Revolutionaries opposed the domestic and foreign policy of Soviet power. Their attitudes were criticised by Lenin in a summing-up speech. The Congress approved Lenin's "Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People", which later became the basis of the Soviet Constitution. A Congress resolution gave full approval to the policy of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars and gave them a vote of confidence.

The Congress adopted a resolution constituting the Russian Socialist Republic as a federation of Soviet Republics, on the basis of a free union of the peoples of Russia. The Congress approved the Government's policy on the nationalities question.

The Congress approved the basic provisions of the law on the socialisation of land worked out on the basis of the Decree on Land. p. 42

²³ *The man in the muffler*—chief character in A. P. Chekhov's story of the same name, a man typifying the narrow-minded philistine who abhors all innovations or initiative. p. 43

²⁴ *Novaya Zhizn (New Life)*—a daily paper expressing Menshevik views; it was published in Petrograd from April 1917 to July 1918.

Prior to October 1917, it pursued a policy of unstable opposition to the Provisional Government, sometimes siding with it and opposing the Bolsheviks. After the October Socialist Revolution it adopted a hostile stand towards Soviet power. p. 45

²⁵ For the *Constitutional-Democrats (Cadets)* and *Socialist-Revolutionaries (S.R.s)* see Notes 3 and 18.

Mensheviks—supporters of a petty-bourgeois, opportunist trend in Russian Social-Democracy. The Mensheviks got their name (members of the minority—*meshinstvo* in Russian) at the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. in August 1903, when they formed a minority of those elected to the central bodies of the Party; revolutionary Social-Democrats, headed by Lenin, formed the majority (Bolsheviks, or members of the majority—*bolshinstvo* in Russian). The Mensheviks favoured conciliation with the bourgeoisie and pursued an opportunist line in the working-class movement. After

the February bourgeois-democratic revolution in 1917 the Mensheviks, together with the Socialist-Revolutionaries, entered the Provisional Government, supported its imperialist policy and fought against the developing proletarian revolution. The Mensheviks pursued the same policy in the Soviets—that of supporting the Provisional Government and diverting the masses from the revolutionary movement.

After the October Socialist Revolution the Mensheviks became an open counter-revolutionary party that organised and participated in plots and insurrections to overthrow Soviet power. p. 49

- ²⁵ The decree referred to is that of the Council of People's Commissars on "The Centralisation of the Management of the Railways, Their Security and the Improvement of Traffic-Carrying Capacity". It was approved by the Council of People's Commissars on March 23, 1918 and published on March 26, 1918 over the signature of V. Ulyanov (Lenin), Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. p. 51

- ²⁷ For *Novaya Zhizn* see Note 24.

Uporyod (Forward)—a Menshevik daily newspaper published in Moscow from March 1917; it was closed down in February 1919 for its counter-revolutionary activity.

Dyelo Naroda (The People's Cause)—a daily newspaper, organ of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. It appeared in Petrograd from March 1917 to July 1918 with repeated changes of name.

The paper supported the bourgeois Provisional Government.

Its publication was resumed in October 1918 in Samara, where three issues appeared, and in March 1919 in Moscow, where ten issues appeared. The paper was then prohibited on account of its counter-revolutionary activity.

Nash Vek (Our Century)—one of the names adopted by *Rech (Speech)*, the central organ of the counter-revolutionary Constitutional-Democratic Party. p. 54

- ²⁸ Lenin refers to and quotes from Engels's *Anti-Dühring*. See Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Moscow, 1975, p. 325. p. 58
- ²⁹ See Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1976, p. 328. p. 62
- ³⁰ See Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1976, p. 189. p. 63
- ³¹ See Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1976, p. 329. p. 63

- ³² See Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1976, pp. 220, 221. p. 63

- ³³ *The Dreyfus case*—a trial engineered in 1894 by the reactionary-monarchist circles of the French militarists against Dreyfus, a Jewish officer of the French General Staff. He was sentenced to life imprisonment on a fictitious charge of espionage and high treason. The public movement throughout France for a review of the case led finally to his acquittal in 1906. p. 65

- ³⁴ This refers to the suppression of the Irish rebellion in 1916 against British rule. "In Europe ... there was a rebellion in Ireland, which the 'freedom-loving' English ... suppressed by executions," wrote Lenin in 1916 (*Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 354). p. 65

- ³⁵ *Duma (State Duma)*—a representative assembly in tsarist Russia convened as a result of the 1905-07 revolution. Nominally it was a legislative body but actually it had no real power. Elections to the Duma were neither direct, nor equal, nor universal. In the case of the working classes, as well as of the non-Russian nationalities of the country, the suffrage was greatly curtailed, a considerable section of the workers and peasants having no voting rights. p. 65

- ³⁶ See Note 12. p. 69

- ³⁷ *The Second International*—an international association of socialist parties founded in 1889. When the First World War of 1914-18 broke out, the leaders of the Second International betrayed the cause of socialism, sided with their imperialist governments, and the Second International split up. The Left parties and groups which had been affiliated to the Second International joined the Third, Communist, International founded in Moscow in 1919. The Second International was re-established at the Berne (Switzerland) Conference in 1919. It was joined only by the Right-wing, opportunist parties in the socialist movement. p. 69
- ³⁸ See Karl Marx's article "L'indifferenza in materia politica" ("On Political Indifferentism") (*Almanacco Repubblicano* for 1874). p. 71

- ³⁹ See Frederick Engels, "On Authority", in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1976, p. 379. p. 71

- ⁴⁰ See Engels's letter to Bebel, March 18-28, 1875, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1976, pp. 31-37. p. 72

- ⁴¹ *Augean stables* (Greek myth.)—the immense stables of King Au-

geas that were not cleaned for many years. One of Hercules's exploits was that he cleaned them. Figuratively, the expression "Augean stables" denotes extreme filth and disorder. p. 75

⁴² See Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1976, p. 126. p. 81

⁴³ See Engels's Introduction to Marx's work *The Civil War in France* (Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1976, p. 188). p. 81

⁴⁴ Lenin's pamphlet *Political Parties in Russia and the Tasks of the Proletariat* was published by the New York *Evening Post* on January 15, 1918, and by *The Class Struggle*, the organ of the Left wing of the American Socialist Party, in issue No. 4 for November-December 1917. It also appeared as a separate edition. p. 86

⁴⁵ Lenin refers to the "Resolution on the Question of Revising the Party Programme" adopted at the Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. held in Petrograd from April 24 to 29 (May 7 to 12), 1917. The text of the resolution was written by Lenin (see V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, pp. 280-81). p. 86

⁴⁶ See Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, 1975, p. 275. p. 88

⁴⁷ The All-Russia Democratic Conference was called by the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, which was dominated by Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, to decide on the question of state power, but its actual purpose was to switch the attention of the masses away from the mounting revolutionary movement. It was held in Petrograd in September 1917. The Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary leaders did their utmost to decrease the number of representatives from the Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies and to increase the number of delegates from various petty-bourgeois and bourgeois organisations, thus securing a majority for themselves at the conference. The Bolsheviks decided to attend the conference in order to expose the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries.

The Democratic Conference adopted a resolution on the establishment of a Pre-parliament (Provisional Council of the Republic). This was an attempt to create a semblance of a parliamentary system in Russia. However, under the regulations drawn up by the Provisional Government, the Pre-parliament was to be an advisory government body. Lenin insisted on boycotting the Pre-parliament since participation in it would have meant sowing illusions that this body could solve the tasks of the revolution. The Central

Committee of the Bolshevik Party discussed Lenin's proposal and decided to boycott the Pre-parliament, having overcome the resistance of Kamenev and other capitulators who insisted on participating in the Pre-parliament. At its opening session on October 7 (20), the Bolsheviks read out their declaration and walked out p. 92

⁴⁸ The First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was held in Petrograd between June 3 (June 16) and June 24 (July 7), 1917, over a thousand delegates attending. The Bolsheviks, who at that time were in a minority in the Soviets, had 105 delegates. Most of the delegates supported the S.R.s and Mensheviks. The items on the agenda included: the attitude to the Provisional Government, the war, and preparations for the Constituent Assembly. Lenin spoke at the Congress on the attitude to the Provisional Government on June 4 (17) and on the war on June 9 (22). The Bolsheviks tabled resolutions on all the main issues. They exposed the imperialist nature of the war and the danger of conciliation with the bourgeoisie and demanded the transfer of all power to the Soviets. The Congress decisions approved support for the Provisional Government, approved the offensive of Russian troops that was being prepared by the Provisional Government and opposed the transfer of power to the Soviets. p. 92

⁴⁹ The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies opened at 10:45 p.m. on October 25 (November 7), 1917 in the Smolny Institute in Petrograd. Of the 649 delegates to the Congress, 390 were Bolsheviks. Delegates from 241 Soviets arrived at the Congress with mandates to vote Bolshevik. The Mensheviks, the Right S.R.s and Bund members left the Congress after the opening because they refused to recognise the socialist revolution. The Congress adopted the manifesto written by Lenin, "To the Workers, Soldiers and Peasants!", which announced the transfer of all power to the Soviets. Lenin spoke on peace and on the land question.

The Second Congress of Soviets adopted Lenin's decrees on peace, the land and the formation of the first Soviet Government, the Council of People's Commissars. Lenin was elected Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. The Congress also elected the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of 101 members of whom 62 were Bolsheviks, 29 Left S.R.s. p. 92

⁵⁰ See Note 22. p. 92

⁵¹ *Petrushka*—a serf valet from Gogol's *Dead Souls* who read books by spelling out each word without bothering about their meaning; he was interested only in the process of reading. p. 95

⁵² This refers to a counter-revolutionary revolt of the Czechoslovak army corps engineered by the Entente imperialists with the active participation of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. The corps was formed in Russia from Czech and Slovak prisoners of war before the Great October Socialist Revolution. After the establishment of Soviet power the Entente representatives raised the question of its evacuation to France. The Soviet Government agreed to the evacuation, provided the Russian soldiers were allowed to return home from France. The agreement of March 26, 1918, allowed the corps to leave Russia via Vladivostok on the condition that it surrender its arms. But the counter-revolutionary commanders of the corps treacherously broke their agreement with the Soviet Government to surrender their arms, and provoked an armed revolt at the end of May 1918 on the instigation of the Entente. In close collaboration with the whiteguards and kulaks the whiteguard Czechs occupied a large part of the Urals, the Volga area and Siberia, where, with the participation of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, whiteguard governments were formed. Most Czech and Slovak prisoners of war were sympathetic to Soviet power and did not fall for the anti-Soviet propaganda of the reactionary higher officers of the corps. Realising that they had been deceived, many soldiers left the corps refusing to fight against Soviet Russia. About 12,000 Czechs and Slovaks fought for the Red Army.

The Volga area was liberated in the autumn of 1918 by the Red Army. The whiteguard Czechs were completely routed along with the Kolchak troops (early 1920). p. 95

⁵³ Lenin refers to his article "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government" which was published on April 28, 1918, in *Pravda* and *Izvestia UTsIK* and as a separate pamphlet. p. 97

⁵⁴ *Judas Golovlyov*—a sanctimonious hypocritical landlord, an owner of serfs, described by the Russian writer M. Y. Saltykov-Shchedrin in his novel *The Golovlyov Family*. p. 98

⁵⁵ The resolution adopted by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on June 14, 1918 stated that the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries (the Right wing and the Centre) were, despite the difficult situation of the Soviet Republic, conducting a struggle against it, employing all possible means, including armed revolt; therefore, said the resolution, the presence in the Soviets of parties "striving to discredit and overthrow Soviet power was absolutely impermissible".

The resolution was adopted by a majority vote. The Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries (the Right wing and the Centre) were expelled from local Soviets and their periodicals suppressed.

p. 98

⁵⁶ *Lieberdants*—that ironical nickname stuck to the Menshevik leaders, Lieber and Dan, and their followers after Demyan Bedny's article "Lieberdan" had appeared in the Moscow Bolshevik newspaper *Sotsial-Demokrat* No. 141, August 25 (September 7), 1917. p. 99

⁵⁷ *Menshevik "activists"*—this was the Menshevik trend that moved farthest to the right, recognised armed struggle against the Soviets as a political method and applied it in practice. The leaders were Lieber, Potresov, Kolokolnikov and others. The "activists" took part in counter-revolutionary acts and in the white terror. p. 99

⁵⁸ See Note 52. p. 99

⁵⁹ Lenin refers to August Bebel's speech on September 20, 1910, at the Magdeburg Congress of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany. p. 100

⁶⁰ *Frankfurter Zeitung* (*Frankfurt Gazette*)—a daily newspaper, organ of the big German stockjobbers, published in Frankfurt-on-Main from 1856 to 1943. p. 100

⁶¹ *Vorwärts* (*Forward*)—a daily newspaper, central organ of the German Social-Democratic Party. By decision of the Halle Party Congress it was published in Berlin from 1891 under the title *Vorwärts, Berliner Volksblatt* (*Forward, Berlin People's Paper*) and replaced the newspaper *Berliner Volksblatt* which appeared from 1884. In its columns Frederick Engels waged a struggle against all forms of opportunism. In the late nineties, after the death of Engels, *Vorwärts* fell into the hands of the Right wing of the party and began the systematic publication of articles by opportunists. During the First World War, *Vorwärts* took a social-chauvinist stand. After the Great October Socialist Revolution it conducted anti-Soviet propaganda. It appeared in Berlin until 1933. p. 101

⁶² *Red Banner* (*Die Rote Fahne*)—a daily newspaper founded by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg as the central organ of the Spartacus League; later on it became the central organ of the Communist Party of Germany. It began publication in Berlin on November 9, 1918, was subjected to repeated repression and banned several times by the Scheidemann-Noske government. It was suppressed in 1933 with Hitler's advent to power, but continued to appear illegally; it was transferred to Prague (Czechoslovakia) in 1935 and to Brussels (Belgium) in October 1936, where it was published until the autumn of 1939.

The Call (*Der Weckruf*)—central organ of the Communist Party of German Austria; published in Vienna from November 1918 to January 11, 1919. p. 104

⁶³ *The Third, Communist International (Comintern)*—the world revolutionary proletarian organisation which united the Communist Parties of various countries; it existed from 1919 to 1943.

The creation of the Third International was historically necessitated by the split in the working-class movement caused by the betrayal of the socialist cause by the opportunist leaders of the Second International, and the latter's collapse, following the outbreak of the First World War. Lenin played an outstanding role in founding the Communist International, whose first congress was held in Moscow on March 2-6, 1919.

It restored and consolidated the ties between the working people of all countries, helped to uncover opportunism in the world labour movement, to strengthen the new Communist Parties and work out the strategy and tactics of the international communist movement.

p. 104

⁶⁴ See Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1976, p. 99.

p. 105

⁶⁵ See Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1976, p. 277.

p. 108

⁶⁶ *The First Congress of the Communist International*, held in Moscow, March 2-6, 1919. It was attended by 52 delegates from Communist and Left Socialist Parties, groups and organisations in 30 countries.

The Congress was opened by Lenin. After reports from delegates had been heard, the platform of the Communist International was discussed and adopted. The chief item on the Congress agenda was the question of bourgeois democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin made a report on this issue on March 4, 1919. The Congress unanimously approved Lenin's theses and submitted them to the Bureau of the Executive Committee for distribution in all countries. The Congress also passed the resolution submitted by Lenin as an addendum to the theses. On the same day the Congress resolved to form the Third (Communist) International. The First Comintern Congress approved a manifesto addressed to the proletarians of all countries and adopted a number of resolutions and decisions.

p. 110

⁶⁷ Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were brutally murdered on January 15, 1919 by German whiteguards who had been given instructions by the government headed by Ebert and Scheidemann. The Central Committee of the R.C.P.(B.) adopted a decision to organise mass demonstrations and meetings of protest. Lenin spoke to demonstrators from the balcony of the Moscow Soviet building.

p. 110

⁶⁸ This refers to an organisation of German Left-wing Social-Democrats (the Spartacus group) formed at the beginning of the First World War and headed by Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring, Clara Zetkin and others. The Spartacists conducted revolutionary propaganda among the masses against the imperialist war, and exposed the annexationist policy of German imperialism and the treachery of the opportunist Social-Democratic leaders. The Spartacists, however, made a number of mistakes on cardinal issues of theory and policy. Lenin repeatedly criticised their mistakes and helped them to take a correct attitude.

In April 1917, the Spartacists were affiliated to the Centrist Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, but remained organisationally independent. During the November 1918 revolution in Germany they broke with the Independents and formed the Spartacus League, issuing their own programme on December 14. At their Inaugural Congress, December 30, 1918-January 1, 1919, they set up the Communist Party of Germany.

p. 111

⁶⁹ *Shop Stewards Committees*—elective labour organisations in various industries, which were particularly widespread during the First World War. Unlike the compromising trade unions which pursued a policy of "civil peace" and renounced the strike struggle, the Shop Stewards Committees championed the interests and demands of the workers, led the strike movement and carried on anti-war propaganda. Shop Stewards were united in shop, district and city committees. In 1916 the Shop Stewards Committees were united nationally.

After the October Revolution, during the foreign armed intervention in the Soviet Republic, the Shop Stewards Committees actively supported Soviet Russia. Many leaders of the Shop Stewards Committees (William Gallacher, Harry Pollitt, Arthur McManus and others) joined the Communist Party.

p. 111

⁷⁰ Most probably, it is not the Birmingham Workers' Council that is meant here, but the Shop Stewards Committee. It is very likely that the newspaper which Lenin read contained incorrect information. Speaking at the First Congress of the Communist International on March 3, 1919, J. Fineberg, a delegate from the British Communist group, said: "In industrial areas local workers' committees were formed, including representatives of the Shop Stewards Committees, for instance, the Clyde workers' committee. London and Sheffield workers' committees and so on. The committees served as organisational centres and representatives of organised labour in the localities. For some time the employers and the government refused to recognise the Shop Stewards Committees, but in the end they had to enter into negotiations with these unregistered committees. That Lloyd George agreed to recognise

the Birmingham committee as an economic organisation proves that the Shop Stewards Committees have become permanent factors in the British labour movement. In the Shop Stewards Committees, workers' committees and national conferences of Shop Stewards Committees we have an organisation similar to the one forming the basis of the Soviet Republic" (*First Congress of the Communist International. Minutes*, Moscow, 1933, p. 63). p. 111

- ⁷¹ *The Berne Conference* was the first post-war conference of the social-chauvinist and Centrist parties, called for the purpose of restoring the Second International. It met in Berne from February 3 to 10, 1919.

One of the main items on the agenda was the question of democracy and dictatorship. In his report on this question the Centrist Branting tried to prove that the socialist revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat could not lead to socialism. Kautsky and Bernstein wanted the Conference to condemn the Bolsheviks and the socialist revolution in Russia. Branting moved a resolution which, while hypocritically greeting the revolutions in Soviet Russia, Austria-Hungary and Germany, actually denounced the dictatorship of the proletariat and extolled bourgeois democracy. In view of the sympathetic attitude of the workers towards Soviet Russia the sponsors of the resolution worded it in very ambiguous terms and did not dare to refer specifically to Soviet Russia. The Conference did not discuss the question of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies. A group of delegates led by Adler and Longuet tabled a resolution suggesting that the Conference refrain from taking a definite stand on Soviet Russia in view of the paucity of information about the situation there. Branting's resolution received a large number of votes.

The First Congress of the Communist International adopted a resolution entitled "On the Attitude Towards 'Socialist' Trends and the Berne Conference", which criticised the Berne decisions. In particular, it denounced the attempts of the Right-wing socialist leaders to compel the Conference to adopt a resolution that would provide a cover for the imperialist armed intervention in Soviet Russia. p. 112

- ⁷² See Engels's Introduction to Karl Marx's *The Civil War in France*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1976, p. 189. p. 113

- ⁷³ See Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1976, p. 221. p. 114

- ⁷⁴ See Note 37. p. 117

- ⁷⁵ *Die Freiheit* (*Freedom*)—a daily paper, organ of the Centrist In-

dependent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, published in Berlin from November 1918 to October 1922. p. 122

- ⁷⁶ *The Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany*—a Centrist party founded at the Inaugural Congress in Gotha in April 1917. Under cover of Centrist phraseology the independents preached unity with social-chauvinists and renounced the class struggle.

For some time the Spartacus group was affiliated with the party, retaining its organisational and political independence and continuing its underground work and the struggle to free the Social-Democratic workers from the influence of the Centrist leaders. In 1918 the Spartacus League left the party and later on it formed the core of the Communist Party of Germany.

At its Congress in Halle in October 1920 the party split. Many Independents joined the Communist Party in December 1920 and the Right wing founded an independent party adopting the old name—the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany. It existed until 1922. p. 123

- ⁷⁷ The reference is to the resolution to change the Party's name and programme adopted at the Seventh Congress of the R.C.P.(B.) held from March 6 to 8, 1918. p. 124

- ⁷⁸ *Gazeta Pechatnikov* (*Printers' Gazette*)—a publication of the Moscow Printers' Union that was under Menshevik influence at the time. It was first issued on December 8, 1918 and was closed down in March 1919 because of its anti-Soviet propaganda. p. 126

- ⁷⁹ Lenin here refers to Rosa Luxemburg's article "Der Anfang" ("The Beginning") published in *Die Rote Fahne* No. 3, November 18, 1918. p. 129

- ⁸⁰ Lenin's proposals for the Draft Programme of the R.C.P.(B.) formed the basis of the Programme of the Communist Party adopted at the Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.) p. 134

- ⁸¹ The All-Russia Central Executive Committee's Central Agency for the Supply and Distribution of Printed Publications organised the recording of Lenin's speeches; gramophone records of thirteen of his speeches were made between 1919 and 1921. p. 145

- ⁸² See Engels's letter to Marx, October 7, 1858 in Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, 1975, p. 103. p. 148

- ⁸³ See Marx's letter to Engels, April 16, 1856, op. cit., p. 86. p. 150

- ⁸⁴ See V. I. Lenin, "The Heroes of the Berne International", in *Collected Works*, Vol. 29. p. 153

⁸⁵ See Note 37.

p. 155

⁸⁶ *The Sverdlov Communist University* was formed from the training courses for agitators and instructors organised in 1918 at the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and later reformed as a school of Soviet work. Following the decision of the Eighth Party Congress to organise a higher school under the auspices of the Central Committee to train Party functionaries, the school was again reorganised, this time as the Central School for Soviet and Party Work; in the second half of 1919 it was renamed the Sverdlov Communist University.

Lenin delivered two lectures on the state, on July 11 and August 29, 1919, but the record of the second lecture, of August 29, has been lost.

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⁸⁷ See Note 17.

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⁸⁸ "*Left-Wing*" *Communism—an Infantile Disorder* was written by Lenin for the opening of the Second Congress of the Communist International, and was distributed among the delegates. It was to help the young Communist Parties to embark on the right road of revolutionary struggle, to correct their early mistakes and acquaint the Communists of all countries with the rich experience of the Bolsheviks, with their strategy and tactics. The most important points and conclusions made in the book laid the basis for the decisions of the Second Congress of the Comintern.

"*Left-Wing*" *Communism—an Infantile Disorder* was completed by Lenin by April 27, 1920; the Appendix was written on May 12, 1920.

The book was published on June 12, 1920 in Russian and appeared in Soviet Russia almost simultaneously; in July, in French and English. In the second half of 1920 the book was published in German in Berlin and Hamburg, in English in London and New York, in French in Paris, and in Italian in Milan.

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⁸⁹ The strength of the Party from the February Revolution, 1917, to March 1919 changed as follows: at the Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), 1917—80,000; at the Sixth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) in July and August 1917—about 240,000; at the Seventh Congress of the R.C.P.(B.) in March 1918—about 300,000; at the Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.) in March 1919—313,766.

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⁹⁰ *Communist International*—organ of the Executive Committee of the Communist International; published from May 1919 to June 1943 in Russian, German, French, English, Spanish and Chinese. The journal printed theoretical articles and documents of the Comintern; it published a number of Lenin's articles. The *Com-*

munist International examined the basic questions of Marxism-Leninism in connection with the problems of the international working-class and communist movement, the experience of the building of socialism in the Soviet Union, and combatted various anti-Leninist trends. Its publication was terminated in accordance with the decision of the Presidium of the Executive Committee taken on May 15, 1943, dissolving the Communist International. p. 191

⁹¹ See Engels's letter to Marx, October 7, 1858, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, 1975, pp. 102-03. p. 192

⁹² *Folkets Dagblad Politiken* (*People's Political Daily*)—the newspaper of the Swedish Left Social-Democrats who formed the Left Social-Democratic Party of Sweden in 1917; it was published in Stockholm from April 1916. In 1921 the Left Social-Democratic Party entered the Comintern and assumed the name of the Communist Party of Sweden, and this newspaper became its organ. Following the split in the Communist Party in October 1929 the newspaper fell into the hands of its Right wing. Its publication ceased in May 1945.

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⁹³ *Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.)*—a trade union organisation founded in the U.S.A. in 1905 and uniting mainly unskilled and low-paid workers of various trades. When the mass strike movement developed in the U.S.A. under the impact of the Russian revolution of 1905-07, the I.W.W. led a number of successful mass strikes and opposed the policy of class collaboration pursued by the reformist leaders of the American Federation of Labour and Right-wing socialists.

During the First World War (1914-18) the I.W.W. took part in organising a number of anti-war mass action of the American workers. At the same time there were pronounced anarcho-syndicalist features in the I.W.W. activities: the organisation did not recognise the proletariat's political struggle, repudiated the leading role of the party, rejected the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and refused to work in unions that formed part of the American Federation of Labour. Owing to the opportunist policy of its leaders, the I.W.W. degenerated into a sectarian organisation without any influence in the working-class movement. p. 194

⁹⁴ See Note 76.

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Gompers, Samuel (1850-1924)—a leader of the US trade union movement, a founder of the American Federation of Labour. He carried on a policy of class collaboration with the capitalists and was against the revolutionary struggle of the working class. He adopted a hostile attitude towards the October Socialist Revolution and the Soviet state.—107, 190, 193

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H

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Kievsky, P. (Pyatakov, Georgi Leonidovich) (1890-1937)—a member of the Bolshevik Party from 1910. From 1915 to

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Liebknecht, Karl (1871-1919)—an outstanding figure in the German and international working-class movement, a leader of the Left-wing German Social-Democrats; one of the organisers and leaders of the Spartacus group. During the November 1918 revolution in Germany he headed, together with Rosa Luxemburg, the revolutionary vanguard of the German workers. He edited the newspaper *Die Rote Fahne* (Red Banner); was a founder of the Communist Party of Germany and a leader of the Berlin workers' uprising in January 1919. After the suppression of the uprising he was assassinated by the counter-revolutionaries.—110, 118

Longuet, Jean (1876-1938)—a leader of the French Social-Democratic Party and of the Second International.—64, 101

Luxemburg, Rosa (1871-1919)—an outstanding leader of the international working-class mo-

vement and of the Left wing of the Second International. A founder and leader of the Social-Democratic Party of Poland. From 1897 she took an active part in the German Social-Democratic movement.

Rosa Luxemburg was one of the founders of the Spartacus group in Germany. During the November 1918 revolution she was one of the leaders of the revolutionary vanguard of the German workers, took an active part in the Inaugural Congress of the Communist Party of Germany. In January 1919 she was assassinated by the counter-revolutionaries.—110, 118

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Martov, L. (Tsederbaum, Yuli Osipovich) (1873-1923)—a leader and ideologist of Menshevism. After the October Socialist Revolution opposed Soviet power and in 1920 emigrated to Germany.—48, 49, 79, 80, 83, 84, 157

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Obolensky, Valerian Valerianovich (pseudonym—*Osinsky, N.*) (1887-1939)—Bolshevik from 1907. In 1918 and 1919 he was on the *Pravda* (Truth) editorial board and worked in the Propaganda Department of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee; delegate to the First Congress of the Comintern.—126

P

Platten, Fritz (1883-1942)—Swiss Left Social-Democrat, later a Communist. One of the founders of the Communist Party of Switzerland. Participated in the organisation of the Comintern.—129

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R

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Renner, Karl (1870-1950)—Austrian politician; leader and theoretician of the Austrian Right-wing Social-Democrats, one of the authors of the bourgeois-nationalist theory of "cultural-national autonomy". In 1919 and 1920 Chancellor and from 1945 to 1950 President of the Austrian Republic.—104, 106, 107, 109

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S

Savinkov, Boris Victorovich (1879-1925)—a leader of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. Conducted an active struggle against Soviet power. Organiser of a number of counter-revolutionary acts and plots.—49, 99

Scheidemann, Philipp (1865-1939)—one of the leaders of the extremely Right, opportunist wing of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany. During the November 1918 revolution in Germany he was a member of the so-called Council of People's Representatives whose activities were determined by the interests of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. Head of the German coalition government from February to June 1919; an organiser of the suppression of the German working-class movement in 1918-21. Subsequently he abandoned political activities.—59, 64, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 109, 123, 129, 149, 152

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Turgenev, Ivan Sergeyevich (1818-1883)—Russian writer.—59

V

Vandervelde, Emile (1866-1938)—leader in the Workers' Party of Belgium, Chairman of the International Socialist Bureau of the Second International, adopted an extremely opportunist stand. During the

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W

Webb, Sidney (1859-1947)—prominent British public figure. In his works he advocated an idea of peaceful solution of the workers' question within the framework of capitalist society. One of the founders of the reformist Fabian Society.—64

Weitling, Wilhelm (1808-1871)—prominent in the German working-class movement at the time of its inception; one of the theoreticians of utopian "equalitarian" communism.—61

Y

Yudenich, Nikolai Nikolayevich (1862-1933)—tsarist general. After the October Socialist Revolution he was commander-in-chief of the whiteguard North-Western Army. He was actively supported by the Entente imperialists; in 1919 twice attempted to capture Petrograd. Defeated by the Red Army in November 1919 he retreated to Estonia and later left for England.—186

Z

Zubatov, Sergei Uasilyevich (1864-1917)—colonel of the Russian gendarmery. From 1900 to 1903 he organised police-sponsored workers' unions

with the aim of diverting the workers' attention from the revolutionary struggle. When he failed in his provocative policy he was dismissed and soon abandoned his political activities.—194