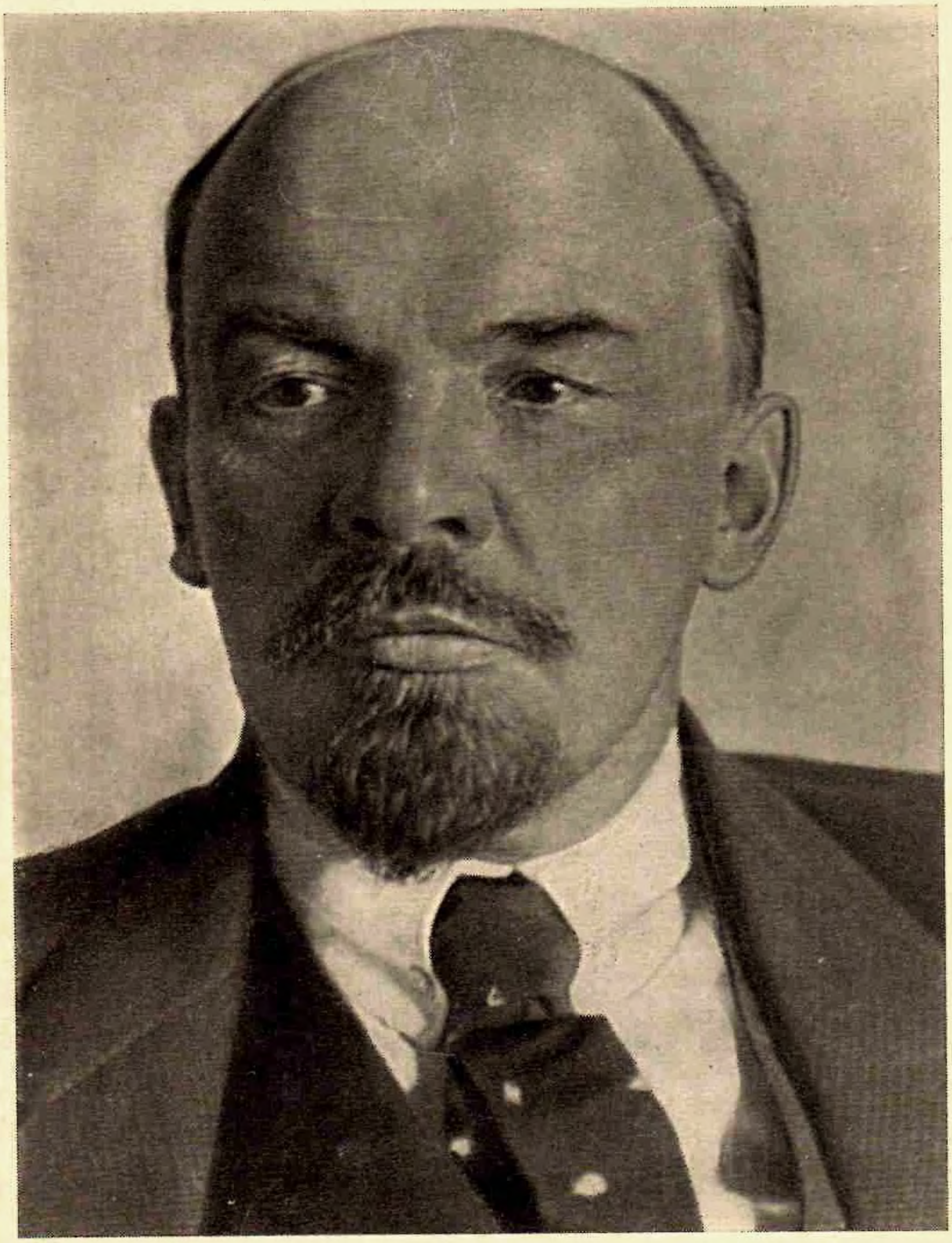
Lenin

PARTY WORK IN THE MASSES



Workers of All Countries, Unite!

V. I. Lenin

Party Work in the Masses

Articles and Speeches

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В. И. ЛЕНИН

О РАБОТЕ ПАРТИИ В МАССАХ

На английском языке

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THE URGENT TASKS OF OUR MOVEMENT

Russian Social-Democracy has repeatedly declared the immediate political task of a Russian working-class party to be the overthrow of the autocracy, the achievement of political liberty. This was enunciated over fifteen years ago by the representatives of Russian Social-Democracy—the members of the Emancipation of Labour group. It was affirmed two and a half years ago by the representatives of the Russian Social-Democratic organisations that, in the spring of 1898, founded the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. Despite these repeated declarations, however, the question of the political tasks of Social-Democracy in Russia is prominent again today. Many representatives of our movement express doubt as to the correctness of the above-mentioned solution of the question. It is claimed that the economic struggle is of predominant importance; the political tasks of the proletariat are pushed into the background, narrowed down, and restricted, and it is even said that to speak of forming an independent working-class party in Russia is merely to repeat somebody else's words, that the workers should carry on only the economic struggle and leave politics to the intelligentsia in alliance with the liberals. The latest profession of the new faith (the notorious *Credo*[1]) amounts to a declaration that the Russian proletariat has not yet come of age and to a complete rejection of the Social-Democratic programme. *Rabochaya Mysl* (particularly in its *Separate Supplement*) takes practically the same attitude. Russian Social-Democracy is passing through a period of vacillation and doubt bordering on self-negation. On the one hand, the working-class movement is being sundered from socialism, the workers are being helped to carry on the

economic struggle, but nothing, or next to nothing, is done to explain to them the socialist aims and the political tasks of the movement as a whole. On the other hand, socialism is being sundered from the labour movement; Russian socialists are again beginning to talk more and more about the struggle against the government having to be carried on entirely by the intelligentsia because the workers confine themselves to the economic struggle.

In our opinion the ground has been prepared for this sad state of affairs by three circumstances. First, in their early activity, Russian Social-Democrats restricted themselves merely to work in propaganda circles. When we took up agitation among the masses we were not always able to restrain ourselves from going to the other extreme. Secondly, in our early activity we often had to struggle for our right to existence against the Narodnaya Volya adherents[2], who understood by "politics" an activity isolated from the working-class movement and who reduced politics purely to conspiratorial struggle. In rejecting this sort of politics, the Social-Democrats went to the extreme of pushing politics entirely into the background. Thirdly, working in the isolation of small local workers' circles, the Social-Democrats did not devote sufficient attention to the necessity of organising a revolutionary party which would combine all the activities of the local groups and make it possible to organise the revolutionary work on correct lines. The predominance of isolated work is naturally connected with the predominance of the economic struggle.

These circumstances resulted in concentration on one side of the movement only. The "Economist" trend (that is, if we can speak of it as a "trend") has attempted to elevate this narrowness to the rank of a special theory and has tried to utilise for this purpose the fashionable Bernsteinism[3] and the fashionable "criticism of Marxism", which peddles old bourgeois ideas under a new label. These attempts alone have given rise to the danger of a weakening of connection between the Russian working-class movement and Russian Social-Democracy, the vanguard in the struggle for political liberty. The most urgent task of our movement is to strengthen this connection.

Social-Democracy is the combination of the working-class movement and socialism. Its task is not to serve the working-class movement passively at each of its separate stages, but to represent the interests of the movement as a whole, to point out to this movement its ultimate aim and its political tasks, and to safeguard its political and ideological independence. Isolated from Social-Democracy, the working-class movement becomes petty and inevitably becomes bourgeois. In waging only the economic struggle, the working class loses its political independence; it becomes the tail of other parties and betrays the great principle: "The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves."[4] In every country there has been a period in which the working-class movement existed apart from socialism, each going its own way; and in every country this isolation has weakened both socialism and the working-class movement. Only the fusion of socialism with the working-class movement has in all countries created a durable basis for both. But in every country this combination of socialism and the working-class movement was evolved historically, in unique ways, in accordance with the prevailing conditions of time and place. In Russia, the necessity for combining socialism and the working-class movement was in theory long ago proclaimed, but it is only now being carried into practice. It is a very difficult process and there is, therefore, nothing surprising in the fact that it is accompanied by vacillations and doubts.

What lesson can be learned from the past?

The entire history of Russian socialism has led to the condition in which the most urgent task is the struggle against the autocratic government and the achievement of political liberty. Our socialist movement concentrated itself, so to speak, upon the struggle against the autocracy. On the other hand, history has shown that the isolation of socialist thought from the vanguard of the working classes is greater in Russia than in other countries, and that if this state of affairs continues, the revolutionary movement in Russia is doomed to impotence. From this condition emerges the task which the Russian Social-De-

mocracy is called upon to fulfil—to imbue the masses of the proletariat with the ideas of socialism and political consciousness, and to organise a revolutionary party inseparably connected with the spontaneous working-class movement. Russian Social-Democracy has done much in this direction, but much more still remains to be done. With the growth of the movement, the field of activity for Social-Democrats becomes wider; the work becomes more varied, and an increasing number of activists in the movement will concentrate their efforts upon the fulfilment of various special tasks which the daily needs of propaganda and agitation bring to the fore. This phenomenon is quite natural and is inevitable, but it causes us to be particularly concerned with preventing these special activities and methods of struggle from becoming ends in themselves and with preventing preparatory work from being regarded as the main and sole activity.

Our principal and fundamental task is to facilitate the political development and the political organisation of the working class. Those who push this task into the background, who refuse to subordinate to it all the special tasks and particular methods of struggle, are following a false path and causing serious harm to the movement. And it is being pushed into the background, firstly, by those who call upon revolutionaries to employ only the forces of isolated conspiratorial circles cut off from the working-class movement in the struggle against the government. It is being pushed into the background, secondly, by those who restrict the content and scope of political propaganda, agitation, and organisation; who think it fit and proper to treat the workers to "politics" only at exceptional moments in their lives, only on festive occasions; who too solicitously substitute demands for partial concessions from the autocracy for the political struggle against the autocracy; and who do not go to sufficient lengths to ensure that these demands for partial concessions are raised to the status of a systematic, implacable struggle of a revolutionary, working-class party against the autocracy.

"Organise!" *Rabochaya Mysl* keeps repeating to the workers in all keys, and all the adherents of the "Econo-

mist" trend echo the cry. We, of course, wholly endorse this appeal, but we will not fail to add: organise, but not only in mutual benefit societies, strike funds, and workers' circles; organise also in a political party; organise for the determined struggle against the autocratic government and against the whole of capitalist society. Without such organisation the proletariat will never rise to the class-conscious struggle; without such organisation the working-class movement is doomed to impotency. With the aid of nothing but funds and study circles and mutual benefit societies the working class will never be able to fulfil its great historical mission—to emancipate itself and the whole of the Russian people from political and economic slavery. Not a single class in history has achieved power without producing its political leaders, its prominent representatives able to organise a movement and lead it. And the Russian working class has already shown that it can produce such men and women. The struggle which has developed so widely during the past five or six years has revealed the great potential revolutionary power of the working class; it has shown that the most ruthless government persecution does not diminish, but, on the contrary, increases the number of workers who strive towards socialism, towards political consciousness, and towards the political struggle. The congress which our comrades held in 1898 correctly defined our tasks and did not merely repeat other people's words, did not merely express the enthusiasm of "intellectuals".... We must set to work resolutely to fulfil these tasks, placing the question of the Party's programme, organisation, and tactics on the order of the day. We have already set forth our views on the fundamental postulates of our programme, and, of course, this is not the place to develop them in detail. We propose to devote a series of articles in forthcoming issues to questions of organisation, which are among the most burning problems confronting us. In this respect we lag considerably behind the old workers in the Russian revolutionary movement. We must frankly admit this defect and exert all our efforts to devise methods of greater secrecy in our work, to propagate systematically the proper methods of

work, the proper methods of deluding the gendarmes and of evading the snares of the police. We must train people who will devote the whole of their lives, not only their spare evenings, to the revolution; we must build up an organisation large enough to permit the introduction of a strict division of labour in the various forms of our work. Finally, with regard to questions of tactics, we shall confine ourselves to the following: Social-Democracy does not tie its hands, it does not restrict its activities to some one preconceived plan or method of political struggle; it recognises all methods of struggle, provided they correspond to the forces at the disposal of the Party and facilitate the achievement of the best results possible under the given conditions. If we have a strongly organised party, a single strike may turn into a political demonstration, into a political victory over the government. If we have a strongly organised party, a revolt in a single locality may grow into a victorious revolution. We must bear in mind that the struggles with the government for partial demands and the gain of certain concessions are merely light skirmishes with the enemy, encounters between outposts, whereas the decisive battle is still to come. Before us, in all its strength, towers the enemy fortress which is raining shot and shell upon us, mowing down our best fighters. We must capture this fortress, and we will capture it, if we unite all the forces of the awakening proletariat with all the forces of the Russian revolutionaries into one party which will attract all that is vital and honest in Russia. Only then will the great prophecy of the Russian worker-revolutionary, Pyotr Alexeyev, be fulfilled: "The muscular arm of the working millions will be lifted, and the yoke of despotism, guarded by the soldiers' bayonets, will be smashed to atoms!"

Written in October-early November 1900
Published in December 1900 in *Iskra* No. 1

Collected Works, Vol. 4, pp. 366-71

ON THE TASKS OF THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

When hypocritical flirting with both the working class and the "legal" opposition goes hand in hand with action on the part of a horde of infuriated scoundrels of the type of Val or Obolensky, it means that the government wants to corrupt and split up those masses and sections of the people which it is powerless to break, and in order to facilitate its task it wants to divert the revolutionary forces, small as their number is, to hunt down each of these scoundrels. It does not matter whether one representative or another of the government is aware of this in general, or how well he is aware of it. What matters is that the tactics to which the government is impelled by all its immense political experience and police instinct, *really* has this significance. When the revolutionary movement permeates the truly revolutionary classes of the people, moreover, when it grows in depth and extent, holding out the promise of developing soon into an invincible force, then the government finds it advantageous to provoke the best revolutionary forces to hunt after mediocre leaders of most outrageous violence. But we must not allow ourselves to be provoked. We must not lose our heads at the very first peals of really revolutionary thunder coming from the people, cast all caution to the winds, and, to ease mind and conscience, eschew all the experience of Europe and the experience of Russia, all more or less definite socialist convictions, all claims of fundamentally consistent, and not adventurist, tactics. In short, we must not allow realisation of an attempt to restore the Narodnaya Volya movement and to repeat all its theoretical and practical mistakes that the Socialist-Revolutionaries[5] have under-

taken and persist in furthering more and more. Our answer to efforts made to corrupt the masses and provoke the revolutionaries must not be given in a "programme" which would open the door wide to the most harmful old mistakes and to new ideological waverings, or in tactics that would tend to deepen the isolation of the revolutionaries from the masses, which is the main source of our weakness and of our incapacity to start a determined struggle at once. We must answer by strengthening the contact between the revolutionaries and the people, and this contact can be established in our time only by developing and strengthening the Social-Democratic labour movement. Only the working-class movement rouses that truly revolutionary and advanced class which has nothing to lose from the collapse of the existing political and social order, the class which is the final and inevitable product of that order, the class which alone is the unquestionable and uncompromising enemy of that order. Only by relying upon the theory of revolutionary Marxism, upon the experience of international Social-Democracy, can we bring about the fusion of our revolutionary movement with the labour movement and create an invincible Social-Democratic movement. Only in the name of a real workers' party can we, without losing faith in our convictions, call on all the progressive elements in the country to join in revolutionary work, call on all working, all suffering and oppressed people to support socialism.

Written in late November 1902
First published in 1939 in the magazine *Proletarskaya Revolutsia* No. 1

Collected Works, Vol. 6, pp. 271-72

NEW TASKS AND NEW FORCES

The development of a mass working-class movement in Russia in connection with the development of Social-Democracy is marked by three notable transitions. The first was the transition from narrow propagandist circles to wide economic agitation among the masses; the second was the transition to political agitation on a large scale and to open street demonstrations; the third was the transition to actual civil war, to direct revolutionary struggle, to the armed popular uprising. Each of these transitions was prepared, on the one hand, by socialist thought working mainly in one direction, and on the other, by the profound changes that had taken place in the conditions of life and in the whole mentality of the working class, as well as by the fact that increasingly wider strata of the working class were roused to more conscious and active struggle. Sometimes these changes took place imperceptibly, the proletariat rallying its forces behind the scenes in an unsensational way, so that the intellectuals often doubted the lasting quality and the vital power of the mass movement. There would then be a turning-point, and the whole revolutionary movement would, suddenly, as it were, rise to a new and higher stage. The proletariat and its vanguard, Social-Democracy, would be confronted with new *practical* tasks, to deal with which, new forces would spring up, seemingly out of the ground, forces whose existence no one had suspected shortly before the turning-point. But all this did not take place at once, without vacillations, without a struggle of currents within the Social-Democratic movement, without relapses to outworn views long since thought dead and buried.

Social-Democracy in Russia is once again passing through such a period of vacillation. There was a time when political agitation had to break its way through opportunist theories, when it was feared that we would not be equal to the new tasks, when excessive repetition of the adjective "class", or a tail-ender's interpretation of the Party's attitude to the class, was used to justify the fact that the Social-Democrats lagged behind the demands of the proletariat. The course of the movement has swept aside all these short-sighted fears and backward views. The new upsurge now is attended once more, although in a somewhat different form, by a struggle against obsolete circles and tendencies. The *Rabocheye Dyelo*-ists have come to life again in the new-Iskrists.[6] To adapt our tactics and our organisation to the new tasks, we have to overcome the resistance of opportunist theories of "a higher type of demonstration" (the plan of the Zemstvo campaign), or of the "organisation-as-process"; we have to combat the reactionary fear of "timing" the uprising, or the fear of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. Once again, excessive (and very often foolish) repetition of the word "class" and belittlement of the Party's tasks in regard to the class are used to justify the fact that Social-Democracy is lagging behind the urgent needs of the proletariat. The slogan "workers' independent activity" is again being misused by people who worship the lower forms of activity and ignore the higher forms of really Social-Democratic independent activity, the really revolutionary initiative of the proletariat itself.

There is not the slightest doubt that the movement, in its course, will once again sweep aside these survivals of obsolete and lifeless views. Such sweeping aside, however, should not be reduced to mere rejection of the old errors, but, what is incomparably more important, it should take the form of constructive revolutionary work towards fulfilling the new tasks, towards attracting into our Party and utilising the new forces that are now coming into the revolutionary field in such vast masses. It is these questions of constructive revolutionary work that should be the main subject in the deliberations of the forthcoming Third

Congress; upon these questions all our Party members should concentrate in their local and general work. As to the new tasks that confront us, of this we have spoken in general terms on more than one occasion. They are: to extend our agitation to new strata of the urban and rural poor; to build up a broader, more flexible, and stronger organisation; to prepare the uprising and to arm the people; and, to these ends, to conclude agreements with the revolutionary democrats. That new forces have arisen for the fulfilment of these tasks is eloquently borne out by the reports of general strikes all over Russia, of the strikes and the revolutionary mood among the youth, among the democratic intelligentsia generally, and even among many sections of the bourgeoisie. The existence of these tremendous fresh forces and the positive assurance that only a small portion of the whole vast stock of inflammable material among the working class and the peasantry has so far been affected by the present unprecedented revolutionary ferment in Russia are a reliable pledge that the new tasks can and will be unfailingly fulfilled. The practical question confronting us now is, first, *how* to utilise, direct, unite, and organise these new forces; *how* to focus Social-Democratic work on the new, higher tasks of the day without for a moment forgetting the old, ordinary run of tasks that confront us, and will continue to confront us, so long as the world of capitalist exploitation continues to exist.

To indicate several methods for dealing with this practical question we shall begin with an individual, but to our mind very characteristic, instance. A short time ago, on the very eve of the outbreak of the revolution, the liberal-bourgeois *Osvobozhdeniye* (No. 63) touched on the question of the organisational work of the Social-Democrats. Closely following the struggle between the two trends in Social-Democracy, *Oswobozhdeniye* lost no opportunity again and again to take advantage of the new *Iskra*'s reversion to Economism, in order to emphasise (in connection with the demagogic pamphlet by "A Worker") its own profound sympathy with the principles of Economism. This liberal publication correctly pointed out that the

pamphlet (see *Vperyod* No. 2, on the subject*) implies inevitable negation, or belittlement, of the role of revolutionary Social-Democracy. Referring to "A Worker's" absolutely incorrect assertions that since the victory of the orthodox Marxists the economic struggle has been ignored, *Osvobozhdeniye* says:

"The illusion of present-day Russian Social-Democracy lies in its fear of educational work, of legal ways, of Economism, of so-called non-political forms of the labour movement, and in its failure to understand that only educational work, legal and non-political forms, can create a sufficiently strong and broad foundation for a working-class movement that will really be worthy of the name revolutionary."

Osvobozhdeniye urges its adherents "to take upon themselves the initiative in building a trade union movement", not in opposition to Social-Democracy, but hand in hand with it; and it draws a parallel between this situation and that which prevailed in the German labour movement during the operation of the Exceptional Law Against the Socialists.

This is not the place to deal with this analogy, a totally erroneous one. In the first place, it is necessary to reassert the truth about the attitude of the Social-Democrats towards the legal forms of the working-class movement. "The legalisation of non-socialist and non-political labour unions in Russia has begun," we wrote in 1902 in *What Is To Be Done?*[7] "Henceforth, we cannot but reckon with this tendency." How shall we reckon with it?—the question is raised there and answered by a reference to the need of exposing, not only the Zubatov theories, but also all liberal harmony speeches about "class collaboration". (In inviting the collaboration of the Social-Democrats, *Osvobozhdeniye* fully acknowledges the first task, but ignores the second.) "Doing this," the pamphlet goes on to say, "does not at all mean forgetting that in the long run the legalisation of the working-class movement will be to our advantage, and not to that of the Zubatovs." In

* See *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 56-62.—*Ed.*

exposing Zubatovism and liberalism at legal meetings we are separating the tares from the wheat. "By the wheat we mean attracting the attention of ever larger numbers, including the most backward sections, of the workers to social and political questions, and freeing ourselves, the revolutionaries, from functions that are essentially legal (the distribution of legal books, mutual aid, etc.), the development of which will inevitably provide us with an increasing quantity of material for agitation."

It follows clearly from this that if anyone is suffering from an "*illusion*" with regard to the question of "*fearing*" the legal forms of the movement, it is *Osvobozhdeniye*. Far from fearing these forms, the revolutionary Social-Democrats clearly point to the existence within them of *tares* as well as *wheat*. *Osvobozhdeniye*'s arguments, consequently, only cover up the liberals' real (and founded) *fear* that revolutionary Social-Democracy will expose the *class essence of liberalism*.

But what interests us most, from the point of view of present-day tasks, is the question of relieving the revolutionaries of some of their functions. The very fact that we are now experiencing the beginning of the revolution makes this a particularly topical and widely significant question. "The more energetically we carry on our revolutionary struggle, the more the government will be compelled to legalise part of the trade union work, thereby relieving us of part of our burden," we said in *What Is To Be Done?** But the energetic revolutionary struggle relieves us of "part of our burden" in many other ways besides this. The present situation has done more than merely "legalise" much of what was formerly banned. It has widened the movement to such an extent that, regardless of government legalisation, many things that were considered and actually were within reach only of revolutionaries have now entered the sphere of practice, have become customary and accessible to the masses. The whole course of Social-Democracy's historical development is characterised by the fact that in face of all obstacles it

* See *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 491.—*Ed.*

has been winning for itself increased freedom of action, despite tsarist laws and police measures. The revolutionary proletariat surrounds itself, as it were, with a certain atmosphere, unthinkable for the government, of sympathy and support both within the working class and within other classes (which, of course, agree with only a small part of the demands of the working-class democrats). In the initial stages of the movement a Social-Democrat had to carry on a great deal of what almost amounted to cultural work, or to concentrate almost exclusively on economic agitation. Now these functions, one after another, are passing into the hands of new forces, of wider sections that are being enlisted in the movement. The revolutionary organisations have concentrated more and more on carrying out the function of real *political* leadership, the function of drawing *Social-Democratic* conclusions from the workers' protest and the popular discontent. In the beginning we had to teach the workers the ABC, both in the literal and in the figurative senses. Now the standard of political literacy has risen so gigantically that we can and should concentrate all our efforts on the more direct Social-Democratic objectives aimed at giving an organised direction to the revolutionary stream. Now the liberals and the legal press are doing a great deal of the "preparatory" work upon which we have hitherto had to expend so much effort. Now the open propaganda of democratic ideas and demands, no longer persecuted by the weakened government, has spread so widely that we must learn to adjust ourselves to this entirely new scope of the movement. Naturally, in this preparatory work there are both tares and wheat. Naturally, Social-Democrats will now have to pay greater attention to combating the influence of the bourgeois democrats on the workers. But this very work will have much more real Social-Democratic content than our former activity, which aimed mainly at rousing the politically unconscious masses.

The more the popular movement spreads, the more clearly will the true nature of the different classes stand revealed and the more pressing will the *Party*'s task be in leading the class, in becoming its organiser, instead of

dragging at the tail-end of events. The more the revolutionary independent activity of all kinds develops everywhere, the more obvious will be the hollowness and inanity of the *Rabocheye Dyelo* catchwords, so eagerly taken up by the new-Iskrists, about independent activity in general, the more significant will become the meaning of *Social-Democratic* independent activity, and the greater will be the demands which events make on our *revolutionary initiative*. The wider the new streams of the social movement become, the greater becomes the importance of a strong Social-Democratic organisation capable of creating new channels for these streams. The more the democratic propaganda and agitation conducted independently of us works to our advantage, the greater becomes the importance of an organised Social-Democratic leadership to safeguard the independence of the working class from the bourgeois democrats.

A revolutionary epoch is to the Social-Democrats what war-time is to an army. We must broaden the cadres of our army, we must advance them from peace strength to war strength, we must mobilise the reservists, recall the furloughed, and form new auxiliary corps, units, and services. We must not forget that in war we necessarily and inevitably have to put up with less trained replacements, very often to replace officers with rank-and-file soldiers, and to speed up and simplify the promotion of soldiers to officers' rank.

To drop metaphor, we must considerably increase the membership of all Party and Party-connected organisations in order to be able to keep up to some extent with the stream of popular revolutionary energy which has been a hundredfold strengthened. This, it goes without saying, does not mean that consistent training and systematic instruction in the Marxist truths are to be left in the shade. We must, however, remember that at the present time far greater significance in the matter of training and education attaches to the military operations, which *teach* the untrained precisely and entirely in *our* sense. We must remember that our "doctrinaire" faithfulness to Marxism is now being reinforced by the march of revolutionary

events, which is everywhere furnishing *object lessons to the masses* and that all these lessons confirm precisely our dogma. Hence, we do not speak about abandoning the dogma, or relaxing our distrustful and suspicious attitude towards the woolly intellectuals and the arid-minded revolutionaries. Quite the contrary. We speak about new methods of teaching dogma, which it would be unpardonable for a Social-Democrat to forget. We speak of the importance for our day of using the object lessons of the great revolutionary events in order to convey—not to study circles, as in the past, but to the masses—our old, "dogmatic" lessons that, for example, it is necessary in practice to combine terror with the uprising of the masses, or that behind the liberalism of the educated Russian society one must be able to discern the class interests of our bourgeoisie (cf. our polemics with the Socialist-Revolutionaries on this question in *Vperyod* No. 3*).

Thus, it is not a question of relaxing our Social-Democratic exactingness and our orthodox intransigence, but of strengthening both in *new* ways, by new methods of training. In war-time, recruits should get their training lessons directly from military operations. So tackle the new methods of training more boldly, comrades! Forward, and organise more and more squads, send them into battle, recruit more young workers, extend the normal framework of all Party organisations, from committees to factory groups, craft unions, and student circles! Remember that every moment of delay in this task will play into the hands of the enemies of Social-Democracy; for the new streams are seeking an immediate outlet, and if they do not find a Social-Democratic channel they will rush into a non-Social-Democratic channel. Remember that every practical step in the revolutionary movement will decidely, inevitably give the young recruits a lesson in Social-Democratic science; for this science is based on an objectively correct estimation of the forces and tendencies of the various classes, while the revolution itself is nothing but the break-up of old superstructures and the independent

* See *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 83-89.—*Ed.*

action of the various classes, each striving to erect the new superstructure in its own way. But do not debase our revolutionary science to the level of mere book dogma, do not vulgarise it with wretched phrases about tactics-as-process and organisation-as-process, with phrases that seek to justify confusion, vacillation, and lack of initiative. Give more scope to all the diverse kinds of enterprise on the part of the most varied groups and circles, bearing in mind that, apart from our counsel and regardless of it, the relentless exigencies of the march of revolutionary events will keep them upon the correct course. It is an old maxim that in politics one often has to learn from the enemy. And at revolutionary moments the enemy always forces correct conclusions upon us in a particularly instructive and speedy manner.

To sum up, we must reckon with the growing movement, which has increased a hundredfold, with the new tempo of the work, with the freer atmosphere and the wider field of activity. The work must be given an entirely different scope. Methods of training should be refocussed from peaceful instruction to military operations. Young fighters should be recruited more boldly, widely, and rapidly into the ranks *of all and every kind* of our organisations. *Hundreds* of new organisations should be set up for the purpose without a moment's delay. Yes, hundreds; this is no hyperbole, and let no one tell me that it is "too late" now to tackle such a broad organisational job. No, it is never too late to organise. We must use the freedom we are getting by law and the freedom we are taking despite the law to strengthen and multiply the number of Party organisations of all varieties. Whatever the course or the outcome of the revolution may be, however early it may be checked by one or other circumstance, all its real gains will be rendered secure and reliable only insofar as the proletariat is organised.

The slogan "Organise!" which the adherents of the majority wanted to issue, fully formulated, at the Second Congress must now be put into effect immediately. If we fail to show bold initiative in setting up new organisations, we shall have to give up as groundless all pretensions to

the role of vanguard. If we stop helplessly at the achieved boundaries, forms, and confines of the committees, groups, meetings, and circles, we shall merely prove our own incapacity. Thousands of circles are now springing up everywhere without our aid, without any definite programme or aim, simply under the impact of events. The Social-Democrats must make it their task to establish and strengthen direct contacts with the greatest possible number of these circles, to assist them, to give them the benefit of their own knowledge and experience, to stimulate them with their own revolutionary initiative. Let all such circles, except those that are avowedly non-Social-Democratic, either directly join the Party or *align themselves with the Party*. In the latter event we must not demand that they accept our programme or that they necessarily enter into organisational relations with us. Their mood of protest and their sympathy for the cause of international revolutionary Social-Democracy in themselves suffice, provided the Social-Democrats work effectively among them, for these circles of *sympathisers* under the impact of events to be transformed at first into democratic assistants and then into convinced members of the Social-Democratic working-class party.

There are masses of people, and we are short of people; this contradictory formula has long expressed the contradictions between the organisational life and the organisational needs of the Social-Democratic Party. Today this contradiction is more salient than ever before; we often hear from all sides passionate appeals for new forces, complaints about the shortage of forces in the organisations, while at the same time we have everywhere countless offers of service, a growth of young forces, especially among the working class. The practical organiser who complains of a shortage of people under such circumstances becomes the victim of the illusion from which Madame Roland suffered, when she wrote in 1793, at the peak of the Great French Revolution, that France had no men, that there were only dwarfs. People who talk in this manner do not see the wood for the trees; they admit that they are blinded by events, that it is not they, the revolutionaries, who control

events in mind and deed, but events that control them and have overwhelmed them. Such organisers *had better retire* and leave the field clear for younger forces who often make up with verve what they lack in experience.

There is no dearth of people; never has revolutionary Russia had such a multitude of people as now. Never has a revolutionary class been so well off for temporary allies, conscious friends, and unconscious supporters as the Russian proletariat is today. There are masses of people; all we need do is get rid of tail-ist ideas and precepts, give full scope to initiative and enterprise, to "plans" and "undertakings", and thus show ourselves to be worthy representatives of the great revolutionary class. Then the proletariat of Russia will carry through *the whole great Russian revolution* as heroically as it has begun it.

Vperyod No. 9,
March 8 (February 23), 1905

Collected Works,
Vol. 8, pp. 211-20

ON CONFOUNDING POLITICS WITH PEDAGOGICS

We have quite a few Social-Democrats who give way to pessimism every time the workers suffer a reverse in single battles with the capitalists or with the government, and who scornfully dismiss all mention of the great and lofty aims of the working-class movement by pointing to the inadequate degree of our influence on the masses. Who and what are we, they say, to strive towards such things? It is purposeless to speak of the role of Social-Democracy as vanguard of the revolution when we do not even really know the mood of the masses, when we are unable to merge with them and to rouse the working masses! The reverses suffered by the Social-Democrats last May Day have considerably intensified this mood. Naturally, the Mensheviks, or new-Iskrists, have seized this opening to raise anew the special slogan "To the masses!"—as if in spite, as if in answer to those who have thought and spoken of the provisional revolutionary government, of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship, etc.

It must be admitted that in this pessimism, and in the conclusions which the hasty publicists of the new *Iskra* draw from it, there is one very dangerous feature that may cause great harm to the Social-Democratic movement. To be sure, self-criticism is vitally essential to every live and virile party. There is nothing more disgusting than smug optimism. There is nothing more warranted than the urging of attention to the constant, imperative necessity of deepening and broadening, broadening and deepening, our influence on the masses, our strictly Marxist propaganda and agitation, our ever-closer connection with the

economic struggle of the working class, etc. Yet, because such urging is at all times warranted, under all conditions and in all situations, it must not be turned into special slogans, nor should it justify attempts to build upon it a special trend in Social-Democracy. A border-line exists here; to exceed the bounds is to turn this indisputably legitimate urging into a narrowing of the aims and the scope of the movement, into a doctrinaire blindness to the vital and cardinal political tasks of the moment.

It is our duty always to intensify and broaden our work and influence among the masses. A Social-Democrat who does not do this is no Social-Democrat. No branch, group, or circle can be considered a Social-Democratic organisation if it does not work to this end steadily and regularly. To a great extent, the purpose of our strict separation as a distinct and independent party of the proletariat consists in the fact that we always and undeviatingly conduct this Marxist work of raising the whole working class, as far as possible, to the level of Social-Democratic consciousness, allowing no political gales, still less political changes of scenery, to turn us away from this urgent task. Without this work, political activity would inevitably degenerate into a game, because this activity acquires real importance for the proletariat only when and insofar as it arouses the mass of a definite class, wins its interest, and mobilises it to take an active, foremost part in events. This work, as we have said, is always necessary. After every reverse we should bring this to mind again, and emphasise it, for weakness in this work is *always* one of the causes of the proletariat's defeat. Similarly, we should always call attention to it and emphasise its importance after every victory, otherwise the victory will be only a seeming one, its fruits will not be assured, its real significance in the great struggle for our ultimate goal will be negligible and may even prove adverse (particularly if a partial victory should slacken our vigilance, lull our distrust of unreliable allies, and cause us to forgo the right moment for a renewed and more vigorous attack on the enemy).

But for the very reason that the work of intensifying and broadening our influence on the masses is always

necessary, after each victory as after each defeat, in times of political quiescense as in the stormiest periods of revolution, we should not turn the emphasis upon this work into a special slogan or build upon it any special trend if we do not wish to court the risk of descending to demagogy and degrading the aims of the advanced and only truly revolutionary class. There is and always will be an element of pedagogics in the political activity of the Social-Democratic Party. We must educate the whole class of wage-workers to the role of fighters for the emancipation of mankind from all oppression. We must constantly teach more and more sections of this class; we must learn to approach the most backward, the most undeveloped members of this class, those who are least influenced by our science and the science of life, so as to be able to speak to them, to draw closer to them, to raise them steadily and patiently to the level of Social-Democratic consciousness, without making a dry dogma out of our doctrine—to teach them not only from books, but through participation in the daily struggle for existence of these backward and undeveloped strata of the proletariat. There is, we repeat, a certain element of pedagogics in this everyday activity. The Social-Democrat who lost sight of this activity would cease to be a Social-Democrat. That is true. But some of us often forget, these days, that a Social-Democrat who would reduce the tasks of politics to pedagogics would also, though for a different reason, cease to be a Social-Democrat. Whosoever might think of turning this "pedagogics" into a special slogan, of *contraposing* it to "politics", of building a special trend upon it, and of appealing to the masses under this slogan against the "politicians" of Social-Democracy, would instantly and unavoidably descend to demagogy.

That comparisons are odious is an old axiom. In every comparison a likeness is drawn in regard to only one aspect or several aspects of the objects or notions compared, while the other aspects are tentatively and with reservation abstracted. Let us remind the reader of this commonly known but frequently ignored axiom and proceed to compare the Social-Democratic Party to a large school which

is at once elementary, secondary, and collegiate. The teaching of the ABC, instruction in the rudiments of knowledge and in independent thinking, will never, under any circumstances, be neglected in this big school. But if anyone sought to invoke the need for teaching the ABC as a pretext for dismissing questions of higher learning, if anyone attempted to offset the impermanent, dubious, and "narrow" results of this higher learning (accessible to a much smaller circle of people than those learning the ABC) to the durable, profound, extensive, and solid results of the elementary school, he would betray incredible shortsightedness. He might even help to pervert the whole purpose of the big school, since by ignoring higher education he would simply be making it easier for charlatans, demagogues, and reactionaries to mislead the people who had only learned the ABC. Or again, let us compare the Party to an army. Neither in peace-time nor in war-time dare we neglect the training of recruits, dare we neglect rifle drill, or the dissemination of the rudiments of military science as intensively and extensively as possible among the masses. But if those directing the manoeuvres or actual battles. . . .*

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* Here the manuscript breaks off.—*Ed.*

LESSONS OF THE MOSCOW UPRISING

The publication of the book *Moscow in December 1905* (Moscow, 1906) could not have been more timely. It is an urgent task of the workers' party to assimilate the lessons of the December uprising.[8] Unfortunately, this book is like a barrel of honey spoilt by a spoonful of tar: most interesting material—despite its incompleteness—and incredibly slovenly, incredibly trite conclusions. We shall deal with these conclusions on another occasion*; at present we shall turn our attention to the burning political question of the day, to the lessons of the Moscow uprising.

The principal forms of the December movement in Moscow were the peaceful strike and demonstrations, and these were the only forms of struggle in which the vast majority of the workers took an active part. Yet, the December action in Moscow vividly demonstrated that the general strike, as an independent and predominant form of struggle, is out of date, that the movement is breaking out of these narrow bounds with elemental and irresistible force and giving rise to the highest form of struggle—an uprising.

In calling the strike, all the revolutionary parties, all the Moscow unions recognised and even intuitively felt that it must inevitably grow into an uprising. On December 6 the Soviet of Workers' Deputies resolved to "strive to transform the strike into an armed uprising". As a matter of fact, however, none of the organisations were prepared for this. Even the Joint Council of Volunteer Fighting

* See *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, pp. 189-93.—*Ed.*

Squads[9] spoke (*on December 9!*) of an uprising as of something remote, and it is quite evident that it had no hand in or control of the street fighting that took place. The organisations *failed to keep pace* with the growth and range of the movement.

The strike was growing into an uprising, primarily as a result of the pressure of the objective conditions created after October.[10] A general strike could no longer take the government unawares: it had already organised the forces of counter-revolution, and they were ready for military action. The whole course of the Russian revolution after October, and the sequence of events in Moscow in the December days, strikingly confirmed one of Marx's profound propositions: revolution progresses by giving rise to a strong and united counter-revolution, i.e., it compels the enemy to resort to more and more extreme measures of defence and in this way devises ever more powerful means of attack.[11]

December 7 and 8: a peaceful strike, peaceful mass demonstrations. Evening of the 8th: the siege of the Aquarium. The morning of the 9th: the crowd in Strastnaya Square is attacked by the dragoons. Evening: the Fiedler building is raided. Temper rises. The unorganised street crowds, quite spontaneously and hesitatingly, set up the first barricades.

The 10th: artillery fire is opened on the barricades and the crowds in the streets. Barricades are set up more deliberately, and no longer in isolated cases, but on a really mass scale. The whole population is in the streets; all the main centres of the city are covered by a network of barricades. For several days the volunteer fighting units wage a stubborn guerrilla battle against the troops, which exhausts the troops and compels Dubasov to beg for reinforcements. Only on December 15 did the superiority of the government forces become complete, and on December 17 the Semyonovsky Regiment[12] crushed Presnya District, the last stronghold of the uprising.

From a strike and demonstrations to isolated barricades. From isolated barricades to the mass erection of barricades and street fighting against the troops. Over the heads

of the organisations, the mass proletarian struggle developed from a strike to an uprising. This is the greatest historic gain the Russian revolution achieved in December 1905; and like all preceding gains it was purchased at the price of enormous sacrifices. The movement was raised from a general political strike to a higher stage. It compelled the reaction to go *to the limit* in its resistance, and so brought vastly nearer the moment when the revolution will also go to the limit in applying the means of attack. The reaction *cannot* go further than the shelling of barricades, buildings and crowds. But the revolution can go very much further than the Moscow volunteer fighting units, it can go very, very much further in breadth and depth. And the revolution has advanced far since December. The base of the revolutionary crisis has become immeasurably broader—the blade must now be sharpened to a keener edge.

The proletariat sensed sooner than its leaders the change in the objective conditions of the struggle and the need for a transition from the strike to an uprising. As is always the case, practice marched ahead of theory. A peaceful strike and demonstrations immediately ceased to satisfy the workers; they asked: What is to be done next? And they demanded more resolute action. The instructions to set up barricades reached the districts exceedingly late, when barricades were already being erected in the centre of the city. The workers set to work in large numbers, but *even this did not satisfy them*; they wanted to know: What is to be done next?—they demanded active measures. In December, we, the leaders of the Social-Democratic proletariat, were like a commander-in-chief who has deployed his troops in such an absurd way that most of them took no active part in the battle. The masses of the workers demanded, but failed to receive, instructions for resolute mass action.

Thus, nothing could be more short-sighted than Plekhanov's view, seized upon by all the opportunists, that the strike was untimely and should not have been started, and that "they should not have taken to arms". On the contrary, we should have taken to arms more resolutely, energet-

ically and aggressively; we should have explained to the masses that it was impossible to confine things to a peaceful strike and that a fearless and relentless armed fight was necessary. And now we must at last openly and publicly admit that political strikes are inadequate; we must carry on the widest agitation among the masses in favour of an armed uprising and make no attempt to obscure this question by talk about "preliminary stages", or to befog it in any way. We would be deceiving both ourselves and the people if we concealed from the masses the necessity of a desperate, bloody war of extermination, as the immediate task of the coming revolutionary action.

Such is the first lesson of the December events. Another lesson concerns the character of the uprising, the methods by which it is conducted, and the conditions which lead to the troops coming over to the side of the people. An extremely biased view on this latter point prevails in the Right wing of our Party. It is alleged that there is no possibility of fighting modern troops; the troops must become revolutionary. Of course, unless the revolution assumes a mass character and affects the troops, there can be no question of serious struggle. That we must work among the troops goes without saying. But we must not imagine that they will come over to our side at one stroke, as a result of persuasion or their own convictions. The Moscow uprising clearly demonstrated how stereotyped and lifeless this view is. As a matter of fact, the wavering of the troops, which is inevitable in every truly popular movement, leads to a real *fight for the troops* whenever the revolutionary struggle becomes acute. The Moscow uprising was precisely an example of the desperate, frantic struggle for the troops that takes place between the reaction and the revolution. Dubasov himself declared that of the fifteen thousand men of the Moscow garrison, only five thousand were reliable. The government restrained the waverers by the most diverse and desperate measures: they appealed to them, flattered them, bribed them, presented them with watches, money, etc.; they doped them with vodka, they lied to them, threatened them, confined them to barracks and disarmed them, and those who were suspected of being

least reliable were removed by treachery and violence. And we must have the courage to confess, openly and unreservedly, that in this respect we lagged behind the government. We failed to utilise the forces at our disposal for such an active, bold, resourceful and aggressive fight for the wavering troops as that which the government waged and won. We have carried on work in the army and we will redouble our efforts in the future ideologically to "win over" the troops. But we shall prove to be miserable pedants if we forget that at a time of uprising there must also be a physical struggle for the troops.

In the December days, the Moscow proletariat taught us magnificent lessons in ideologically "winning over" the troops, as, for example, on December 8 in Strastnaya Square, when the crowd surrounded the Cossacks, mingled and fraternised with them, and persuaded them to turn back. Or on December 10, in Presnya District, when two working girls, carrying a red flag in a crowd of 10,000 people, rushed out to meet the Cossacks crying "Kill us! We will not surrender the flag alive!" And the Cossacks were disconcerted and galloped away, amidst the shouts from the crowd: "Hurrah for the Cossacks!" These examples of courage and heroism should be impressed forever on the mind of the proletariat.

But here are examples of how we lagged behind Dubasov. On December 9, soldiers were marching down Bolshaya Serpukhovskaya Street singing the *Marseillaise*, on their way to join the insurgents. The workers sent delegates to meet them. Malakhov himself galloped at breakneck speed towards them. The workers were too late, Malakhov reached them first. He delivered a passionate speech, caused the soldiers to waver, surrounded them with dragoons, marched them off to barracks and locked them in. Malakhov reached the soldiers in time and we did not, although within two days 150,000 people had risen at our call, and these could and should have organised the patrolling of the streets. Malakhov surrounded the soldiers with dragoons, whereas we failed to surround the Malakhovs with bomb-throwers. We could and should have done this; and long ago the Social-Democratic press (the old *Iskra*) point-

ed out that ruthless extermination of civil and military chiefs was our duty during an uprising. What took place in Bolshaya Serpukhovskaya Street was apparently repeated in its main features in front of the Nesvizhskiye Barracks and the Krutitskiye Barracks, and also when the workers attempted to "withdraw" the Ekaterinoslav Regiment, and when delegates were sent to the sappers in Alexandrov, and when the Rostov artillery on its way to Moscow was turned back, and when the sappers were disarmed in Kolomna, and so on. During the uprising we proved unequal to our task in the fight for the wavering troops.

The December events confirmed another of Marx's profound propositions, which the opportunists have forgotten, namely, that insurrection is an art and that the principal rule of this art is the waging of a desperately bold and irrevocably determined *offensive*. We have not sufficiently assimilated this truth. We ourselves have not sufficiently learned, nor have we taught the masses, this art, this rule to attack at all costs. We must make up for this omission with all our energy. It is not enough to take sides on the question of political slogans; it is also necessary to take sides on the question of an armed uprising. Those who are opposed to it, those who do not prepare for it, must be ruthlessly dismissed from the ranks of the supporters of the revolution, sent packing to its enemies, to the traitors or cowards; for the day is approaching when the force of events and the conditions of the struggle will compel us to distinguish between enemies and friends according to this principle. It is not passivity that we should preach, not mere "waiting" until the troops "come over". No! We must proclaim from the housetops the need for a bold offensive and armed attack, the necessity at such times of exterminating the persons in command of the enemy, and of a most energetic fight for the wavering troops.

The third great lesson taught by Moscow concerns the tactics and organisation of the forces for an uprising. Military tactics depend on the level of military technique. This plain truth Engels demonstrated and brought home

to all Marxists. Military technique today is not what it was in the middle of the nineteenth century. It would be folly to contend against artillery in crowds and defend barricades with revolvers. Kautsky was right when he wrote that it is high time now, after Moscow, to review Engels's conclusions,[13] and that Moscow had inaugurated *"new barricade tactics"*. These tactics are the tactics of guerrilla warfare. The organisation required for such tactics is that of mobile and exceedingly small units, units of ten, three or even two persons. We often meet Social-Democrats now who scoff whenever units of five or three are mentioned. But scoffing is only a cheap way of ignoring the *new* question of tactics and organisation raised by street fighting under the conditions imposed by modern military technique. Study carefully the story of the Moscow uprising, gentlemen, and you will understand what connection exists between "units of five" and the question of "new barricade tactics".

Moscow advanced these tactics, but failed to develop them far enough, to apply them to any considerable extent, to a really mass extent. There were too few volunteer fighting squads, the slogan of bold attack was not issued to the masses of the workers and they did not apply it; the guerrilla detachments were too uniform in character, their arms and methods were inadequate, their ability to lead the crowd was almost undeveloped. We must make up for all this and we shall do so by learning from the experience of Moscow, by spreading this experience among the masses and by stimulating their creative efforts to develop it still further. And the guerrilla warfare and mass terror that have been taking place throughout Russia practically without a break since December, will undoubtedly help the masses to learn the correct tactics of an uprising. Social-Democracy must recognise this mass terror and incorporate it into its tactics, organising and controlling it of course, subordinating it to the interests and conditions of the working-class movement and the general revolutionary struggle, while eliminating and ruthlessly lopping off the "hooligan" perversion of this guerrilla warfare which was so splendidly and ruthlessly dealt with by our Moscow com-

rades during the uprising and by the Letts during the days of the famous Lettish republics.[14]

There have been new advances in military technique in the very recent period. The Japanese War produced the hand grenade. The small-arms factories have placed automatic rifles on the market. Both these weapons are already being successfully used in the Russian revolution, but to a degree that is far from adequate. We can and must take advantage of improvements in technique, teach the workers' detachments to make bombs in large quantities, help them and our fighting squads to obtain supplies of explosives, fuses and automatic rifles. If the mass of the workers takes part in uprisings in the towns, if mass attacks are launched on the enemy, if a determined and skilful fight is waged for the troops, who after the Duma, after Sveaborg and Kronstadt[15] are wavering more than ever—and if we ensure participation of the rural areas in the general struggle—victory will be ours in the next all-Russian armed uprising.

Let us, then, develop our work more extensively and set our tasks more boldly, while mastering the lessons of the great days of the Russian revolution. The basis of our work is a correct estimate of class interests and of the requirements of the nation's development at the present juncture. We are rallying, and shall continue to rally, an increasing section of the proletariat, the peasantry and the army under the slogan of overthrowing the tsarist regime and convening a constituent assembly by a revolutionary government. As hitherto, the basis and chief content of our work is to develop the political understanding of the masses. But let us not forget that, in addition to this general, constant and fundamental task, times like the present in Russia impose other, particular and special tasks. Let us not become pedants and philistines, let us not evade these special tasks of the moment, these special tasks of the given forms of struggle, by meaningless references to our permanent duties, which remain unchanged at all times and in all circumstances.

Let us remember that a great mass struggle is approaching. It will be an armed uprising. It must, as far as possi-

ble, be simultaneous. The masses must know that they are entering upon an armed, bloody and desperate struggle. Contempt for death must become widespread among them and will ensure victory. The onslaught on the enemy must be pressed with the greatest vigour; attack, not defence, must be the slogan of the masses; the ruthless extermination of the enemy will be their task; the organisation of the struggle will become mobile and flexible; the wavering elements among the troops will be drawn into active participation. And in this momentous struggle, the party of the class-conscious proletariat must discharge its duty to the full.

Proletary No. 2,
August 29, 1906

Collected Works,
Vol. 11, pp. 171-78

THE ATTITUDE OF THE BOURGEOIS PARTIES AND OF THE WORKERS' PARTY TO THE DUMA ELECTIONS

The papers are full of news about the preparations for the elections.[16] Almost every day we are informed either of a new government "interpretation" striking out of the voters' list one more category of unreliable citizens, or of new persecutions, prohibitions of meetings, suppression of newspapers and the arrest of suspected electors or candidates. The Black Hundreds[17] have raised their heads, whooping and hooting more insolently than ever.

The parties that are objectionable to the government are also preparing for the elections. These parties are confident, and justly confident, that the *mass* of the voters will have their say, will take advantage of the elections to express their true convictions in spite of all the tricks, pinpricks and restrictions, great and small, that are directed against the voters. This confidence is based on the fact that the most ferocious persecutions, the most intolerable pinpricks will at most eliminate hundreds, thousands, let us say, tens of thousands of voters throughout Russia. But this will not alter the sentiments and the attitude of the *masses* towards the government. Ten or twenty thousand voters can be struck off the list in St. Petersburg, say, but this will only cause the 150,000 voters in the capital to withdraw into their shells, as it were, to lie low for a time. They will not disappear, however, and their mass sentiment will not change; if it does change, it will not, of course, be in favour of the government. Therefore, unless the electoral law is radically amended, unless all remnants of electoral legality are finally trampled upon (and they can still be further trampled upon by means of systematic arrests of electors:

one may expect the very worst from Stolypin!)—there is still no doubt that the mood of the masses will decide the elections, and the decision will certainly not be in favour of the government and its Black Hundreds.

And all non-supporters of the government are placing their hopes in the masses of the voters. But if you examine carefully what this hope in the masses really amounts to, what *the attitude* of the various parties is towards the masses—you will observe a vast difference between the bourgeois parties and the party of the proletariat.

The Cadets[18] are at the head of the liberal-bourgeois parties. During the elections to the First Duma they shamefully betrayed the struggle, they refused to take part in the boycott; they themselves went tamely to the elections and drew the raw masses after them. Now they are placing their hopes on the inertness of these masses, and on the restrictions which have been imposed on agitation and on the Left parties in the conduct of their election campaign. The Cadet's hope in the masses is hope in the immaturity and servitude of the masses. He argues as follows: the masses will not understand our programme and tactics, they will not go beyond a peaceful and legal, the most peaceful and timid protest—not because they do not wish to, but because they will not be allowed to. They will vote for us, for the Lefts have no newspapers, no meetings, no leaflets, no security against arbitrary arrest and persecution. So thinks the Cadet. And he proudly raises his eyes to heaven and says: I thank thee Lord that I am not as one of those "extremists"! I am not a revolutionary; I shall be able to adjust myself most obediently and abjectly to any measures; I shall even get my election forms* from the Peaceful Renovators.[19]

Hence, the whole of the Cadets' election campaign is directed to frightening the masses with the Black-Hundred danger and the danger from the extreme Left parties, to adapting themselves to the philistinism, cowardice and flabbiness of the petty bourgeois and to persuading him that the Cadets are the safest, the most modest, the most

* See *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 385.—*Ed.*

moderate and the most well-behaved of people. Every day the Cadet papers ask their readers: Are you afraid, philistine? Rely on us! We are not going to frighten you, we are opposed to violence, we are obedient to the government; rely on us, and we shall do everything for you "as far as possible"! And behind the backs of the frightened philistines the Cadets resort to every trick to assure the government of their loyalty, to assure the Lefts of their love of liberty, to assure the Peaceful Renovators of their affinity with their party and their election forms.

No enlightenment of the masses, no agitation to rouse the masses, no exposition of consistent democratic slogans —only a haggling for seats behind the backs of the frightened philistines—such is the election campaign of all the parties of the liberal bourgeoisie, from the non-party people (of *Tovarishch*) to the Party of Democratic Reforms.

The attitude of the workers' party towards the masses is exactly the reverse. The important thing for us is not to get seats in the Duma by means of compromises; on the contrary, those seats are important only because and insofar as they can serve to develop the *political consciousness* of the masses, to *raise* them to a higher political level, to *organise* them, not for the sake of philistine happiness, not for the sake of "tranquillity", "order" and "peaceful [bourgeois] bliss", but for the *struggle,* the struggle for the complete emancipation of labour from all exploitation and all oppression. Only for this purpose, and only to the extent that they help us to achieve it, are seats in the Duma and the *whole* election campaign important for us. The workers' party places all its hopes on the masses; on the masses who are not frightened, not passively submissive and who do not humbly bear the yoke, but who are politically conscious, demanding and militant. The workers' party must treat with contempt the usual liberal method of frightening the philistine with the bogey of the Black-Hundred danger. The whole task of the Social-Democrats is to make the masses *conscious* of the real danger, of the actual aims in the struggle of these forces whose strength lies not in the

Duma, which find full expression not in Duma debates, and which will settle the question of Russia's future outside the Duma.

The workers' party therefore warns the masses against the clandestine election tricks of the Cadet bourgeoisie, against its stultifying cry: Entrust to us, lawyers, professors and enlightened landlords, the task of combating the Black-Hundred danger!

The workers' party tells the masses: trust only your socialist consciousness and your socialist organisation. To surrender priority in the struggle and the right to lead it to the liberal bourgeoisie is tantamount to selling the cause of liberty for grandiloquent phrases, for the tawdry brilliance of fashionable and gaudy signboards. No Black-Hundred danger in the Duma can be as harmful as the corruption of the minds of the masses who are blindly following the liberal bourgeoisie, its slogans, its candidates and its policy.

Among the masses to whom the workers' party is appealing, the strongest numerically are the peasants and various sections of the petty bourgeoisie. They are more determined than the Cadets, more honest and a thousand times more capable of fighting, but in politics they are too often led by the Cadet windbags. Even now they are wavering between the militant proletariat and the compromising bourgeoisie.

The advocates of blocs with the Cadets are not only doing harm to the proletariat and to the whole cause of liberty. They are prejudicing the development of political consciousness among the urban and rural poor. They are not performing their immediate duty, which is to free these people from the influence of the liberal bourgeoisie. Look at the Trudoviks, the "Popular Socialists" and the Socialist-Revolutionaries.[20] They, too, are wavering, and are also mainly occupied with plans for deals with the Cadets. The leaders of the Trudoviks, having failed to form a party of their own, are multiplying their Duma mistakes tenfold by appealing to the masses to vote for the Cadets (Anikin—through newspaper reporters, Zhilkin—in *Tovarishch*, etc.). This is downright treachery to the cause of the peasants'

struggle, downright betrayal of the peasants to the liberal landlords, who would rob the peasants by means of a "fair" compensation as thoroughly as their forefathers did in 1861.[21] And as for the "Popular Socialists", even the Cadets are laughing at them and calling them "second reserve Cadets" (Milyukov in *Rech*). Their leaders (Annensky and others) also appeal for blocs with the Cadets. Their tiny party (which according to *Tovarishch*, a paper which is favourably disposed to them, is weaker even than the party of peaceful plunder,[22] and which has only about 2,000 members throughout Russia!) is a mere appendage of the Cadets. The position of the Socialist-Revolutionaries is also ambiguous: both in the October period and in the period of the First Duma they concealed the fact that they had split with the Popular Socialists; they continued to collaborate with them and jointly published the same newspapers. Today, they are not conducting any open and independent struggle, are not sufficiently broadly, openly and sharply attacking the "second reserve Cadets", are not supplying the masses with adequate data for criticising that party, and are not making any appraisal in principle of the whole election campaign and all electoral agreements in general.

It is the great historical duty of the workers' party to help to create an *independent* political party of the working class. Those who advocate blocs with the Cadets hinder the fulfilment of this duty.

Another great duty that confronts the workers' party is to free the masses of the ruined, poverty-stricken and doomed urban petty bourgeoisie and peasantry from the influence of the ideas and prejudices of the liberal bourgeoisie. The fulfilment of this duty is also being hindered by those who advocate blocs with the Cadets. They are not divorcing the peasants from the liberals, but are strengthening this unnatural alliance, which is fatal to the cause of liberty and to the cause of the proletariat. They are not warning the peasant masses against the liberals' backstairs politics (or rather, political intrigue for the distribution of seats in the Duma), but are sanctioning this intrigue by taking part in it.

Down with all blocs! The workers' party must conduct its election campaign independently, not only in words, but in deeds. It must provide the whole people, and the masses of the proletariat in particular, with a model of courageous and consistent criticism based on principle. Only in that way shall we succeed in rallying the masses for effective participation in the struggle for freedom and not in the sham liberalism of the Cadet betrayers of freedom.

Ternii Truda No. 2,
December 31, 1906

Collected Works,
Vol. 11, pp. 414-18

From DRAFT RESOLUTIONS FOR THE FIFTH CONGRESS OF THE R.S.D.L.P.

4. THE INTENSIFICATION OF MASS DESTITUTION AND OF THE ECONOMIC STRUGGLE

Whereas:

1. a number of facts testify to the extreme intensification of destitution among the proletariat and also of its economic struggle (the lock-out in Poland, the movement among the workers of St. Petersburg and Ivanovo-Voznesensk against the high cost of living, the extensive strike movement in the Moscow industrial area, the urgent calls of the trade union organisations to prepare for an intense struggle, etc.);

2. all signs go to show that these various manifestations of the economic struggle are accumulating to such an extent that there is every reason to expect mass economic action all over the country, involving far larger sections of the proletariat than before;

3. the whole history of the Russian revolution shows that all the powerful upsurges of the revolutionary movement began only on the basis of such mass economic movements;

This conference declares:

1. that all Party organisations must pay most serious attention to these curcumstances, collect fuller information about them, and that this question should be put on the agenda of the Fifth Party Congress;

2. that the greatest possible number of Party members must be concentrated on economic agitation among the masses;

3. that this economic movement must be regarded as the main source and foundation of the entire revolutionary crisis that is developing in Russia.

5. NON-PARTY WORKERS' ORGANISATIONS AND THE ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST TREND AMONG THE PROLETARIAT

Whereas:

1. in connection with Comrade Axelrod's agitation for a non-party labour congress, a trend (represented by Larin, Shcheglo, El, Ivanovsky, Mirov, and the Odessa publication *Osvobozhdeniye Truda*) has appeared in the ranks of the R.S.D.L.P., the aim of which is to destroy the Social-Democratic Labour Party and to set up in its place a non-party political organisation of the proletariat[23];

2. besides this, outside of and actually against the Party, anarcho-syndicalist agitation is being carried on among the proletariat, using this same slogan of a non-party labour congress and non-party organisations (*Soyuznoye Dyelo* and its group in Moscow, the anarchist press in Odessa, etc.);

3. notwithstanding the resolution passed by the November All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P., a series of disruptive actions has been observed in our Party, with the object of setting up non-party organisations;

4. on the other hand, the R.S.D.L.P. has never renounced its intention of utilising certain non-party organisations, such as the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, in periods of more or less intense revolutionary upheaval, to extend Social-Democratic influence among the working class and to strengthen the Social-Democratic labour movement (see the September resolutions of the St. Petersburg Committee and the Moscow Committee on the labour congress, in *Proletary* Nos. 3 and 4);

5. the incipient revival creates the opportunity to organise or utilise non-party representative working-class institutions, such as Soviets of Workers' Deputies, Soviets of Workers' Delegates, etc., for the purpose of developing the Social-Democratic movement; at the same time the Social-Democratic Party organisations must bear in mind that if Social-Democratic activities among the proletarian masses are properly, effectively and widely organised, such institutions may actually become superfluous;

This conference declares:

1. that a most determined ideological struggle must be waged against the anarcho-syndicalist movement among the proletariat and against Axelrod's and Larin's ideas in the Social-Democratic Party;

2. that a most determined struggle must be waged against all disruptive and demagogic attempts to weaken the R.S.D.L.P. from within or to utilise it for the purpose of substituting non-party political, proletarian organisations for the Social-Democratic Party;

3. that Social-Democratic Party organisations may, in case of necessity, participate in inter-party Soviets of Workers' Delegates, Soviets of Workers' Deputies, and in congresses of representatives of these organisations, and may organise such institutions, provided this is done on strict Party lines for the purpose of developing and strengthening the Social-Democratic Labour Party;

4. that for the purpose of extending and strengthening the influence of the Social-Democratic Party among the broad masses of the proletariat, it is essential, on the one hand, to increase efforts to organise trade unions and conduct Social-Democratic propaganda and agitation within them, and, on the other hand, to draw still larger sections of the working class into the activities of all types of Party organisations.

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THE ASSESSMENT OF THE PRESENT SITUATION

The agenda of the forthcoming All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. includes the question: "The present situation and the tasks of the Party". The organisations of our Party have already begun (Moscow and St. Petersburg ahead of all other centres in this respect) systematically to discuss this question, which is undoubtedly of extreme importance.

The present period of lull in the movement for liberation, of rampant reaction, of betrayals and despondency in the camp of the democrats, of crisis and partial breakdown in the Social-Democratic organisations, makes it particularly vital to take into account first of all the main lessons of the first campaign of our revolution. We have in mind not tactical lessons in the narrow sense of the word, but in the first place the general lessons of the revolution. And, in keeping with this, our first question will be, what are the objective changes which have taken place in the grouping of classes and the political balance of forces in Russia between 1904 and 1908[24]? The main changes can be reduced, in our view, to the following five: (1) There has been a fundamental shift in the agrarian policy of the autocracy on the peasant question; support and reinforcement of the old village commune have been superseded by a policy of speeded-up police destruction and plundering of that commune.[25] (2) The representative arrangements of the Black-Hundred nobility and big bourgeoisie have made a tremendous step forward: instead of the former local elected committees of the nobles and merchants, instead of sporadic attempts at representing them on an all-Russian

scale, there is a single representative body, the State Duma, in which these classes are guaranteed complete preponderance. Representation of the liberal professions—to say nothing of the peasantry and the proletariat—is reduced to the role of an appendage and a makeweight in this so-called "constitutional" institution, the purpose of which is to strengthen the autocracy. (3) For the first time the classes have achieved a definite cleavage and taken shape in open political struggle during this period: the political parties which now exist openly and secretly (half-secretly, to be more exact, for there are no completely "secret" parties in Russia since the revolution), express with previously unheard-of exactness the interests and viewpoint of classes which during the three years have matured a hundred times more than during the preceding half-century. The Black-Hundred nobility, the national-"liberal" bourgeoisie, the petty-bourgeois democrats (the Trudoviks with their small Left wing of S.R.s) and proletarian Social-Democracy have all during this period completed the "foetal" stage of their development, and for years ahead have defined their nature, not in words but by facts and mass actions. (4) What before the revolution was known as liberal and liberal-Narodnik "society", or the spokesman and "enlightened" part of the "nation" at large—the broad mass of well-to-do, noblemen's and intellectuals' "opposition", which seemed to be something integral, and homogeneous, permeating the Zemstvos, the universities, all the "decent" press, etc., etc.—has displayed itself in the revolution as the ideologues and supporters of the bourgeoisie, and has taken up what all can recognise now as a *counter-revolutionary* position in respect of the *mass* struggle of the socialist proletariat and the democratic peasantry. The counter-revolutionary liberal bourgeoisie has come into existence and is growing—and this fact does not cease to be a fact because it is denied by the "progressive" legal press, or because our opportunists, the Mensheviks, keep silent about it and do not understand it. (5) Millions among the population have gained practical *experience*, in the most varied forms, of a genuinely mass and directly revolutionary struggle, including a "general strike", the expul-

sion of landowners, the burning of their country-houses, and open armed uprising. He who was already a revolutionary or a class-conscious worker before the revolution cannot fully realise the tremendous significance of this fact, which has radically changed a number of previous conceptions of the course of development of a political crisis, the tempo of this development, the dialectics of history created in practice by the masses. The assessment of this experience *by the masses* is an invisible, painful and slow process, playing a far more important part than many an event on the surface of the country's political life which fascinate infants who are not only of an infantile age in politics but sometimes a good deal older. The leading role of the proletarian masses all through the revolution and in all the fields of struggle, from demonstrations, through insurrection, to (in chronological order) "parliamentary" activity, has become apparent for all to see during this period, if we look over it as a whole.

Such are the objective changes which have created a gulf between pre-October[26] and present-day Russia. Such are the *results* of three years of the most eventful period of our history, results given, of course, in a summarised form, so to speak, insofar as one is able in a few words to outline what is most important and essential. Now let us examine the conclusions in the sphere of tactics which these results dictate.

The change in the agrarian policy of the autocracy is of exceptionally great importance for a "peasant" country like Russia. This change is not an accident, it is not the fluctuations in ministerial lines of action, not an invention of the bureaucracy. No, it is a profound "shift" towards *agrarian Bonapartism*, towards a liberal (economically understood, i.e., bourgeois) policy in the sphere of peasant land relations. Bonapartism is the manoeuvring on the part of a monarchy which has lost its old patriarchal or feudal, simple and solid, foundation—a monarchy which is obliged to walk the tightrope in order not to fall, make advances in order to govern, bribe in order to gain affections, fraternise with the dregs of society, with plain thieves and swindlers, in order not to rely only on bayonets.

Bonapartism is the objectively necessary evolution of the monarchy in any bourgeois country, traced by Marx and Engels through a number of facts in the modern history of Europe. And the agrarian Bonapartism of Stolypin, on this point quite consciously and steadfastly supported both by the Black-Hundred landlords and the Octobrist[27] bourgeoisie, could not even have seen the light, much less have lasted two years now, if the village commune itself in Russia were not developing in a capitalist direction, if within the commune elements were not steadily shaping which the autocracy could begin its flirtation with, to which it could say: "Enrich yourselves!", "Plunder the commune but support me!" Therefore, any assessment of Stolypin's agrarian policy that did not reckon with the Bonapartist methods of the latter, on the one hand, and its bourgeois (that is, liberal) essence on the other would be decidedly erroneous.

For example, our liberals express their dimly realised understanding that Stolypin's agrarian policy is Bonapartism by their attacks on its police character, on the idiotic interference of officials in peasant affairs, etc., etc. But when the Cadets lament the violent break-up of the "age-old" foundations of our country life, they become *reactionary* moaners. Without a violent, revolutionary break-up of the foundations of the old Russian countryside there can be no development of Russia. The struggle is going on—though very many indeed of its participants do not realise it—*only* about whether it will be the violence of a landlords' monarchy against the peasants, or of a peasant republic against the landlords. In both cases a bourgeois, and no other kind of agrarian revolution in Russia is *inevitable,* but in the first case it will be a slow and agonising one, in the second a swift, broad and free-moving one. The struggle of the workers' party for this second road is expressed and recognised in our agrarian programme—not in the part where the senseless idea of "municipalisation" is put forward, but in the part which speaks about *confiscating all the landed* estates. After the experience of three years it is only, perhaps, among the Mensheviks that people can be still found who do not see the link between

the struggle for that confiscation and the struggle for a republic. Stolypin's agrarian policy, if maintained for a very long time, if it reconstructed all landed relations in the countryside for good and all on purely bourgeois lines, might force us to give up the idea of any agrarian programme in bourgeois society (up to this day *even* the Mensheviks, and even the Cherevanins among the Mensheviks, have not reached the point of renouncing our agrarian programme). But Stolypin's policy can by no means induce us to change our tactics today. Since the "confiscation of all landed estates" stands in the programme, only infants can fail to see the revolutionary tactics (in the direct and narrow sense of the word "revolutionary") which follow from this. And it would be wrong to put the question in this way, that if Stolypin's policy is suffering "bankruptcy", that means that a revival is near—and vice versa. The failure of Bonapartist methods does not imply the failure of the policy of the kulak plundering of the village commune. And, vice versa, Stolypin's "success" in the countryside now and in the next years to come will *necessarily* inflame the struggle within the peasantry rather than quench it, for only by a long, a very long road, can the "goal", i.e., the final and complete consolidation of a *purely* bourgeois peasant economy, be achieved. Stolypin's "success" in the years immediately ahead might lead at best to the emergence of a stratum of consciously counter-revolutionary Octobrist peasants, but it is just such a transformation of the well-to-do minority into a politically conscious and united force that would inevitably give a tremendous impetus to the development of political consciousness and unity of the democratic mass against such a minority. We Social-Democrats could wish for nothing better than the transformation of the spontaneous, sporadic, blind struggle between the "sharks" and the "community" into a conscious and open struggle between Octobrists and Trudoviks.

Let us go on to the question of the Duma. Undoubtedly this Black-Hundred "constitutional" body is just another development of the absolute monarchy towards Bonapartism. All those features of Bonapartism which we noted

above are revealed with perfect clarity in the present electoral law, in the faked majority of Black-Hundred representatives plus the Octobrists, in the sham imitation of Europe, in the rush for loans, the expenditure of which is allegedly controlled by "the representatives of the nation", and the complete ignoring of all the debates and decisions of the Duma by the autocracy in its practical policy. The contradiction between the Black-Hundred autocracy, which virtually reigns supreme, and the window-dressing of a bourgeois "constitution" is revealing itself more and more obviously, and bringing with it the elements of a new revolutionary crisis. The autocracy was to have been covered up, dressed up, decked out with the help of the Duma; in effect, the Black-Hundred-Octobrist Duma with every day of its existence reveals, exposes, lays bare the true character of our state power, its real class foundations and its Bonapartism. One cannot but recall in this connection the remarkably profound observation of Engels (in his letter to Bernstein on August 27, 1883) on the meaning of the *transition* from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy. While the liberals in general and the Russian Cadets in particular see in such a transition the workings of their notorious "peaceful" progress and its guarantee, Engels pointed out the historic role of the constitutional monarchy as a form of state which facilitates a *decisive* struggle between the feudalists and the bourgeoisie. Engels wrote: "But just as this struggle [between feudalism and the bourgeoisie] could not be fought out to a decisive conclusion under the old absolute monarchy but only in a constitutional one (England, France 1789-92 and 1815-30), so the struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat can only be fought out in a republic." Engels here gives the title of constitutional monarchy, among others, to the France of 1816, when the famous Chambre Introuvable, a reactionary counter-revolutionary chamber, ran amuck in support of the White Terror against the revolution probably no less violently than our Third Duma. What does this mean? Does Engels recognise the reactionary assemblies of representatives of the landlords and capitalists, who support absolutism in its struggle with revolution, as being genuinely constitutional

institutions? No. It means that there may arise historical conditions when institutions which falsify a constitution inflame the struggle for a real constitution, and become a stage in the development of new *revolutionary* crises. In the first campaign of our revolution the majority of the people still believed in the possibility of reconciling a genuine constitution with the autocracy; and the Cadets built their whole policy on systematically sustaining this belief among the people, while the Trudoviks followed the lead of the Cadets at least half-way in this respect. Now the autocracy by its Third Duma is showing the people in practice with what "constitution" it can "reconcile itself" —and thereby brings nearer a wider and more resolute struggle *against the autocracy*.

It follows from this, incidentally, that it would be quite wrong to replace our old slogan of "down with the autocracy" with the slogan "down with the Third Duma". Under what conditions could a slogan like "down with the Duma" acquire meaning? Let us assume that we are faced with a liberal, reform-seeking, compromising Duma in a period of the sharpest revolutionary crisis, which had developed to the point of direct civil war. It is quite possible that at such a moment our slogan might be "down with the Duma", i.e., down with peaceable negotiations with the tsar, down with the deceptive institution of "peace", let's call for a direct attack. Now let us assume, on the contrary, that we are faced with an arch-reactionary Duma, elected under an obsolete electoral law, and the absence of any acutely revolutionary crisis in the country. In that case the slogan "down with the Duma" might become the slogan of a struggle for electoral reform. We see neither of these contingencies at the present time. The Third Duma is not a compromising but a downright counter-revolutionary body, which does not cover up the autocracy, but exposes it, and which plays no independent part in any respect; no one anywhere expects it to produce progressive reforms; no one imagines that the source of tsarism's real power and strength lies in this assembly of diehards. All are agreed that tsarism does not repose on it, but makes use of it; that tsarism can pursue its entire present policy,

both if the calling of such a Duma be postponed (as the calling of a parliament was "postponed" by Turkey in 1878) and if it be replaced by a "Zemsky Sobor"* or something similar. The slogan "down with the Duma" would mean concentrating the main attack on an institution which is neither independent nor decisive, and which does not play the principal part. Such a slogan would be wrong. We must keep the old slogan of "down with the autocracy" and "long live the Constituent Assembly", because it is precisely the autocracy which continues to remain the real authority, the real support and bulwark of reaction. The fall of the autocracy inevitably means the removal (and the revolutionary removal at that) of the Third Duma as an institution of tsarism; but the fall of the Third Duma by itself would mean either a new adventure by that same autocracy or an attempt at reform—a deceptive and only apparent reform—undertaken by the same autocracy.**

To proceed. We have seen that the class nature of the political parties during the three years of the first revolutionary campaign has become defined with remarkable force and salience. Hence it follows that in all discussions of the present balance of political forces, of the tendencies to change in this balance, etc., it is essential to reckon with these concrete data of historical experience, and not with abstract "general arguments". The entire history of the European states bears witness that precisely in the periods of direct revolutionary struggle deep and lasting foundations of class groupings are laid, and divisions into large political parties take place, which thereafter persist even in very long periods of stagnation. Some parties may go underground, give no sign of life, disappear from the front of the political stage: but at the slightest revival the main political forces inevitably will give signs of themselves again, perhaps in an altered form but with the same character and direction of their activity, so long as the objec-

* A central representative assembly.—*Ed.*

** In the next issue we shall examine the other aspect of the question of "Duma" tactics, and discuss the "letter" from an otzovist[28] comrade in *Rabocheye Znamya* No. 5 (see *Collected Works*, Vol. 15, pp. 286-302.—*Ed.*)

tive tasks of the revolution, which has suffered defeat to this or that extent, are not fulfilled. Hence, it would be the greatest short-sightedness, for example, to presume that because there are no Trudovik organisations in the local areas, and the Trudovik group in the Third Duma is distinguished by its particular confusion and impotence, the masses of the democratic peasantry have therefore completely fallen apart, and play no essential role in the process of the rise of a new revolutionary crisis. Such a view is worthy only of the Mensheviks, who more and more are falling into the most humdrum "parliamentary cretinism" (take, for example, their truly disgraceful renegade attacks against the illegal Party organisation). Marxists should know that the conditions of representation, not only in our Black-Hundred Duma but even in the most ideal bourgeois parliament, will always create an artificial disparity between the real strength of the various classes and its reflection in the representative institution. For example, the liberal-bourgeois intelligentsia always and everywhere seems in parliaments to be a hundred times stronger than it is in reality (in our revolution, too, opportunist Social-Democrats took the Cadets for what they seemed to be), and on the contrary very broad democratic strata of the petty bourgeoisie (in the towns during the bourgeois revolutions of 1848, in the countryside in Russia) often prove to be an extremely important factor in the open struggle of the masses, while being quite insignificant from the point of view of their representation in parliaments.

Our peasantry entered upon the revolution immeasurably less politically conscious than the liberal bourgeois on the one hand and the socialist proletariat on the other. For this reason it drew from the revolution more painful but valuable disillusionments, more bitter but salutary lessons, than any other class. Quite naturally, it is digesting these lessons with particular difficulty and particularly slowly. Quite naturally many "radicals" from among the intelligentsia will lose patience, and give it all up as a bad job—and so will some Social-Democratic philistines, on whose faces a contemptuous grimace appears whenever someone talks about some peasant democracy or other, but

whose mouths water at the mere sight of the "enlightened" liberals. But the class-conscious proletariat will not so easily strike out of its memory what it saw and what it took part in during the autumn and winter of 1905. And taking into account the balance of forces in our revolution, we must know that the certain sign of a genuinely widespread rise in the social tide, of a genuinely approaching revolutionary crisis, will inevitably be, in the Russia of today, a movement among the peasantry.

The liberal bourgeoisie in our country has entered upon the path of counter-revolution. Only the brave Cherevanins can deny this—they and the cowardly editors of *Golos Sotsial-Demokrata*,[29] who deny their own comrade-in-idea and -arms. But if this counter-revolutionary nature of the bourgeois liberals were to lead anyone to infer that their opposition and discontent, their conflicts with the Black-Hundred landlords, or any rivalry and struggle of the different sections of the bourgeoisie among themselves, can be of no importance in the process of a new upsurge, this would be a tremendous mistake, and real Menshevism inside out. The experience of the Russian revolution, like the experience of other countries, proves beyond doubt that where the objective conditions of a profound political crisis exist, the tiniest conflicts seemingly remote from the real breeding ground of revolution, can be of the most serious importance as the reason, as the last straw, as a turning-point in public feeling, etc. Let us recall that the Zemstvo campaign and the liberals' petitions of 1904 were the forerunner of such an original and purely proletarian "petition" as that of January the Ninth.[30] When the Bolsheviks were arguing about the Zemstvo campaign, it was not against its use for proletarian demonstrations, but against our Mensheviks wanting to confine these demonstrations to the Zemstvo assembly halls, against the demonstrations before the Zemstvo people being declared the highest form of demonstration, and against plans for the demonstrations being drawn up with a view to preventing the liberals from being frightened off. Another example is the student movements. In a country which is going through an era of bourgeois-democratic revolution involv-

ing a progressive accumulation of inflammable material, these movements may easily spark off events infinitely more far-reaching than a petty and local conflict over the management of affairs in a single branch of the state administration. Naturally, the Social-Democrats, who carry on the independent class policy of the proletariat, will never adapt themselves either to the student struggle or to new Zemstvo congresses, or to the conceptions of sections of the bourgeoisie which have fallen out among themselves; they will never ascribe independent importance to this family quarrel, and so on. But it is precisely the Social-Democratic Party which is the party of the class leading the whole struggle for emancipation; it is unquestionably bound to make use of each and every conflict, to inflame it, to extend its importance, to link with it its own agitation for revolutionary slogans, to bring the news of these conflicts to the broad masses, to induce them to take independent and open action with their own demands, etc. In France after 1793, a counter-revolutionary liberal bourgeoisie came into being and steadily grew; nevertheless the conflicts and the struggle between its different sections continued for another hundred years to serve in one way or another as grounds for new revolutions in which the proletariat invariably played the part of the principal motive force, and which it *carried through* to the point of winning a republic.

Let us now consider the conditions for an offensive by this leading and advanced class in our bourgeois-democratic revolution, the proletariat. When the Moscow comrades were discussing this question, they quite rightly underlined the root importance of the industrial crisis. They collected extremely interesting material about this crisis, took into account the significance of the struggle between Moscow and Lodz, and amended in several respects certain conceptions which had hitherto prevailed. It remains only to be wished that this material should not wither away in the subcommittees of the Moscow Committee or the Moscow Area Committee, but should be worked over and published in the press for the whole Party to discuss. For our part we shall confine ourselves to a few remarks on the *pres-*

entation of the question. The direction in which the crisis is moving is, by the way, a moot question (it is generally admitted that a very severe depression, bordering on a crisis, once more reigns in our industry after a very brief and slight boom). Some say that offensive economic struggles by the workers are as impossible as before, and consequently a revolutionary upswing is impossible in the near future. Others say that the impossibility of economic struggle impels a turn to a political struggle, and therefore a revolutionary upswing is inevitable in the near future.

We think that both arguments have at their foundation the same error, which consists in simplifying a complex issue. Undoubtedly the detailed study of the industrial crisis is of the greatest importance. But it is also beyond doubt that no data about the crisis, even if they were ideally accurate, can in reality decide the question of whether a rise of the revolutionary tide is at hand or not: because such a rise depends on a thousand additional factors which it is impossible to measure beforehand. It is indubitable that without the general groundwork of an agrarian crisis in the country, and depression in industry, profound political crises are impossible. But if the general groundwork exists, that does not permit us to conclude whether the depression will for a time retard the mass struggle of the workers in general, or whether *at a certain stage* of events *the same* depression will not push new masses and fresh forces into the political struggle. To answer such a question there is only one way: to keep a careful finger on the pulse of the country's whole political life, and especially the state of the movement and of the mood of the mass of the proletariat. Recently, for example, a number of reports from Party workers in different parts of Russia, in both industrial and agricultural areas, point to an undoubted revival of interest, an influx of fresh forces, a growing interest in agitation, etc. Comparing with this the beginning of mass unrest among the students, on the one hand, and the attempts to revive the Zemstvo congresses, on the other, we can record a certain turn in events, something that is breaking up the complete stagnation of the last eighteen months. How strong that turn is, whether it

means the opening stage for a new epoch of open struggle, etc., facts will show. All that we can do now, and all that we must do in any case, is to intensify our efforts to strengthen the illegal Party organisation and multiply tenfold our agitation among the mass of the proletariat. Only agitation can reveal on a broad scale the real state of mind of the masses, only agitation can make for close co-operation between the Party and the whole working class, only making use for the purposes of political agitation of every strike, of every important event or issue in working-class life, of all conflicts within the ruling classes or between one section of those classes or another and the autocracy, of every speech by a Social-Democrat in the Duma, of every new expression of the counter-revolutionary policy of the government, etc.—only work like this can once again close the ranks of the revolutionary proletariat, and provide accurate material for judging the speed with which conditions for new and more decisive battles are coming to a head.

To sum up. A survey of the results of the revolution and the present situation show clearly that the objective tasks of the revolution have not been performed. The shift towards Bonapartism in the autocracy's agrarian policy and in its general policy both in the Duma and through the medium of the Duma, only sharpens and widens the contradiction between the Black-Hundred autocracy and the supremacy of the "wild landlord", on the one hand, and the requirements of the economic and social development of the whole country, on the other. The police and kulak drive against the masses in the countryside is making the struggle there more acute and politically conscious, bringing—so to speak—the struggle against the autocracy closer to the everyday and vital problems of every village. The defence of revolutionary-democratic demands in the agrarian question (confiscation of all landed estates) is exceptionally binding a duty for the Social-Democrats at such a moment. The Black-Hundred-Octobrist Duma, which shows clearly in practice with what "constitution" the autocracy can "be reconciled" and which does not resolve a single question even within the narrowest limits of meet-

ing the needs of the country's economic development, is turning the struggle "for a constitution" into a revolutionary struggle *against the autocracy*. The local conflicts of individual sections of the bourgeoisie among themselves and with the government, in these conditions, bring just such a struggle nearer. The impoverishment of the countryside, depression in industry, a general feeling that there is no way out in the present political situation and that the notorious "peaceful constitutional" way is hopeless, all give rise more and more to new elements of a revolutionary crisis. Our business now is not artificially to invent any new slogans (like that of "Down with the Duma" instead of "Down with the autocracy"), but to strengthen the illegal Party organisation (in spite of the reactionary outcry of the Mensheviks who are trying to bury it) and to develop wide revolutionary Social-Democratic agitation, which will bind the Party firmly together with the masses of the proletariat and mobilise those masses.

Proletary No. 38,
November 1 (14), 1908

Collected Works,
Vol. 15, pp. 267-80

ON THE ROAD

A year of disintegration, a year of ideological and political disunity, a year of Party driftage lies behind us. The membership of all our Party organisations has dropped. Some of them—namely, those whose membership was least proletarian—have fallen to pieces. The Party's semi-legal institutions created by the revolution have been broken up time after time. Things reached a point when some elements within the Party, under the impact of the general break-up, began to ask whether it was necessary to preserve the old Social-Democratic Party, whether it was necessary to continue *its* work, whether it was necessary to go "underground" once more, and how this was to be done. And the extreme Right (the liquidationist trend, so called) answered this question in the sense that it was necessary to legalise ourselves at all costs, even at the price of an open renunciation of the Party programme, tactics and organisation. This was undoubtedly an ideological and political crisis as well as an organisational one.

The recent All-Russia Conference of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party has led the Party out on to the road, and evidently marks a turning-point in the development of the Russian working-class movement after the victory of the counter-revolution. The decisions of the conference, published in a special Report issued by the Central Committee of our Party, have been confirmed by the Central Committee, and therefore, pending the next Congress, stand as the decisions of the whole Party. These decisions give a very definite answer to the question of the causes and the significance of the crisis, as well as the

means of overcoming it. By working in the spirit of the conference resolutions, by striving to make *all* Party workers realise clearly and fully the present tasks of the Party, our organisations will be able to strengthen and consolidate their forces for united and effective revolutionary Social-Democratic work.

The main cause of the Party crisis is indicated in the preamble of the resolution on organisation. This main cause is the wavering intellectual and petty-bourgeois elements, of which the workers' party had to rid itself; elements who joined the working-class movement mainly in the hope of an early triumph of the bourgeois-democratic revolution and could not stand up to a period of reaction. Their instability was revealed both in theory ("retreat from revolutionary Marxism": the resolution on the present situation) and in tactics (the "whittling down of slogans"), as well as in Party organisation. The class-conscious workers repelled this instability, came out resolutely against the liquidators, began to take the management and guidance of the Party organisations into their own hands. If this hard core of our Party was unable at the outset to overcome the elements of disunity and crisis, this was not only because the task was a great and difficult one amidst the triumph of the counter-revolution, but also because a certain indifference towards the Party showed itself among those workers who, although revolutionary-minded, were not sufficiently socialist-minded. It is precisely to the class-conscious workers of Russia that the decisions of the conference are addressed in the first place—as the crystallised opinion of Social-Democracy concerning the means of combating disunity and vacillation.

A Marxist analysis of present-day class relations and of the new policy of tsarism; an indication of the immediate aim of the struggle which our Party continues as before to set itself; an appreciation of the lessons of the revolution as regards the correctness of the revolutionary Social-Democrats' tactics; elucidation of the causes of the Party crisis; pointing out the role in combating it of the proletarian elements of the Party; solution of the problem of relations between the illegal and legal organisations;

recognition of the necessity of utilising the Duma tribune and drawing up precise instructions for the guidance of our Duma group, linked with direct criticism of its mistakes—such was the principal content of the decisions of the conference, which provide a complete answer to the question of the party of the working class choosing a definite path in the present difficult period. Let us examine this answer more carefully.

The interrelation of classes in their political groupings remains the same as that which prevailed during the past period of direct revolutionary struggle of the masses.[31] The overwhelming majority of the peasants cannot but strive for an agrarian revolution which would destroy semi-feudal landownership, and which cannot be achieved without the overthrow of tsarism. The triumph of reaction has borne down heavily on the democratic elements of the peasantry, which is incapable of forming a solid organisation; but despite all oppression, despite the Black-Hundred Duma, despite the extreme instability of the Trudoviks, the revolutionary mood of the peasant masses is clearly evidenced even by the debates in the Third Duma. The fundamental position of the proletariat in regard to the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia remains unaltered: to guide the democratic peasantry and to wrest it from the influence of the liberal bourgeoisie, the Cadet Party—which continues to draw closer and closer to the Octobrists notwithstanding petty private squabbles, and which recently has been striving to establish national-liberalism and to support tsarism and reaction by chauvinist agitation. The struggle goes on as before—says the resolution—for the complete abolition of the monarchy and the conquest of political power by the proletariat and the revolutionary peasantry.

The autocracy, as hitherto, is the principal enemy of the proletariat and of all democratic trends. It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that it remains unchanged. The Stolypin "constitution" and Stolypin's agrarian policy mark a new stage in the break-down of the old, semi-patriarchal, semi-feudal tsarism, a new step towards its transformation into a bourgeois monarchy. The delegates

from the Caucasus, who wished either to delete such a characterisation of the present situation altogether, or to substitute "plutocratic" for "bourgeois", were wrong. The autocracy has long been plutocratic; but it is only after the first stage of the revolution, under the impact of its blows, that the autocracy is becoming bourgeois, both in its agrarian policy and its direct, nationally-organised alliance with certain strata of the bourgeoisie. The autocracy has been nursing the bourgeoisie for a long time now; the bourgeoisie, by means of the ruble, has long been winning its way to "the top", securing influence on legislation and administration, and a place beside the noble aristocracy. But the peculiar feature of the present situation is that the autocracy has been forced to set up a representative assembly for certain strata of the bourgeoisie, to balance between them and the feudalist landlords, to form an alliance of these sections in the Duma; it has been forced to abandon all the hopes it had placed in the patriarchalism of the muzhik, and to seek support against the rural masses among the rich peasants, who are ruining the village commune.

The autocracy cloaks itself with pseudo-constitutional institutions, but at the same time its class essence is being exposed as never before, owing to the alliance concluded by the tsar with the Purishkeviches and the Guchkovs, and with no one else. The autocracy is attempting to take upon itself the fulfilment of those tasks of the bourgeois revolution which are objectively necessary—the setting-up of a representative assembly of the people which would really manage the affairs of bourgeois society, and the purging of the countryside of medieval, entangled and antiquated agrarian relations. But the practical results of these new steps taken by the autocracy are, so far, exactly nil, and this only shows more clearly than ever that other forces and other means are necessary for the fulfilment of the historical task. In the minds of millions of people inexperienced in politics, the autocracy was hitherto contrasted with popular representation in general; now, the struggle is narrowing its aims, and is more concretely defining its task as the struggle for power in the state, which deter-

mines the character and significance of representation itself. That is why the Third Duma marks a special stage in the break-down of the old tsarism, in the intensification of its adventurist character, in the deepening of the old revolutionary aims, in the widening of the field of struggle (and of the numbers taking part in the struggle) for these aims.

We must get over this stage. The present new conditions require new forms of struggle. The use of the Duma tribune is an absolute necessity. A prolonged effort to educate and organise the masses of the proletariat becomes particularly important. The combination of illegal and legal organisation raises special problems before the Party. The popularisation and clarification of the experience of the revolution, which the liberals and liquidationist intellectuals are seeking to discredit, are necessary both for theoretical and practical purposes. But the tactical line of the Party—which must be able to take the new conditions into account in its methods and means of struggle—remains unchanged. The correctness of revolutionary Social-Democratic tactics, states one of the resolutions of the conference, is confirmed by the experience of the mass struggle in 1905-07. The defeat of the revolution resulting from this first campaign revealed, not that the tasks were wrong, not that the immediate aims were "utopian", not that the methods and means were mistaken, but that the forces were insufficiently prepared, that the revolutionary crisis was insufficiently wide and deep—and Stolypin and Co. are working to widen and deepen it with most praiseworthy zeal! Let the liberals and terrified intellectuals lose heart after the first genuinely mass battle for freedom, let them repeat like cowards: don't go where you have been beaten before, don't tread that fatal path again. The class-conscious proletariat will answer them: the great wars in history, the great problems of revolutions, were solved only by the advanced classes returning to the attack again and again—and they achieved victory after having learned the lessons of defeat. Defeated armies learn well. The revolutionary classes of Russia have been defeated in their first campaign, but the revolutionary situation re-

mains. In new forms and by other ways, sometimes much more slowly than we would wish, the revolutionary crisis is approaching, coming to a head again. We must carry on with the lengthy work of preparing larger masses for that crisis; this preparation must be more serious, taking account of higher and more concrete tasks; and the more successfully we do this work, the more certain will be our victory in the new struggle. The Russian proletariat can be proud of the fact that in 1905, under its leadership, a nation of slaves for the first time became a million-strong host, an army of the revolution, striking at tsarism. And now the same proletariat will know how to do persistently, staunchly and patiently the work of educating and training the new cadres of a still mightier revolutionary force.

As we have said, utilisation of the Duma tribune is an essential element of this work of education and training. The conference resolution on the Duma group indicates to our Party that road which comes nearest—if we are to seek instances in history—to the experience of German Social-Democracy at the time of the Anti-Socialist Law.[32] The illegal Party must know how to use, it must learn how to use, the legal Duma group; it must train up the latter into a Party organisation equal to its tasks. The most mistaken tactics, the most regrettable deviation from consistent proletarian work, dictated by the conditions of the present period, would be to raise the question of recalling the group from the Duma (there were two "otzovists" at the conference, but they did not raise the question openly), or to refrain from directly and openly criticising its mistakes and from enumerating them in the resolution (as some delegates insisted at the conference). The resolution fully recognises that the group has committed mistakes for which it was not alone to blame, and which were quite similar to the inevitable mistakes of all our Party organisations. But there are other mistakes—departures from the *political line* of the Party. Since these departures occurred, since they were made by an organisation openly acting in the name of the whole Party, the Party was bound to declare clearly and definitely that these were

deviations. In the history of West-European socialist parties there have been a number of instances of abnormal relations between the parliamentary groups and the Party; to this day these relations are quite often abnormal in the Latin countries, where the groups do not display sufficient Party spirit. We must from the very outset organise Social-Democratic parliamentarism in Russia on a different basis; we must at once establish team-work in this field—so that every Social-Democratic deputy may really feel that he has the Party behind him, that the Party is deeply concerned over his mistakes and tries to straighten out his path—so that every Party worker may take part in the general Duma work of the Party, learning from the practical Marxist criticism of its steps, feeling it his duty to assist it, and striving to gear the special work of the group to the whole propaganda and agitation activity of the Party.

The conference was the first authoritative meeting of delegates from the biggest Party organisations to discuss the work of the Duma Social-Democratic group during the whole session. And the decision of the conference shows very clearly how our Party will shape its Duma work, how very exacting it will be in this field both to itself and to the group, how undeviatingly and consistently it proposes to work on developing genuinely Social-Democratic parliamentarism.

The question of our attitude to the Duma group has a tactical and an organisational aspect. In the latter respect the resolution on the Duma group is only the application of our general principles of organisational policy to a particular case, principles laid down by the conference in the resolution giving instructions on the question of organisation. The conference has recorded that two main tendencies exist in the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party on this question: one of them throws the weight of emphasis on the illegal Party organisation, the other—which is more or less akin to liquidationism—throws the weight of emphasis on the legal and semi-legal organisations. The point is that the present situation is characterised, as we have already pointed out, by a certain number of Party

workers leaving the Party—especially intellectuals, but also some proletarians. The liquidationist trend raises the question as to whether it is the best, the most active elements that are abandoning the Party and choosing the legal organisations as their field of activity, or whether it is the "vacillating intellectualist and petty-bourgeois elements" that are leaving the Party. Needless to say, by emphatically rejecting and condemning liquidationism, the conference replied that it was the latter elements. The most proletarian elements of the Party, and those elements of the intelligentsia that were most consistent in principle and most Social-Democratic, remained true to the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. The desertions from the Party mean its purification, they mean getting rid of its least stable element, of its unreliable friends, of its "fellow-travellers" (*Mitläufer*), who always joined the proletariat for a while and who were recruited from among the petty bourgeoisie or from among the "declassed", i.e., people thrown out of the orbit of some definite class.

From this evaluation of the principle of Party organisation logically follows the line of organisational policy adopted by the conference. To strengthen the illegal Party organisation, to create Party cells in all spheres of work, to set up first of all "entirely Party committees consisting of workers, even if their number be small, in each industrial enterprise", to concentrate the functions of leadership in the hands of leaders of the Social-Democratic movement from among the workers themselves—such is the task today. Needless to say, the task of these cells and committees must be to utilise all the semi-legal and, as far as possible, legal organisations, to maintain "close contact with the masses", and to direct the work in such a way that Social-Democracy responds to all the needs of the masses. Every Party cell and workers' committee must become a "base for agitation, propaganda and practical organising work among the masses", i.e., they must go where the masses go, and try at every step to push the consciousness of the masses in the direction of socialism, to link up every specific question with the general tasks of the proletariat, to transform every act of organisation into

one of *class* consolidation, to win by dint of energy and ideological influence (not by their ranks and titles, of course) the leading role in all the proletarian legal organisations. Even if these cells and committees be very small at times, they will be linked together by Party tradition and Party organisation, by a definite class programme; and two or three Social-Democratic members of the Party will thus be able to avoid becoming submerged in an amorphous legal organisation and to pursue their *Party* line under all conditions, in all circumstances and in all kinds of situations, to influence their environment in the spirit of the whole Party, and not allow the environment to swallow them up.

Though mass organisations of one type or another may be dissolved, though the legal trade unions may be hounded out of existence, though every open act of workers' initiative under a regime of counter-revolution may be ruined by the police on one pretext or another—no power on earth can prevent the concentration of masses of workers in a capitalist country, such as Russia has already become. One way or another, legally or semi-legally, openly or coverty, the working class will find its own rallying points; the class-conscious Party Social-Democrats will everywhere and always march in front of the masses, everywhere and always act together in order to influence the masses in the spirit of the Party. And Social-Democracy, which has proved in open revolution that it is the party of the class, the party that succeeded in leading millions in strikes, in the uprising of 1905, as well as in the elections of 1906-07, will now also be able to remain the party of the class, the party of the masses, the vanguard, which in the hardest times will not lose touch with the bulk of the army, but will be able to help the latter overcome these hard times, consolidate its ranks once more, and train more and more new fighters.

Let the Black-Hundred diehards rejoice and howl inside the Duma and outside it, in the capital and in the remote provinces, let the reaction rage—the ever so wise Mr. Stolypin cannot take a single step without bringing the precariously balancing autocracy nearer its fall, without creat-

ing a new tangle of political impossibilities and absurdities, without adding new and fresh forces to the ranks of the proletariat and to the ranks of the revolutionary elements of the peasant masses. A party which succeeds in consolidating itself for persistent work in contact with the masses, a party of the advanced class, which succeeds in organising its vanguard, and which directs its forces in such a way as to influence in a Social-Democratic spirit every sign of life of the proletariat—such a party will win no matter what happens.

Sotsial-Demokrat No. 2,
January 28 (February 10), 1909

Collected Works,
Vol. 15, pp. 345-55

ONCE MORE ON PARTYISM AND NON-PARTYISM

The question of Party and non-Party, necessary and "unnecessary", candidatures is undoubtedly one of the most important—if not the most important—in the present Duma election. First of all and above all, the electors and the broad masses who are watching the election must realise *why* the election is necessary, *what* is the task that faces a Duma deputy, *what* the tactics of a St. Petersburg deputy in the Third Duma should be. But a really full and accurate idea of all this is possible only if the whole election campaign is of a Party character.

For those who desire in the election to uphold the interests of the really broad and broadest masses the first and foremost task is to develop the political consciousness of the masses. The more this consciousness is developed, and in inseparable connection with its development, the more clearly defined is the grouping of the masses according to the real interests of the various classes of the population. All non-partyism, even under exceptionally favourable conditions, invariably indicates that clarity and maturity are lacking in the political consciousness of the candidate, the groups or parties supporting him and the mass of people who take part in his election.

In the case of all the parties devoid of proper organisation and a clear-cut and principled programme,[33] whose aim in the election is to cater for the interests of particular small groups of the propertied classes, the development of the political consciousness of the masses is always thrust into the background, while a clear class grouping of the masses is practically always regarded as undesirable and

dangerous. For those who have no desire to come to the defence of the bourgeois parties clarity of political consciousness and of class alignment comes before everything. This, of course, does not exclude temporary joint actions by different parties in certain special cases, but it does absolutely exclude all non-partyism and all weakening or obscuring of party character.

But for the very reason that we uphold the party principle, in the interests of the broad masses, for the sake of freeing them from any kind of bourgeois influence, for the sake of the fullest clarity of class alignments, we must exert to the maximum our strength and vigilance to see that the Party principle is observed not in *words merely, but in fact.*

The non-party candidate Kuzmin-Karavayev, who has already been labelled an "unnecessary candidate", lays down that, strictly speaking, there are no party candidates at the elections in St. Petersburg. This opinion is so false that it is not worth pausing to refute it. It is impossible to doubt that Kutler and N. D. Sokolov are party candidates. Kuzmin-Karavayev is led astray partly by the fact that neither of the parties which have nominated them are existing quite openly as such. But if this makes it difficult to run the elections on a party basis it does not do away with the necessity of it. To give in to *such* difficulties, to fold one's arms in face of them, is absolutely identical with acceding to Mr. Stolypin's desire to hear confirmation of his "constitutionalism" from the lips of the "opposition" (the so-called opposition).

For the masses who are taking part in the St. Petersburg election it is particularly important now to find out *which* parties have *given up* in face of these difficulties and which of them have preserved in their entirety both their programme and their slogans; which have tried to "adapt themselves" to the reactionary regime by curtailing and restricting their Duma activity, their press and their organisation to the framework of this regime and which of them have adapted themselves to it by changing certain forms of activity, but not by any means by clipping their slogans in the Duma, or by strait-jacketing their press, organisa-

tion, etc. Such a comprehensive inquiry, based on the history of the parties, based on the facts of their activity inside and outside the Duma, should be the main content of the election campaign. The masses should, in this new and, for democrats, more difficult situation, re-acquaint themselves with the *parties* which claim the title of democratic. The masses should familiarise themselves again and again with the features that distinguish the bourgeois democrats from the democrats who have nominated N. D. Sokolov on this occasion, the differences in their general outlook, ultimate aims, their attitude to the task of the great international movement for emancipation, their ability to uphold the ideals and methods of the movement for emancipation in Russia. The masses must come out of this election campaign more party-conscious, more clearly aware of the interests, aims, slogans, points of view and methods of action of the different classes—that is the permanent result which the political trend represented by N. D. Sokolov values above everything and which it will be able to achieve by the most strenuous, unwavering, persistent and comprehensive work.

Novy Dyen No. 9,
September 14 (27), 1909
Signed: *Vl. Ilyin*

Collected Works,
Vol. 16, pp. 62-64

ON THE EVE OF THE ELECTIONS TO THE FOURTH DUMA

On the eve of the elections the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party has come forward, despite cruel persecution, despite wholesale arrests, with a clearer, more distinct and more precise programme, tactics and platform than any other party.

In January 1912 the All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. summed up the results of the ideological and political work carried out by the Party in the grim years of the counter-revolution. The Conference decisions gave answers to all the pressing questions of the movement. Thanks to those decisions, the election platform was simply a final statement. The platform was published by the Central Committee in Russia and was then reprinted by a whole series of local organisations. The whole bourgeois press reported the Conference and published some of its decisions.

In the six months since the Conference, work has been going on through the Party press and dozens of reports, in hundreds of speeches in factory groups and at the meetings held in April and May, to explain the Conference decisions and to put them into effect. The Party's slogans —a republic, an eight-hour working day, confiscation of the landed estates—have spread throughout Russia and have been accepted by the foremost proletarians. The revolutionary upsurge of the masses, its expression ranging from strikes and meetings to revolts in the armed forces, has proved these slogans to be correct and vital.

Our Party has already made use of the elections, and very extensively too. No amount of "interpretation" by

the police, no amount of falsification of the Fourth Duma (by the priesthood or otherwise) can nullify *this* result. Propaganda, organised strictly on Party lines, has already been carried out everywhere and has *set the tone* for the entire election campaign of the Social-Democrats.

The bourgeois parties in a hasty, slapdash manner are writing "platforms *for* the elections", for promises, for hoodwinking the voters. The liquidators, too, who are trailing behind the liberals, are now devising a *legal* "platform *for* the elections". The liquidators are making a fuss about platforms in the legal, censored press as they prepare to cover up their utter confusion, disorganisation, and lack of ideological principle, with a respectable, law-abiding "platform for the elections".

Not a platform "for the elections", but elections to implement the *revolutionary Social-Democratic* platform!—that is how the Party of the working class sees it. We have already used the elections to this end, and will use them to the hilt. We will use even the most reactionary tsarist Duma to advocate the revolutionary platform, tactics and programme of the Russian S.D. Labour Party. Truly valuable are only those platforms that complete the long work of *revolutionary* agitation, which has already given *full* answers to *all* the questions of the movement, and not those platforms (particularly the legal ones!) that are composed in all haste as a stop-gap and as a noisy advertisement, as in the case of the liquidators.

Six months have passed since the Party re-established itself. Overcoming incredible difficulties, suffering from fierce persecution and experiencing breaks in the work of this or that local centre or of the common centre—the Central Committee—the Party is definitely going forward, extending its work and its influence among the masses. This extension of the work is taking place *in a new form*: in addition to the illegal nuclei, which are secret and narrow, and better disguised than before, there is broader legal Marxist propaganda. It is just this distinctive character of the new preparations for revolution in the new conditions that has long been noted and acknowledged by the Party.

And we can now give a full answer to the noisy utterances of the liquidators, who threaten us with "duplicate candidates". Empty threats that scare no one! The liquidators are so badly beaten and impotent that *no amount of help* can revive them. They cannot so much as think of putting up "duplicate candidates"; if they did so, they would win a pitiful, ludicrously insignificant number of votes. They know this and will not try the experiment. They are making a noise merely to divert attention and conceal the truth.

We said "no amount of help". The liquidators are counting on help from abroad. Their friends—particularly the Letts, the Bund,[34] and Trotsky—have announced the convocation of *ten* "centres, organisations and factions"! Don't laugh! The world abroad is rich, great and bountiful. As many as "ten centres"!! The methods used in this case are the same as with the government in the Fourth Duma: preparations for setting up a representative body, and the conversion of a number of ciphers into the semblance of "big numbers". First of all, Trotsky (in Russia he is a cipher, he is only a contributor to *Zhivoye Dyelo*, and his agents are only defenders of the liquidators' "initiating groups"[35]). Secondly, *Golos Sotsial-Demokrata*, i.e., the selfsame impotent liquidators. Thirdly, the "Caucasian Regional Committee", also a cipher, in a third garb. Fourthly, the "Organising Committee"[36]—a fourth garb of the *very same* liquidators. Fifthly and sixthly, the Letts and the Bund, which is wholly liquidationist today. But enough!

Needless to say our Party is laughing at this game of non-entities abroad. They cannot resuscitate a corpse, for the liquidators in Russia are a corpse.

Here are the facts.

For six months the liquidators and *all* their friends have been waging a desperate struggle against the Party. There exists a legal *Marxist* press. It is fearfully handicapped, and does not dare utter a word about a republic, our Party, uprising, or the tsar's gang. It would be simply ridiculous to think of advocating the slogans of the R.S.D.L.P. through that press.

But the worker in Russia is no longer what he used to be. He has become a force. He has paved a way for himself. He has *his own* press, which is handicapped but belongs to him and defends Marxism *theoretically*.

In this open arena, everyone can see the "successes" of the liquidators' struggle against the anti-liquidators. S. V. of *Vperyod*[37] has already pointed out those successes in Trotsky's Vienna, liquidationist, *Pravda*.[38] The fact is, he wrote, that the workers' *collections* go almost entirely to the anti-liquidators. But he sought to comfort himself, saying that it is not because the workers sympathise with the "Leninists".

Why, naturally "not because", dear friend of the liquidators!

But still, look at the facts.

Six months of open struggle for a *workers' daily newspaper*.[39]

The liquidators have been shouting about it since 1910. What about their success? In six months—from January 1 to July 1, 1912—their papers, *Zhivoye Dyelo* and *Nevsky Golos*, carried the accounts of *15 (fifteen)* collections made by groups of workers for a workers' daily newspaper! Fifteen groups of workers in six months!

Take the newspapers of the anti-liquidators. See their accounts of the collections made for a workers' daily during the same six-month period. Add up the number of collections by groups of workers. You will find that there were *504 contributions by workers' groups*!

Here are exact monthly data for the various parts of Russia (see p. 77).

The liquidators have been thoroughly beaten in the eyes of the workers' groups in Russia. The liquidators are a corpse, and no number of terrible (oh, how terrible!) "associations of groups, centres, factions, trends and tendencies" abroad can revive this corpse.

No shrill manifestos abroad and no fake conferences between "initiating groups" and the liquidators can undo or alleviate this complete defeat of the liquidators in the eyes of the *hundreds of workers' groups in Russia*.

Number of workers' group contributions for a workers' daily newspaper during the first half of 1912

	In *anti*-liquidationist newspapers	In liquidationist newspapers
January	14	0
February	18	0
March	76	7
April	227	8
May	135	0
June	34	0
Total	504	15
St. Petersburg and vicinity	415	10
South	51	1
The rest of Russia	38	4
Total	504	15

The unity of the election campaign of the worker Social-Democrats in Russia is *assured*. It is assured not through "agreements" with the liquidators, but through the complete victory over the liquidators, who have already been reduced to their true role, the role of liberal intellectuals. See how well Savin, the Socialist-Revolutionary liquidator, fits into *Nasha Zarya*.[40] See how warmly L. M. praises, in *Listok Golosa Sotsial-Demokrata*, "the initiative" of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, who repeatedly stray (because of an otzovist hangover!) into liquidationism. Ponder on the significance of the fact that the same sheet holds up the well-known Socialist-Revolutionary "leader", Avksentyev, as an example for Plekhanov. Remember how *all* liquidators kiss the *non*-Social-Democratic Left wing of the Polish Socialist Party. Liquidators of all parties, unite!

Everyone finds his niche in the end. Groups of intellectualist liquidators from among former Marxists and former liberals with a bomb[41] are being welded together by the course of events.

As for the Party of the working class, the R.S.D.L.P., it has, in the six months since it regained its freedom from the bondage of those who had liquidated it, made a huge stride forward, as can be seen from the facts cited.

Rabochaya Gazeta No. 9,
July 30 (August 12), 1912

Collected Works,
Vol. 18, pp. 237-41

CONGRESS OF PEASANTS' DEPUTIES

A Congress of representatives of peasants' organisations and Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, who have met to draw up regulations for the convocation of an All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies and to set up similar local Soviets, has been in session in the Taurida Palace since April 13.

According to *Dyelo Naroda*, representatives from more than 20 gubernias are attending the Congress.

Resolutions have been adopted urging the need for the speediest organisation of the "peasantry" from bottom to "top". "Soviets of Peasants' Deputies functioning in the various areas" have been declared to be the "best form of organisation of the peasantry".

Bykhovsky, a member of the provisional bureau for the convocation of the present Congress, has pointed out that a decision to organise the peasantry by setting up an All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies had been taken by the Moscow Co-operative Congress, representing an organised membership of twelve million, or fifty million of the population.

This is an undertaking of tremendous importance, which must be given every support. If it is carried out without delay, if the peasantry, in spite of Shingaryov, takes over all the land immediately by a majority decision and not by "voluntary agreement" with the landowners[42] as he would have it, then not only the soldiers, who would receive more bread and meat, but also the cause of freedom would gain by it.

For the organisation of the peasants, carried out from below without the officials and without the "control and

supervision" of the landowners and their hangers-on, is the only reliable pledge of success for the revolution, for freedom, for the liberation of Russia from the yoke and bondage of the landowners.

There is no doubt that all members of our Party, all class-conscious workers, will do their utmost to support the organisation of Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, will see to it that their numbers are increased and their strength consolidated, and will exert every effort to work inside these Soviets along consistent and strictly proletarian class lines.

To carry on this work, it is necessary to organise separately the proletarian elements (agricultural labourers, day-labourers, etc.) *within* the general peasant Soviets, or (sometimes *and*) set up separate Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies.

Our object is not to scatter forces; on the contrary, in order to strengthen and broaden the movement, we must arouse the "*lowest*"—to use the terminology of the landowners and capitalists—section of society, or, more correctly, class.

To build up the movement, we must free it from the influence of the bourgeoisie; we must try to rid it of the inevitable weaknesses, vacillations, and mistakes of the petty bourgeoisie.

This work must be done by means of friendly persuasion, without anticipating events, without hurrying to "consolidate" organisationally that which the representatives of the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians have not yet fully realised, thought out, and digested for *themselves*. But it must be done, and a start must be made at once everywhere.

The practical demands and slogans, or, more properly, the proposals that have to be made to gain the *attention* of the peasants, should be based on vital and urgent issues.

The first issue is that of the land. The rural proletarians will be for the complete and immediate transfer of *all* the land without exception to the whole people, and for its being taken over immediately by the local committees. But

you cannot eat land. The millions of households that have no horses, implements, or seeds will gain nothing from the transfer of the land to the "people".

The question of continuing to run the big farms, wherever at all possible, as large-scale enterprises, directed by agricultural experts and the Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies and using the best machines, seeds, and most efficient farming methods, must be discussed and practical measures taken without delay.

We cannot conceal from the peasants, least of all from the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians, that small-scale farming under commodity economy and capitalism *cannot* rid humanity of mass poverty, that it is necessary to *think* about going over to large-scale farming conducted on public lines and to *tackle this job at once* by teaching the masses, and in turn *learning from the masses,* the practical expedient measures for bringing about such a transition.

Another vital and pressing issue is that of the organisation and administration of the state. It is not enough to preach democracy, not enough to proclaim it and decree it, not enough to entrust the people's "representatives" in representative institutions with its implementation. Democracy must be *built* at once, from below, through the initiative of the masses themselves, through their effective participation *in all* fields of state activity, without "supervision" from above, without the bureaucracy.

Replacement of the police, the bureaucracy, and the standing army by the universal arming of the whole people, by a universal *militia* of the entire people, women included, is a practical job that can and should be tackled immediately. The more initiative, variety, daring and creativeness the masses contribute to this, the better. Not only the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians, but nine-tenths of the peasantry probably will follow us if we explain our proposals clearly, simply, and intelligibly by demonstrating examples and lessons from real life. Our proposals are:

—not to allow the restoration of the police;

—not to allow the restoration of the absolute powers of

officials who, in effect, are undisplaceable and who belong to the landowner or capitalist class;

—not to allow the restoration of a standing army separated from the people, for such an army is the surest guarantee that attempts of all kinds will be made to stamp out freedom and restore the monarchy;

—to teach the people, down to the very bottom, the art of government not only in theory but in practice, by beginning to make immediate use everywhere of the experience of the masses.

Democracy from below, democracy without an officialdom, without a police, without a standing army; voluntary social duty by a *militia* formed from a universally armed people—this is a guarantee of freedom which no tsars, no swash-buckling generals, and no capitalists can take away..

Pravda No. 34,
April 16, 1917

Collected Works,
Vol. 24, pp. 167-70

From GREETINGS TO ITALIAN, FRENCH AND GERMAN COMMUNISTS

The Kautskyite (or Independent) party[43] is dying. It is bound to die and disintegrate soon as a result of the differences between its predominantly revolutionary membership and its counter-revolutionary "leaders".

The Communist Party, experiencing exactly the same (essentially the same) differences as were experienced by Bolshevism, will grow stronger and become as hard as steel.

The differences among the German Communists boil down, so far as I can judge, to the question of "utilising the legal possibilities" (as the Bolsheviks used to say in the 1910-13 period), of utilising the bourgeois parliament, the reactionary trade unions, the "works' councils law" (*Betriebsratgesetz*), bodies that have been hamstrung by the Scheidemanns and Kautskys; it is a question of whether to participate in such bodies or boycott them.

We Russian Bolsheviks experienced quite similar differences in 1906 and in the 1910-12 period. And for us it is clear that with many of the young German Communists it is simply a case of a lack of revolutionary experience. Had they experienced a couple of bourgeois revolutions (1905 and 1917), they would not be advocating the boycott so unconditionally, nor fall from time to time into the mistakes of syndicalism.

This is a matter of growing pains; the movement is developing in fine style and as it grows they will pass. And

these obvious mistakes must be combated openly; the differences must not be exaggerated since it must be clear to everyone that in the near future the struggle for the dictatorship of the proleariat, for Soviet power, will wipe out the greater part of them.

Both from the standpoint of Marxist theory and the experience of three revolutions (1905, February 1917 and October 1917) I regard refusal to participate in a bourgeois parliament, in a reactionary (Legien, Gompers, etc.) trade union, in an ultra-reactionary workers' council hamstrung by the Scheidemanns, etc., as an undoubted mistake.

At times, in individual cases, in individual countries, the boycott is correct, as, for example, was the Bolshevik boycott of the tsarist Duma in 1905.[44] But the selfsame Bolsheviks took part in the much more reactionary and downright counter-revolutionary Duma of 1907. The Bolsheviks contested the elections to the bourgeois Constituent Assembly in 1917, and in 1918 we dispersed it, to the horror of the philistine democrats, the Kautskys and other such renegades from socialism. We worked in the ultra-reactionary, purely Menshevik, trade unions which (in their counter-revolutionary nature) yielded nothing to the Legien unions—the foulest and most reactionary trade unions in Germany. Even now, two years after the conquest of state power, we have not yet finished fighting the remnants of the Menshevik (i.e., the Scheidemann, Kautsky, Gompers, etc.) trade unions—so long is the process! So strong in some places and in some trades is the influence of petty-bourgeois ideas!

At one time we were in a minority in the Soviets, the trade unions and the co-operatives. By persistent effort and long struggle—both *before and after* the conquest of political power—we won a majority, first in *all* workers' organisations, then in non-worker and, finally, even in small-peasant organisations.

Only scoundrels or simpletons can think that the proletariat must first win a majority in elections carried out *under the yoke of the bourgeoisie*, under the *yoke of wage-slavery*, and must then win power. This is the height of

stupidity or hypocrisy; it is substituting elections, under the old system and with the old power, for class struggle and revolution.

The proletariat wages its class struggle and does not wait for elections to begin a strike, although for the complete success of a strike it is necessary to have the sympathy of the majority of the working people (and, it follows, of the majority of the population); the proletariat wages its class struggle and overthrows the bourgeoisie without waiting for any preliminary elections (supervised by the bourgeoisie and carried out under its yoke); and the proletariat is perfectly well aware that for the success of its revolution, for the successfull overthrow of the bourgeoisie, it is *absolutely necessary* to have the sympathy of the majority of the working people (and, it follows, of the majority of the population).

The parliamentary cretins and latter-day Louis Blancs "insist" absolutely on elections, on elections that are most certainly supervised by the bourgeoisie, to ascertain whether they have the sympathy of the majority of the working people. But this is the attitude of pedants, of living corpses, or of cunning tricksters.

Real life and the history of actual revolutions show that quite often the "sympathy of the majority of the working people" cannot be demonstrated by any elections (to say nothing of elections supervised by the exploiters, with "equality" of exploiters and exploited!). Quite often the "sympathy of the majority of the working people" is demonstrated *not* by elections at all, but by the growth of one of the parties, or by its increased representation in the Soviets, or by the success of a strike which for some reason has acquired enormous significance, or by successes won in civil war, etc., etc.

The history of our revolution has shown, for example, that sympathy for the dictatorship of the proletariat on the part of the majority of the working people in the boundless expanses of the Urals and Siberia was ascertained not by means of elections, but by the experience of a year of the tsarist general Kolchak's rule in that area. Incidentally, Kolchak's rule also began with a "coalition"

of the Scheidemann and Kautsky crowd (in Russian they are called Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, supporters of the Constituent Assembly), just as in Germany at the moment the Haases and Scheidemanns, through their "coalition", are paving the way to power for von Goltz or Ludendorff and covering up this power and making it look decent. In parenthesis it should be said that the Haase-Scheidemann coalition in the government has ended, but the political coalition of these betrayers of socialism remains. Proof: Kautsky's books, Stampfer's articles in *Vorwärts*, the articles by the Kautskys and the Scheidemanns about their "unification", and so on.

The proletarian revolution is impossible without the sympathy and support of the overwhelming majority of the working people for their vanguard—the proletariat. But this sympathy and this support are not forthcoming immediately and are not decided by elections. They are *won* in the course of long, arduous and stern class struggle. The class struggle waged by the proletariat *for* the sympathy and support of the majority of the working people does not end with the conquest of political power by the proletariat. *After* the conquest of power this struggle *continues*, but in *other* forms. In the Russian revolution the circumstances were exceptionally favourable for the proletariat (in its struggle for its dictatorship), since the proletarian revolution took place at a time when all the people were under arms and when the peasantry as a whole, disgusted by the "Kautskyite" policy of the social-traitors, the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, wanted the overthrow of the rule of the landowners.

But even in Russia, where things were exceptionally favourable at the moment of the proletarian revolution, where a most remarkable unity of the entire proletariat, the entire army and the entire peasantry was achieved at once—even in Russia, the proletariat, exercising its dictatorship, had to struggle for months and years to win the sympathy and support of the majority of the working people. After two years this struggle has practically, but still not completely, ended in favour of the proletariat. In

two years we have won the full sympathy and support of the overwhelming majority of the workers and labouring peasants of Great Russia, including the Urals and Siberia, but as yet we have not won the full support and sympathy of the majority of the working peasants (as distinct from the peasant exploiters) of the Ukraine. We *could* be (but shall not be) crushed by the military might of the Entente, but *inside* Russia we *now* have such sound sympathy, and from such an enormous majority of the working people, that our state is the most democratic state the world has ever seen.

One has only to give some thought to this complex, difficult and long history of proletarian struggle for power —a struggle rich in the extraordinary variety of forms and in the unusual abundance of sharp changes, turns and switches from one form to another—to see clearly the error of those who would "forbid" participation in bourgeois parliaments, reactionary trade unions, tsarist or Scheidemann Shop Stewards Committees or works' councils, and so on and so forth. This error is due to the lack of revolutionary experience among quite sincere, convinced and valiant working-class revolutionaries. Consequently, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were a thousand times right in January 1919 when they realised this mistake, pointed it out,[45] but nevertheless chose to remain with the proletarian revolutionaries, mistaken though they were on a minor question, rather than side with the traitors to socialism, the Scheidemanns and the Kautskys, who made no mistake on the question of participating in bourgeois parliaments, but had ceased to be socialists and had become philistine democrats and accomplices of the bourgeoisie.

A mistake, however, remains a mistake and it is necessary to criticise it and fight for its rectification.

The fight against the traitors to socialism, the Scheidemanns and the Kautskys, must be waged mercilessly, but not on the issue of for or against participation in bourgeois parliaments, reactionary trade unions, etc. This would be an obvious mistake, and a bigger mistake still would be to retreat from the ideas of Marxism and its

practical line (a strong, centralised political party) to the ideas and practice of syndicalism. It is necessary to work for the Party's participation in bourgeois parliaments, in reactionary trade unions and in "works' councils" that have been mutilated and castrated in Scheidemann fashion, for the Party to be wherever workers are to be found, wherever it is possible to talk to workers, to influence the working masses. Legal and illegal work must at all costs be combined, the illegal Party, through its *workers'* organisations, must exercise systematic, constant and strict control over legal activity. This is no easy matter, but the proletarian revolution, generally speaking, knows nothing and can know nothing of "easy" tasks or "easy" means of struggle.

This difficult task must be carried out at all costs. The Scheidemann and Kautsky gang differ from us not only (and not chiefly) because they do not recognise the armed uprising and we do. The chief and radical difference is that in *all* spheres of work (in bourgeois parliaments, trade unions, co-operatives, journalistic work, etc.) they pursue an inconsistent, opportunist policy, even a policy of downright treachery and betrayal.

Fight against the social-traitors, against reformism and opportunism—this political line can and must be followed without exception in *all* spheres of our struggle. And then we shall win the working masses. And the vanguard of the proletariat, the Marxist centralised political party together with the working masses, will take the people along the true road to the triumph of proletarian dictatorship, to proletarian instead of bourgeois democracy, to the Soviet Republic, to the socialist system.

In the space of a few months the Third International has won a number of glorious, unprecedented victories. The speed of its growth is astonishing. Particular mistakes and growing pains give no grounds for alarm. By criticising them directly and openly, we shall ensure that the working masses of all cultured countries, educated in the spirit of Marxism, quickly rid themselves of the betrayers of socialism, the Scheidemanns and Kautskys of

all nations (for these traitors are to be found in all nations).

The victory of communism is inevitable. Communism will triumph.

N. Lenin

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From "LEFT-WING" COMMUNISM—AN INFANTILE DISORDER

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, according to the figures of the latest Party Congress (April 1920), has a membership of 611,000. The membership varied greatly both before and after the October Revolu-

tion, and used to be much smaller, even in 1918 and 1919.[46] 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 proceedings the Party endeavours to follow with the closest attention), as well as by continually appointing class-conscious workers to various posts in the rural districts, the proletariat exercises its role of leader of the peasantry, gives effect to the dictatorship of the urban proletariat,

wages a systematic struggle against the rich, bourgeois, exploiting and profiteering peasantry, etc.

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

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

Capitalism inevitably leaves socialism the legacy, on the one hand, of the old trade and craft distinctions among the workers, distinctions evolved in the course of centuries; on the other hand, trade unions, which only very slowly, in the course of years and years, can and will develop into broader industrial unions with less of the craft union about them (embracing entire industries, and not only crafts, trades and occupations), and later proceed, through these industrial unions, to eliminate the division of labour among people, to educate and school people, give them *all-round development and an all-round* training, so that they *are able to do everything.* Communism is advancing and must advance towards that goal, and *will reach* it, but only after very many years. To attempt in practice, today, to anticipate this future result of a fully developed, fully stabilised and constituted, fully comprehensive and mature communism would be like trying to teach higher mathematics to a child of four.

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

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

In the sense mentioned above, a *certain* "reactionism" in the trade unions is *inevitable* under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Not to understand this means a complete failure to understand the fundamental conditions of the *transition* from capitalism to socialism. It would be egregious folly to fear *this* "reactionism" or to try to *evade* or leap over it, for it would mean fearing that function of the proletarian

vanguard which consists in training, educating, enlightening and drawing into the new life the most backward strata and masses of the working class and the peasantry. On the other hand, it would be a still graver error to postpone the achievement of the dictatorship of the proletariat until a time when there will not be a single worker with a narrow-minded craft outlook, or with craft and craft-union prejudices. The art of politics (and the Communist's correct understanding of his tasks) consists in correctly gauging the conditions and the moment when the vanguard of the proletariat can successfully assume power, when it is able—during and after the seizure of power—to win adequate support from sufficiently broad strata of the working class and of the non-proletarian working masses, and when it is able thereafter to maintain, consolidate and extend its rule by educating, training and attracting ever broader masses of the working people.

Further. In countries more advanced than Russia, a certain reactionism in the trade unions has been and was bound to be manifested in a far greater measure than in our country. Our Mensheviks found support in the trade unions (and to some extent still do so in a small number of unions), as a result of the latter's craft narrow-mindedness, craft selfishness and opportunism. The Mensheviks of the West have acquired a much firmer footing in the trade unions; there the *craft-union, narrow-minded, selfish, case-hardened, covetous, and petty-bourgeois "labour aristocracy", imperialist-minded, and imperialist-corrupted,* has developed into a much stronger section than in our country. That is incontestable. The struggle against the Gomperses, and against the Jouhaux, Hendersons, Merrheims, Legiens and Co. in Western Europe is much more difficult than the struggle against our Mensheviks, who are an *absolutely homogeneous* social and political type. This struggle must be waged ruthlessly, and it must unfailingly be brought—as we brought it—to a point when all the incorrigible leaders of opportunism and social-chauvinism are completely discredited and driven out of the trade unions. Political power cannot be captured (and the attempt to capture it should not be made) until the struggle has

reached a *certain* stage. This "certain stage" will be *different* in different countries and in different circumstances; it can be correctly gauged only by thoughtful, experienced and knowledgeable political leaders of the proletariat in each particular country. (In Russia the elections to the Constituent Assembly in November 1917, a few days after the proletarian revolution of October 25, 1917, were one of the criteria of the success of this struggle. In these elections the Mensheviks were utterly defeated; they received 700,000 votes—1,400,000 if the vote in Transcaucasia is added—as against 9,000,000 votes polled by the Bolsheviks. See my article, "The Constituent Assembly Elections and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat",* in the *Communist International* No. 7-8.)

We are waging a struggle against the "labour aristocracy" in the name of the masses of the workers and in order to win them over to our side; we are waging the struggle against the opportunist and social-chauvinist leaders in order to win the working class over to our side. It would be absurd to forget this most elementary and most self-evident truth. Yet it is this very absurdity that the German "Left" Communists perpetrate when, *because* of the reactionary and counter-revolutionary character of the trade union *top leadership*, they jump to the conclusion that ... we must withdraw from the trade unions, refuse to work in them, and create new and *artificial* forms of labour organisation! This is so unpardonable a blunder that it is tantamount to the greatest service Communists could render the bourgeoisie. Like all the opportunist, social-chauvinist, and Kautskyite trade union leaders, our Mensheviks are nothing but "agents of the bourgeoisie in the working-class movement" (as we have always said the Mensheviks are), or "labour lieutenants of the capitalist class", to use the splendid and profoundly true expression of the followers of Daniel De Leon in America. To refuse to work in the reactionary trade unions means leaving the insufficiently developed or backward masses of workers under the influence of the reactionary leaders, the agents of the

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

bourgeoisie, the labour aristocrats, or "workers who have become completely bourgeois" (cf. Engels's letter to Marx in 1858 about the British workers).

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

These facts make crystal clear something that is confirmed by thousands of other symptoms, namely, that class-consciousness and the desire for organisation are growing among the proletarian masses, among the rank and file, among the backward elements. Millions of workers in Great Britain, France and Germany are *for the first time* passing from a complete lack of organisation to the elementary, lowest, simplest, and (to those still thoroughly imbued with

bourgeois-democratic prejudices) most easily comprehensible form of organisation, namely, the trade unions; yet the revolutionary but imprudent Left Communists stand by, crying out "the masses", "the masses!" but *refusing to work within the trade unions*, on the pretext that they are "reactionary", and invent a brand-new, immaculate little "Workers' Union", which is guiltless of bourgeois-democratic prejudices and innocent of craft or narrow-minded craft-union sins, a union which, they claim, will be(!) a broad organisation. "Recognition of the Soviet system and the dictatorship" will be the *only* (!) condition of membership. (See the passage quoted above.)

It would be hard to imagine any greater ineptitude or greater harm to the revolution than that caused by the "Left" revolutionaries! Why, if we in Russia today, after two and a half years of unprecedented victories over the bourgeoisie of Russia and the Entente, were to make "recognition of the dictatorship" a condition of trade union membership, we would be doing a very foolish thing, damaging our influence among the masses, and helping the Mensheviks. The task devolving on Communists is to *convince* the backward elements, to work *among* them, and not to *fence themselves off* from them with artificial and childishly "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 American Industrial Workers of the World[47] 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 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)**; the whole truth must likewise be put squarely to the "Left" Communists.

* 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.

** See *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, pp. 337-44.—*Ed.*

VII

SHOULD WE PARTICIPATE IN BOURGEOIS PARLIAMENTS?

It is with the utmost contempt—and the utmost levity—that the German "Left" Communists reply to this question in the negative. Their arguments? In the passage quoted above we read:

> "...All reversion to parliamentary forms of struggle, which have become historically and politically obsolete, must be emphatically rejected...."

This is said with ridiculous pretentiousness, and is patently wrong. "Reversion" to parliamentarianism, forsooth! Perhaps there is already a Soviet republic in Germany? It does not look like it! How, then, can one speak of "reversion"? Is this not an empty phrase?

Parliamentarianism has become "historically obsolete". That is true in the propaganda sense. However, everybody knows that this is still a far cry from overcoming it in *practice*. Capitalism could have been declared—and with full justice—to be "historically obsolete" many decades ago, but that does not at all remove the need for a very long and very persistent struggle *on the basis* of capitalism. Parliamentarianism is "historically obsolete" from the standpoint of *world history*, i.e., the *era* of bourgeois parliamentarianism is over, and the *era* of the proletarian dictatorship has *begun*. That is incontestable. But world history is counted in decades. Ten or twenty years earlier or later makes no difference when measured with the yardstick of world history; from the standpoint of world history it is a trifle that cannot be considered even approximately. But for that very reason, it is a glaring theoretical error to apply the yardstick of world history to practical politics.

Is parliamentarianism "politically obsolete"? That is quite a different matter. If that were true, the position of the "Lefts" would be a strong one. But it has to be proved by a most searching analysis, and the "Lefts" do not even know how to approach the matter. In the "Theses on Par-

liamentarianism", published in the *Bulletin of the Provisional Bureau in Amsterdam of the Communist International* No. 1, February 1920, and obviously expressing the Dutch-Left or Left-Dutch strivings, the analysis, as we shall see, is also hopelessly poor.

In the first place, contrary to the opinion of such outstanding political leaders as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the German "Lefts", as we know, considered parliamentarianism "politically obsolete" even in January 1919. We know that the "Lefts" were mistaken. This fact alone utterly destroys, at a single stroke, the proposition that parliamentarianism is "politically obsolete". It is for the "Lefts" to prove why their error, indisputable at that time, is no longer an error. They do not and cannot produce even a shred of proof. A political party's attitude towards its own mistakes is one of the most important and surest ways of judging how earnest the party is and how it fulfils *in practice* its obligations towards its *class* and the *working people*. Frankly acknowledging a mistake, ascertaining the reasons for it, analysing the conditions that have led up to it, and thrashing out the means of its rectification—that is the hallmark of a serious party; that is how it should perform its duties, and how it should educate and train its *class*, and then the *masses*. By failing to fulfil this duty and give the utmost attention and consideration to the study of their patent error, the "Lefts" in Germany (and in Holland) have proved that they are not a *party of a class*, but a circle, not a *party of the masses*, but a group of intellectualists and of a few workers who ape the worst features of intellectualism.

Second, in the same pamphlet of the Frankfurt group of "Lefts", which we have already cited in detail, we read:

"...The millions of workers who still follow the policy of the Centre [the Catholic "Centre" Party] are counter-revolutionary. The rural proletarians provide the legions of counter-revolutionary troops." (Page 3 of the pamphlet.)

Everything goes to show that this statement is far too sweeping and exaggerated. But the basic fact set forth here is incontrovertible, and its acknowledgement by the "Lefts" is particularly clear evidence of their mistake. How can

one say that "parliamentarianism is politically obsolete", when "millions" and "legions" of *proletarians* are not only still in favour of parliamentarianism in general, but are downright "counter-revolutionary"!? It is obvious that parliamentarianism in Germany is *not yet* politically obsolete. It is obvious that the "Lefts" in Germany have mistaken *their desire*, their politico-ideological attitude, for objective reality. That is a most dangerous mistake for revolutionaries to make. In Russia—where, over a particularly long period and in particularly varied forms, the most brutal and savage yoke of tsarism produced revolutionaries of diverse shades, revolutionaries who displayed amazing devotion, enthusiasm, heroism and will-power—in Russia we have observed this mistake of the revolutionaries at very close quarters, we have studied it very attentively and have a first-hand knowledge of it; that is why we can also see it especially clearly in others. Parliamentarianism is of course "politically obsolete" to the Communists in Germany; but—and that is the whole point—we must *not* regard what is obsolete *to us* as something obsolete *to a class, to the masses*. Here again we find that the "Lefts" do not know how to reason, do not know how to act as the party of a *class*, as the party of the *masses*. You must not sink to the level of the masses, to the level of the backward strata of the class. That is incontestable. You must tell them the bitter truth. You are in duty bound to call their bourgeois-democratic and parliamentary prejudices what they are—prejudices. But at the same time you must *soberly* follow the *actual* state of the class-consciousness and preparedness of the entire class (not only of its communist vanguard), and of all the *working people* (not only of their advanced elements).

Even if only a fairly large *minority* of the industrial workers, and not "millions" and "legions", follow the lead of the Catholic clergy—and a similar minority of rural workers follow the landowners and kulaks (Grossbauern) —it *undoubtedly* signifies that parliamentarianism in Germany has *not yet* politically outlived itself, that participation in parliamentary elections and in the struggle on the parliamentary rostrum is *obligatory* on the party of the

revolutionary proletariat *specifically* for the purpose of educating the backward strata of *its own class,* and for the purpose of awakening and enlightening the undeveloped, downtrodden and ignorant rural *masses.* Whilst you lack the strength to do away with bourgeois parliaments and every other type of reactionary institution, you *must* work within them because *it is there* that you will still find workers who are duped by the priests and stultified by the conditions of rural life; otherwise you risk turning into nothing but windbags.

Third, the "Left" Communists have a great deal to say in praise of us Bolsheviks. One sometimes feels like telling them to praise us less and to try to get a better knowledge of the Bolsheviks' tactics. We took part in the elections to the Constituent Assembly, the Russian bourgeois parliament, in September-November 1917. Were our tactics correct or not? If not, then this should be clearly stated and proved, for it is necessary in evolving the correct tactics for international communism. If they were correct, then certain conclusions must be drawn. Of course, there can be no question of placing conditions in Russia on a par with conditions in Western Europe. But as regards the particular question of the meaning of the concept that "parliamentarianism has become politically obsolete", due account should be taken of our experience, for unless concrete experience is taken into account such concepts very easily turn into empty phrases. In September-November 1917, did we, the Russian Bolsheviks, not have *more* right than any Western Communists to consider that parliamentarianism was politically obsolete in Russia? Of course we did, for the point is not whether bourgeois parliaments have existed for a long time or a short time, but how far the masses of the working people are *prepared* (ideologically, politically and practically) to accept the Soviet system and to dissolve the bourgeois-democratic parliament (or allow it to be dissolved). It is an absolutely incontestable and fully established historical fact that, in September-November 1917, the urban working class and the soldiers and peasants of Russia were, because of a number of special conditions, exceptionally well prepared to accept the So-

viet system and to disband the most democratic of bourgeois parliaments. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks did *not* boycott the Constituent Assembly, but took part in the elections both before *and after* the proletariat conquered political power. That these elections yielded exceedingly valuable (and to the proletariat, highly useful) political results has, I make bold to hope, been proved by me in the above-mentioned article, which analyses in detail the returns of the elections to the Constituent Assembly in Russia.*

The conclusion which follows from this is absolutely incontrovertible: it has been proved that, far from causing harm to the revolutionary proletariat, participation in a bourgeois-democratic parliament, even a few weeks before the victory of a Soviet republic and even *after* such a victory, actually helps that proletariat to *prove* to the backward masses why such parliaments deserve to be done away with; it *facilitates* their successful dissolution, and *helps* to make bourgeois parliamentarianism "politically obsolete". To ignore this experience, while at the same time claiming affiliation to the Communist *International*, which must work out its tactics internationally (not as narrow or exclusively national tactics, but as international tactics), means committing a gross error and actually abandoning internationalism in deed, while recognising it in word.

Now let us examine the "Dutch-Left" arguments in favour of non-participation in parliaments. The following is the text of Thesis No. 4, the most important of the above-mentioned "Dutch" theses:

"When the capitalist system of production has broken down, and society is in a state of revolution, parliamentary action gradually loses importance as compared with the action of the masses themselves. When, in these conditions, parliament becomes the centre and organ of the counter-revolution, whilst, on the other hand, the labouring class builds up the instruments of its power in the Soviets, it may even prove necessary to abstain from all and any participation in parliamentary action."

The first sentence is obviously wrong, since action by the masses, a big strike, for instance, is more important than

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

parliamentary activity at *all* times, and not only during a revolution or in a revolutionary situation. This obviously untenable and historically and politically incorrect argument merely shows very clearly that the authors completely ignore both the general European experience (the French experience before the revolutions of 1848 and 1870; the German experience of 1878-90, etc.) and the Russian experience (see above) of the importance of *combining* legal and illegal struggle. This question is of immense importance both in general and in particular, because in *all* civilised and advanced countries the time is rapidly approaching when such a combination will more and more become—and has already partly become—mandatory on the party of the revolutionary proletariat, inasmuch as civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is maturing and is imminent, and because of savage persecution of the Communists by republican governments and bourgeois governments generally, which resort to any violation of legality (the example of America is edifying enough), etc. The Dutch, and the Lefts in general, have utterly failed to understand this highly important question.

The second sentence is, in the first place, historically wrong. We Bolsheviks participated in the most counter-revolutionary parliaments, and experience has shown that this participation was not only useful but indispensable to the party of the revolutionary proletariat, after the first bourgeois revolution in Russia (1905), so as to pave the way for the second bourgeois revolution (February 1917), and then for the socialist revolution (October 1917). In the second place, this sentence is amazingly illogical. If a parliament becomes an organ and a "centre" (in reality it never has been and never can be a "centre", but that is by the way) of counter-revolution, while the workers are building up the instruments of their power in the form of the Soviets, then it follows that the workers must prepare —ideologically, politically and technically—for the struggle of the Soviets against parliament, for the dispersal of parliament by the Soviets. But it does not at all follow that this dispersal is hindered, or is not facilitated, by the presence of a Soviet opposition *within* the counter-revolutionary par-

liament. In the course of our victorious struggle against Denikin and Kolchak, we never found that the existence of a Soviet and proletarian opposition in their camp was immaterial to our victories. We know perfectly well that the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly on January 5, 1918 was not hampered but was actually facilitated by the fact that, within the counter-revolutionary Constituent Assembly which was about to be dispersed, there was a consistent Bolshevik, as well as an inconsistent, Left Socialist-Revolutionary Soviet opposition. The authors of the theses are engaged in muddled thinking; they have forgotten the experience of many, if not all, revolutions, which shows the great usefulness, during a revolution, of a *combination* of mass action outside a reactionary parliament with an opposition sympathetic to (or, better still, directly supporting) the revolution within it. The Dutch, and the "Lefts" in general, argue in this respect like doctrinaires of the revolution, who have never taken part in a real revolution, have never given thought to the history of revolutions, or have naïvely mistaken subjective "rejection" of a reactionary institution for its actual destruction by the combined operation of a number of objective factors. The surest way of discrediting and damaging a new political (and not only political) idea is to reduce it to absurdity on the plea of defending it. For any truth, if "overdone" (as Dietzgen Senior put it), if exaggerated, or if carried beyond the limits of its actual applicability, can be reduced to an absurdity, and is even bound to become an absurdity under these conditions. That is just the kind of disservice the Dutch and German Lefts are rendering to the new truth of the Soviet form of government being superior to bourgeois-democratic parliaments. Of course, anyone would be in error who voiced the outmoded viewpoint or in general considered it impermissible, in all and any circumstances, to reject participation in bourgeois parliaments. I cannot attempt here to formulate the conditions under which a boycott is useful, since the object of this pamphlet is far more modest, namely, to study Russian experience in connection with certain topical questions of international communist tactics. Russian experience has provided us with

one successful and correct instance (1905), and another that was incorrect (1906), of the use of a boycott by the Bolsheviks.[48] Analysing the first case, we see that we succeeded in *preventing* a reactionary government from *convening* a reactionary parliament in a situation in which extra-parliamentary revolutionary mass action (strikes in particular) was developing at great speed, when not a single section of the proletariat and the peasantry could support the reactionary government in any way, and when the revolutionary proletariat was gaining influence over the backward masses through the strike struggle and through the agrarian movement. It is quite obvious that *this* experience is not applicable to present-day European conditions. It is likewise quite obvious—and the foregoing arguments bear this out—that the advocacy, even if with reservations, by the Dutch and the other "Lefts" of refusal to participate in parliaments is fundamentally wrong and detrimental to the cause of the revolutionary proletariat.

In Western Europe and America, parliament has become most odious to the revolutionary vanguard of the working class. That cannot be denied. It can readily be understood, for it is difficult to imagine anything more infamous, vile or treacherous than the behaviour of the vast majority of socialist and Social-Democratic parliamentary deputies during and after the war. It would, however, be not only unreasonable but actually criminal to yield to this mood when deciding *how* this generally recognised evil should be fought. In many countries of Western Europe, the revolutionary mood, we might say, is at present a "novelty", or a "rarity", which has all too long been vainly and impatiently awaited; perhaps that is why people so easily yield to that mood. Certainly, without a revolutionary mood among the masses, and without conditions facilitating the growth of this mood, revolutionary tactics will never develop into action. In Russia, however, lengthy, painful and sanguinary experience has taught us the truth that revolutionary tactics cannot be built on a revolutionary mood alone. Tactics must be based on a sober and strictly objective appraisal of *all* the class forces in a particular state (and of the states that surround it, and of all states the

world over) as well as of the experience of revolutionary movements. It is very easy to show one's "revolutionary" temper merely by hurling abuse at parliamentary opportunism, or merely by repudiating participation in parliaments; its very ease, however, cannot turn this into a solution of a difficult, a very difficult, problem. It is far more difficult to create a really revolutionary parliamentary group in a European parliament than it was in Russia. That stands to reason. But it is only a particular expression of the general truth that it was easy for Russia, in the specific and historically unique situation of 1917, to *start* the socialist revolution, but it will be more difficult for Russia than for the European countries to *continue* the revolution and bring it to its consummation. I had occasion to point this out already at the beginning of 1918, and our experience of the past two years has entirely confirmed the correctness of this view. Certain specific conditions, viz., 1) the possibility of linking up the Soviet revolution with the ending, as a consequence of this revolution, of the imperialist war, which had exhausted the workers and peasants to an incredible degree; 2) the possibility of taking temporary advantage of the mortal conflict between the world's two most powerful groups of imperialist robbers, who were unable to unite against their Soviet enemy; 3) the possibility of enduring a comparatively lengthy civil war, partly owing to the enormous size of the country and to the poor means of communication; 4) the existence of such a profound bourgeois-democratic revolutionary movement among the peasantry that the party of the proletariat was able to adopt the revolutionary demands of the peasant party (the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, the majority of whose members were definitely hostile to Bolshevism) and realise them at once, thanks to the conquest of political power by the proletariat[49]—all these specific conditions do not at present exist in Western Europe, and a repetition of such or similar conditions will not occur so easily. Incidentally, apart from a number of other causes, that is why it is more difficult for Western Europe to *start* a socialist revolution than it was for us. To attempt to "circumvent" this difficulty by "skipping" the arduous job of utilising reac-

tionary parliaments for revolutionary purposes is absolutely childish. You want to create a new society, yet you fear the difficulties involved in forming a good parliamentary group made up of convinced, devoted and heroic Communists, in a reactionary parliament! Is that not childish? If Karl Liebknecht in Germany and Z. Höglund in Sweden were able, even without mass support from below, to set examples of the truly revolutionary utilisation of reactionary parliaments, why should a rapidly growing revolutionary mass party, in the midst of the post-war disillusionment and embitterment of the masses, be unable to *forge* a communist group in the worst of parliaments? It is because, in Western Europe, the backward masses of the workers and—to an even greater degree—of the small peasants are much more imbued with bourgeois-democratic and parliamentary prejudices than they were in Russia; because of that, it is *only* from within such institutions as bourgeois parliaments that Communists can (and must) wage a long and persistent struggle, undaunted by any difficulties, to expose, dispel and overcome these prejudices.

The German "Lefts" complain of bad "leaders" in their party, give way to despair, and even arrive at a ridiculous "negation" of "leaders". But in conditions in which it is often necessary to hide "leaders" underground, the *evolution* of good "leaders", reliable, tested and authoritative, is a very difficult matter; these difficulties *cannot* be successfully overcome without combining legal and illegal work, and *without testing the "leaders", among other ways*, in parliaments. Criticism—the most keen, ruthless and uncompromising criticism—should be directed, not against parliamentarianism or parliamentary activities, but against those leaders who are unable—and still more against those who are *unwilling*—to utilise parliamentary elections and the parliamentary rostrum in a revolutionary and communist manner. Only such criticism—combined, of course, with the dismissal of incapable leaders and their replacement by capable ones—will constitute useful and fruitful revolutionary work that will simultaneously train the "leaders" to be worthy of the working class and of all working

people, and train the masses to be able properly to understand the political situation and the often very complicated and intricate tasks that spring from that situation.*

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* "I have had too little opportunity to acquaint myself with "Left-wing" communism in Italy. Comrade Bordiga and his faction of Abstentionist Communists (*Comunista astensionista*) are certainly wrong in advocating non-participation in parliament. But on one point, it seems to me, Comrade Bordiga is right—as far as can be judged from two issues of his paper, *Il Soviet* (Nos. 3 and 4, January 18 and February 1, 1920), from four issues of Comrade Serrati's excellent periodical, *Comunismo* (Nos. 1-4, October 1-November 30, 1919), and from separate issues of Italian bourgeois papers which I have seen. Comrade Bordiga and his group are right in attacking Turati and his partisans, who remain in a party which has recognised Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and yet continue their former pernicious and opportunist policy as members of parliament. Of course, in tolerating this, Comrade Serrati and the entire Italian Socialist Party are making a mistake which threatens to do as much harm and give rise to the same dangers as it did in Hungary, where the Hungarian Turatis sabotaged both the party and the Soviet government from within. Such a mistaken, inconsistent, or spineless attitude towards the opportunist parliamentarians gives rise to "Left-wing" communism, on the one hand, and *to a certain extent* justifies its existence, on the other. Comrade Serrati is obviously wrong when he accuses Deputy Turati of being "inconsistent" (*Comunismo* No. 3), for it is the Italian Socialist Party itself that is inconsistent in tolerating such opportunist parliamentarians as Turati and Co.

THESES ON THE FUNDAMENTAL TASKS OF THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

1. The present stage in the development of the international communist movement is marked by the fact that the finest representatives of the revolutionary proletariat in all capitalist countries have fully grasped the fundamental principles of the Communist International, viz., dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet power, and have ranged themselves with unbounded enthusiasm on the side of the Communist International. An even bigger and more important step forward is the definite sympathy with these fundamental principles that has everywhere taken shape among the broadest masses, not only of the urban proletariat, but of the advanced section of the rural workers as well.

On the other hand, two errors, or failings, are to be observed in the very rapidly growing international communist movement. One, which is very grave and constitutes an immense and immediate danger to the success of the cause of proletarian emancipation, is that a section of the old leaders and of the old parties of the Second International—some yielding half-unconsciously to the wishes and pressure of the masses, and some deliberately deceiving the masses in order to retain their function of agents and assistants of the bourgeoisie within the working-class movement—declare their qualified or even unqualified adherence to the Third International, while actually remaining in all their practical party and political work, on the level of the Second International. Such a state of affairs is absolutely intolerable, because it leads to downright

corruption of the masses, detracts from the Third International's prestige, and threatens a repetition of the same acts of treachery as were perpetrated by the Hungarian Social-Democrats, who so hastily assumed the title of Communists. The other error, which is far less significant and is more in the nature of growing pains of the movement, consists in a tendency towards "Leftism" which results in a wrong appraisal of the role and the tasks of the party with regard to the class and the masses, and a wrong attitude towards the revolutionary Communists' obligation to work in bourgeois parliaments and reactionary trade unions.

Communists are in duty bound, not to gloss over shortcomings in their movement, but to criticise them openly so as to remedy them the more speedily and radically. For this purpose it is necessary: first, to define as concretely as possible, particularly on the basis of the practical experience already acquired, the content of the concepts "dictatorship of the proletariat" and "Soviet power"; second, to specify the precise content of the immediate and systematic preparatory work to be carried on in all countries so as to give effect to these slogans; and third, to specify the methods and means of rectifying the faults in our movement.

I

THE ESSENCE OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT AND OF SOVIET POWER

2. The victory of socialism (as the first stage of communism) over capitalism requires that the proletariat, as the only really revolutionary class, shall accomplish the following three tasks. First—overthrow the exploiters, and first and foremost the bourgeoisie, as their principal economic and political representative; utterly rout them, crush their resistance; absolutely preclude any attempt on their part to restore the yoke of capital and wage-slavery. Second—win over and bring under the leadership of the Com-

munist Party, the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat, not only the entire proletariat, or its vast majority, but all who labour and are exploited by capital; educate, organise, train and discipline them in the actual course of a supremely bold and ruthlessly firm struggle against the exploiters; wrest this vast majority of the population in all the capitalist countries from dependence on the bourgeoisie; imbue it, through its own practical experience, with confidence in the leading role of the proletariat and of its revolutionary vanguard. Third—neutralise, or render harmless, the inevitable vacillation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, between bourgeois democracy and Soviet power, to be seen in the class of petty proprietors in agriculture, industry and commerce—a class which is still fairly numerous in nearly all advanced countries, although comprising only a minority of the population—as well as in the stratum of intellectuals, salary earners, etc., which corresponds to this class.

The first and second tasks are independent ones, each requiring its own special methods of action with regard to the exploiters and to the exploited respectively. The third task follows from the first two, and merely requires a skilful, timely and flexible combination of methods of the first and second type, depending on the specific circumstances in each separate instance of vacillation.

3. In the concrete situation created throughout the world, and above all in the most advanced, powerful, enlightened and free capitalist countries, by militarism, imperialism, the oppression of colonies and weak countries, the world-wide imperialist buchery and the "Peace" of Versailles—in that situation the very idea of the capitalists peacefully submitting to the will of the majority of the exploited, the very idea of a peaceful, reformist transition to socialism, is not merely sheer philistine stupidity but also downright deception of the workers, embellishment of capitalist wage-slavery, and concealment of the truth. That truth consists in the bourgeoisie, even the most enlightened and democratic, no longer hesitating at any fraud or crime, even the massacre of millions of workers and peasants, so as to preserve private ownership of the means of produc-

tion. Only the forcible overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the confiscation of its property, the destruction of the entire bourgeois state apparatus from top to bottom—parliamentary, judicial, military, bureaucratic, administrative, municipal, etc.—right down to the wholesale deportation or internment of the most dangerous and stubborn exploiters and the institution of strict surveillance over them so as to foil their inevitable attempts to resist and to restore capitalist slavery—only such measures can ensure real submission of the whole class of exploiters.

On the other hand, the idea, common among the old parties and the old leaders of the Second International, that the majority of the exploited toilers can achieve complete clarity of socialist consciousness and firm socialist convictions and character under capitalist slavery, under the yoke of the bourgeoisie (which assumes an infinite variety of forms that become more subtle and at the same time more brutal and ruthless the higher the cultural level in a given capitalist country) is also idealisation of capitalism and of bourgeois democracy, as well as deception of the workers. In fact, it is only after the vanguard of the proletariat, supported by the whole or the majority of this, the only revolutionary class, overthrows the exploiters, suppresses them, emancipates the exploited from their state of slavery and immediately improves their conditions of life at the expense of the expropriated capitalists—it is only after this, and only in the actual process of an acute class struggle, that the masses of the toilers and exploited can be educated, trained and organised around the proletariat under whose influence and guidance they can get rid of the selfishness, disunity, vices and weaknesses engendered by private property; only then will they be converted into a free union of free workers.

4. Victory over capitalism calls for proper relations between the leading (Communist) party, the revolutionary class (the proletariat) and the masses, i.e., the entire body of the toilers and the exploited. Only the Communist Party, if it is really the vanguard of the revolutionary class, if it really comprises all the finest representatives of that class,

if it consists of fully conscious and staunch Communists who have been educated and steeled by the experience of a persistent revolutionary struggle, and if it has succeeded in linking itself inseparably with the whole life of its class and, through it, with the whole mass of the exploited, and in completely winning the confidence of this class and this mass—only such a party is capable of leading the proletariat in a final, most ruthless and decisive struggle against all the forces of capitalism. On the other hand, it is only under the leadership of such a party that the proletariat is capable of displaying the full might of its revolutionary onslaught, and of overcoming the inevitable apathy and occasional resistance of that small minority, the labour aristocracy, who have been corrupted by capitalism, the old trade union and co-operative leaders, etc.—only then will it be capable of displaying its full might, which, because of the very economic structure of capitalist society, is infinitely greater than its proportion of the population. Finally, it is only after they have been really emancipated from the yoke of the bourgeoisie and of the bourgeois machinery of state, only after they have found an opportunity of organising in their Soviets in a really free way (free from the exploiters), that the masses, i.e., the toilers and exploited as a body, can display, for the first time in history, all the initiative and energy of tens of millions of people who have been crushed by capitalism. Only when the Soviets have become the sole state apparatus is it really possible to ensure the participation, in the work of administration, of the entire mass of the exploited, who, even under the most enlightened and freest bourgeois democracy, have always actually been excluded 99 per cent from participation in the work of administration. It is only in the Soviets that the exploited masses really begin to learn—not in books, but from their own practical experience—the work of socialist construction, of creating a new social discipline and a free union of free workers.

II

WHAT IMMEDIATE AND UNIVERSAL PREPARATION FOR THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT SHOULD CONSIST IN

5. The present stage in the development of the international communist movement is marked by the fact that in the vast majority of capitalist countries, the proletariat's preparations to effect its dictatorship have not been completed, and, in many cases, have not even been systematically begun. From this it does not, however, follow that the proletarian revolution is impossible in the immediate future; it is perfectly possible, since the entire economic and political situation is most inflammable and abounds in causes of a sudden flare-up; the other condition for revolution, apart from the proletariat's preparedness, viz., a general state of crisis in all the ruling and in all bourgeois parties, also exists. However, it does follow that the Communist parties' current task consists not in accelerating the revolution, but in intensifying the preparation of the proletariat. On the other hand, the facts cited above from the history of many socialist parties make it incumbent on us to see that "recognition" of the dictatorship of the proletariat shall not remain a mere matter of words.

Hence, from the point of view of the international proletarian movement, it is the Communist parties' principal task at the present moment to unite the scattered Communist forces, to form a single Communist Party in every country (or to reinforce or renovate the already existing Party) in order to increase tenfold the work of preparing the proletariat for the conquest of political power—political power, moreover, in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The ordinary socialist work conducted by groups and parties which recognise the dictatorship of the proletariat has by no means undergone that fundamental reorganisation, that fundamental renovation, which is essential before this work can be considered communist work and adequate to the tasks to be accomplished on the eve of proletarian dictatorship.

6. The proletariat's conquest of political power does not put a stop to its class struggle against the bourgeoisie; on the contrary, it renders that struggle most widespread, intense and ruthless. Owing to the extreme intensification of the struggle all groups, parties and leaders in the working-class movement who have fully or partly adopted the stand of reformism, of the "Centre",[50] etc., inevitably side with the bourgeoisie or join the wavering, or else (what is the most dangerous of all) land in the ranks of the unreliable friends of the victorious proletariat. Hence, preparation for the dictatorship of the proletariat calls, not only for an intensification of the struggle against reformist and "Centrist" tendencies, but also for a change in the character of that struggle. The struggle cannot be restricted to explaining the erroneousness of these tendencies; it must unswervingly and ruthlessly expose any leader of the working-class movement who reveals such tendencies, for otherwise the proletariat cannot know who it will march with into the decisive struggle against the bourgeoisie. This struggle is such that at any moment it may—and actually does, as experience has shown—substitute criticism with weapons for the weapon of criticism. Any inconsistency or weakness in exposing those who show themselves to be reformists or "Centrists" means directly increasing the danger of the power of the proletariat being overthrown by the bourgeoisie, which tomorrow will utilise for the counter-revolution that which short-sighted people today see merely as "theoretical difference".

7. In particular, we must not restrict ourselves to the usual repudiation, in principle, of all collaboration between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, of all "collaborationism". Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, which will never be able, at one stroke, to abolish private property completely, mere defence of "liberty" and "equality", while private ownership of the means of production is preserved, turns into "collaboration" with the bourgeoisie, and undermines the rule of the working class. The dictatorship of the proletariat means that the state uses its whole machinery of power to uphold and perpetuate "no-liberty" for the exploiters to continue their oppression and exploita-

tion, "inequality" between the owner of property (i.e., one who has appropriated for himself certain means of production created by social labour) and the non-owner. That which, prior to the victory of the proletariat, seems merely a theoretical difference on the question of "democracy" inevitably becomes, on the day following victory, a question that is settled by force of arms. Consequently, even preliminary work in preparing the masses to effect the dictatorship of the proletariat is impossible without a radical change in the entire character of the struggle against the "Centrists" and the "champions of democracy".

8. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the most determined and revolutionary form of the proletariat's class struggle against the bourgeoisie. This struggle can be successful only when the most revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat has the backing of the overwhelming majority of the proletariat. Hence, preparation for the dictatorship of the proletariat entails not only explanation of the bourgeois character of all reformism, of all defence of democracy, while private ownership of the means of production is preserved; it entails, not only exposure of such trends, which are in fact a defence of the bourgeoisie within the labour movement; it also calls for old leaders being replaced by Communists in proletarian organisations of absolutely every type—not only political, but also trade union, co-operative, educational, etc. The more complete, lengthy and firmly established the rule of bourgeois democracy has been in a given country, the more the bourgeoisie will have succeeded in securing the appointment to such leading posts of people whose minds have been moulded by it and imbued with its views and prejudices, and who have very often been directly or indirectly bought by it. These representatives of the labour aristocracy, bourgeoisified workers, should be ousted from all their posts a hundred times more sweepingly than hitherto, and replaced by workers—even by wholly inexperienced men, provided they are connected with the exploited masses and enjoy their confidence in the struggle against the exploiters. The dictatorship of the proletariat will require the appointment of such inexperienced workers to the most

responsible posts in the state; otherwise the workers' government will be impotent and will not have the support of the masses.

9. The dictatorship of the proletariat means that all toiling and exploited people, who have been disunited, deceived, intimidated, oppressed, downtrodden and crushed by the capitalist class, come under the full leadership of the only class trained for that leadership by the whole history of capitalism. That is why the following is one of the methods whereby preparations for the dictatorship of the proletariat should be started everywhere and immediately:

In all organisations, unions and associations without exception, and first and foremost in proletarian organisations, but also in those of the non-proletarian toiling and exploited masses (political, trade union, military, co-operative, educational, sports, etc., etc.), groups or cells of Communists should be formed—preferably open groups, but underground groups as well, the latter being essential whenever there is reason to expect their suppression, or the arrest or banishment of their members on the part of the bourgeoisie; these cells, which are to be in close touch with one another and with the Party centre, should, by pooling their experience, carrying on work of agitation, propaganda and organisation, adapting themselves to absolutely every sphere of public life and to every variety and category of the toiling masses, systematically educate themselves, the Party, the class, and the masses by means of such diversified work.

In this connection, it is of the utmost importance that necessary distinctions between the methods of work should be evolved in practice: on the one hand, in relation to the "leaders", or "responsible representatives", who are very often hopelessly beset with petty-bourgeois and imperialist prejudices—such "leaders" must be ruthlessly exposed and expelled from the working-class movement—and, on the other hand, in relation to the masses, who, particularly after the imperialist holocaust, are for the most part inclined to listen to and accept the doctrine that the guidance from the proletariat is essential, as the only way of

escape from capitalist slavery. We must learn to approach the masses with particular patience and caution so as to be able to understand the distinctive features in the mentality of each stratum, calling, etc., of these masses.

10. In particular, there is a group or cell of Communists that deserves exceptional attention and care from the Party, i.e., the parliamentary group of Party members, who are deputies to bourgeois representative institutions (primarily the national, but also local, municipal, etc., representative institutions). On the one hand, it is this tribune which is held in particular regard by large sections of the toiling masses, who are backward or imbued with petty-bourgeois prejudices; it is therefore imperative for Communists to utilise this tribune to conduct propaganda, agitation and organisational work and to explain to the masses why the dispersal of the bourgeois parliament by the national congress of Soviets was legitimate in Russia (and, at the proper time, will be legitimate in any country). On the other hand, the entire history of bourgeois democracy, particularly in the advanced countries, has converted the parliamentary rostrum into one of the principal, if not the principal, venues of unparalleled fraudulency, financial and political deception of the people, careerism, hypocrisy and oppression of the working people. The intense hatred of parliaments felt by the best representatives of the revolutionary proletariat is therefore quite justified. The Communist parties and all parties affiliated to the Third International—especially those which have not arisen by splitting away from the old parties and by waging a long and persistent struggle against them, but through the old parties accepting (often nominally) the new stand—should therefore adopt a most strict attitude towards their parliamentary groups; the latter must be brought under the full control and direction of the Central Committees of the Parties; they must consist, in the main, of revolutionary workers; speeches by members of parliament should be carefully analysed in the Party press and at Party meetings, from a strictly communist standpoint; deputies should be sent to carry on agitational work among the masses; those who manifest Second Interna-

tional leanings should be expelled from the parliamentary groups, etc.

11. One of the chief causes hampering the revolutionary working-class movement in the developed capitalist countries is the fact that because of their colonial possessions and the super-profits gained by finance capital, etc., the capitalists of these countries have been able to create a relatively larger and more stable labour aristocracy, a section which comprises a small minority of the working class. This minority enjoys better terms of employment and is most imbued with a narrow-minded craft spirit and with petty-bourgeois and imperialist prejudices. It forms the real social pillar of the Second International, of the reformists and the "Centrists"; at present it might even be called the social mainstay of the bourgeoisie. No preparation of the proletariat for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie is possible, even in the preliminary sense, unless an immediate, systematic, extensive and open struggle is waged against this stratum, which, as experience has already fully shown, will no doubt provide the bourgeois whiteguards with many a recruit after the victory of the proletariat. All parties affiliated to the Third International must at all costs give effect to the slogans: "Deeper into the thick of the masses", "Closer links with the masses"—meaning by the masses all those who toil and are exploited by capital, particularly those who are least organised and educated, who are most oppressed and least amenable to organisation.

The proletariat becomes revolutionary only insofar as it does not restrict itself to the narrow framework of craft interests, only when in all matters and spheres of public life, it acts as the leader of all the toiling and exploited masses; it cannot achieve its dictatorship unless it is prepared and able to make the greatest sacrifices for the sake of victory over the bourgeoisie. In this respect, the experience of Russia is significant both in principle and in practice. The proletariat could not have achieved its dictatorship there, or won the universally acknowledged respect and confidence of all the toiling masses, had it not made the most sacrifices, or starved more than any other

section of those masses at the most crucial moments of the onslaught, war and blockade effected by the world bourgeoisie.

In particular, the Communist Party and all advanced proletarians must give all-round and unstinted support especially to the spontaneous and mass strike movement, which, under the yoke of capital, is alone capable of really rousing, educating and organising the masses, of imbuing them with complete confidence in the leadership of the revolutionary proletariat. Without such preparation, no dictatorship of the proletariat is possible; those who are capable of publicly opposing strikes, such as Kautsky in Germany and Turati in Italy, cannot possibly be tolerated in the ranks of parties affiliated to the Third International. This applies even more, of course, to those trade union and parliamentary leaders who so often betray the workers by using the experience of strikes to teach them reformism, and not revolution (for instance, in Britain and in France in recent years).

12. In all countries, even in those that are freest, most "legal", and most "peaceful" in the sense that the class struggle is least acute there, it is now absolutely indispensable for every Communist Party to systematically combine legal and illegal work, legal and illegal organisations. Notwithstanding their false and hypocritical declarations, the governments of even the most enlightened and freest of countries, where the bourgeois-democratic system is most "stable", are already systematically and secretly drawing up blacklists of Communists and constantly violating their own constitutions so as to give secret or semi-secret encouragement to the whiteguards and to the murder of Communists in all countries, making secret preparations for the arrest of Communists, planting *agents provocateurs* among the Communists, etc., etc. Only a most reactionary philistine, no matter what cloak of fine "democratic" and pacifist phrases he may don, will deny this fact or the conclusion that of necessity follows from it, viz., that all legal Communist parties must immediately form illegal organisations for the systematic conduct of illegal work and for complete preparations for the moment

the bourgeoisie resorts to persecution. Illegal work is most necessary in the army, the navy and the police because, since the imperialist holocaust, governments the world over have begun to stand in dread of people's armies which are open to the workers and peasants, and are secretly resorting to all kinds of methods to set up military units specially recruited from the bourgeoisie and equipped with the most up-to-date weapons.

On the other hand, it is likewise necessary that, in all cases without exception, the parties should not restrict themselves to illegal work, but should conduct legal work as well, overcoming all obstacles, starting legal publications, and forming legal organisations under the most varied names, which should be frequently changed if necessary. This is being practised by the illegal Communist parties in Finland, Hungary, partly in Germany, Poland, Latvia, etc. It should be practised by the Industrial Workers of the World in the U.S.A. and by all Communist parties at present legal, should public prosecutors see fit to take proceedings against them on the grounds of resolutions adopted by Congresses of the Communist International, etc.

A combination of illegal and legal work is an absolute principle dictated, not only by all features of the present period, that of the eve of the proletarian dictatorship, but also by the necessity of proving to the bourgeoisie that there is not, nor can there be, any sphere of activity that cannot be won by the Communists; above all, it is dictated by the fact that broad strata of the proletariat and even broader strata of the non-proletarian toiling and exploited masses still exist everywhere, who continue to believe in bourgeois-democratic legality and whom we must undeceive without fail.

13. In particular, the conditions of the working-class press in most advanced capitalist countries strikingly reveal the utter fraudulency of liberty and equality under bourgeois democracy, as well as the necessity of systematically combining legal work with illegal work. Both in vanquished Germany and in victorious America, the entire power of the bourgeoisie's machinery of state and all the machina-

tions of the financial magnates are employed to deprive the workers of their press, these including legal proceedings, the arrest (or murder by hired assassins) of editors, denial of mailing privileges, the cutting off of paper supplies, and so on and so forth. Besides, the news services essential to daily newspapers are run by bourgeois telegraph agencies, while advertisements, without which a large newspaper cannot pay its way, depend on the "good will" of the capitalists. To sum up: through skulduggery and the pressure of capital and the bourgeois state, the bourgeoisie is depriving the revolutionary proletariat of its press.

To combat this, the Communist parties must create a new type of periodical press for mass distribution among the workers: first, legal publications, which, without calling themselves communist and without publicising their links with the Party, must learn to make use of any legal opportunity, however slight, just as the Bolsheviks did under the tsar, after 1905; secondly, illegal leaflets, even the briefest and published at irregular intervals, but reprinted at numerous printshops by workers (secretly, or, if the movement has become strong enough, by the revolutionary seizure of printshops), and providing the proletariat with outspoken revolutionary information and revolutionary slogans.

Preparation for the dictatorship of the proletariat is impossible without a revolutionary struggle, into which the masses are drawn, for the freedom of the communist press.

III

RECTIFICATION OF THE POLITICAL LINE—PARTLY ALSO OF THE COMPOSITION—OF PARTIES AFFILIATED OR DESIRING TO AFFILIATE TO THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

14. The measure in which the proletariat in countries most important from the viewpoint of world economics and politics is prepared to establish its dictatorship can be

seen with the greatest objectivity and precision in the fact that the most influential parties of the Second International, viz., the French Socialist Party, the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, the Independent Labour Party of Great Britain and the Socialist Party of America, have withdrawn from this yellow International, and have decided—the first three conditionally, the latter even unconditionally—to affiliate to the Third International. This proves that not only the vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat but its majority too have begun to come over to our side, convinced by the entire course of events. The main thing now is the ability to consummate this process and to consolidate firmly in point of organisation what has been achieved, so as to advance all along the line, without the slightest wavering.

15. All the activities of the parties mentioned (to which should be added the Socialist Party of Switzerland, if the telegraph reports of its decision to join the Third International are true) show—as any periodical of these parties will strikingly confirm—that they are not yet communist, and quite often run directly counter to the fundamental principles of the Third International, viz., the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet government in place of bourgeois democracy.

Accordingly, the Second Congress of the Communist International must resolve that it cannot immediately accept the affiliation of these parties; that it endorses the reply given by the Executive Committee of the Third International to the German "Independents"; that it confirms its readiness to conduct negotiations with any party that withdraws from the Second International and desires to enter into closer relations with the Third International; that it will admit the delegates of such parties in a deliberative capacity to all its congresses and conferences; that it sets the following conditions for the complete adhesion of these (and similar) parties with the Communist International:

1) All decisions of all Congresses of the Communist International and of its Executive Committee to be published in all the periodicals of the parties concerned;

2) These decisions to be discussed at special meetings of all sections or local organisations of the parties;

3) After such discussion, special congresses of the parties to be convened to sum up the results, and for the purpose of—

4) Purging the parties of elements that continue to act in the spirit of the Second International;

5) All periodical publications of the parties to be placed under exclusively Communist editorship.

The Second Congress of the Third International should instruct its Executive Committee formally to accept these and similar parties into the Third International after ascertaining that all these conditions have actually been met and that the activities of the parties have assumed a communist character.

16. As to the question of the conduct of Communists now holding a minority of the responsible posts in these and similar parties, the Second Congress of the Communist International should resolve that, in view of the obvious growth of sincere sympathy for communism among workingmen belonging to these parties, it would be undesirable for Communists to resign from the latter, as long as they can carry on work within them for the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet government, and as long as it is possible to criticise the opportunists and Centrists who still remain in these parties.

At the same time, the Second Congress of the Third International should declare in favour of Communist groups and organisations, or groups and organisations sympathising with communism, joining the Labour Party in Great Britain, despite its membership in the Second International. As long as this party ensures its affiliated organisations their present freedom of criticism and freedom to carry on work of propaganda, agitation and organisation in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet government, and as long as this party preserves the character of a federation of all trade union organisations of the working class, it is imperative for Communists to do everything and to make certain compromises in order to be able to exercise their influence on the broadest masses

of the workers, to expose their opportunist leaders from a higher tribune, that is in fuller view of the masses, and to hasten the transfer of political power from the direct representatives of the bourgeoisie to the "labour lieutenants of the capitalist class", so that the masses may be more quickly weaned away from their last illusions on this score.

17. Concerning the Socialist Party of Italy, the Second Congress of the Third International considers that the criticism of that party and the practical proposals submitted to the National Council of the Socialist Party of Italy in the name of the party's Turin section,[51] as set forth in *L'Ordine Nuovo* of May 8, 1920, are in the main correct and are fully in keeping with the fundamental principles of the Third International.

Accordingly, the Second Congress of the Third International requests the Socialist Party of Italy to convene a special congress to discuss these proposals and also all the decisions of the two Congresses of the Communist International for the purpose of rectifying the party's line and of purging it, particularly its parliamentary group, of non-Communist elements.

18. The Second Congress of the Third International considers erroneous the views on the Party's relation to the class and to the masses, and the view that it is not obligatory for Communist parties to participate in bourgeois parliaments and in reactionary trade unions. These views have been refuted in detail in special decisions of the present Congress, and advocated most fully by the Communist Workers' Party of Germany, and partly by the Communist Party of Switzerland, by *Kommunismus,* organ of the East-European Secretariat of the Communist International in Vienna, by the now dissolved secretariat in Amsterdam, by several Dutch comrades, by several Communist organisations in Great Britain, as, for example, the Workers' Socialist Federation, etc., and also by the Industrial Workers of the World in the U.S.A. and the Shop Stewards' Committees[52] in Great Britain, etc.

Nevertheless, the Second Congress of the Third International considers it possible and desirable that those of

the above-mentioned organisations which have not yet officially affiliated to the Communist International should do so immediately; for in the present instance, particularly as regards the Industrial Workers of the World in the U.S.A. and Australia, as well as the Shop Stewards' Committees in Great Britain, we are dealing with a profoundly proletarian and mass movement, which in all essentials actually stands by the basic principles of the Communist International. The erroneous views held by these organisations regarding participation in bourgeois parliaments can be explained, not so much by the influence of elements coming from the bourgeoisie, who bring their essentially petty-bourgeois views into the movement—views such as anarchists often hold—as by the political inexperience of proletarians who are quite revolutionary and connected with the masses.

For this reason, the Second Congress of the Third International requests all Communist organisations and groups in the Anglo-Saxon countries, even if the Industrial Workers of the World and the Shop Stewards' Committees do not immediately affiliate to the Third International, to pursue a very friendly policy towards these organisations, to establish closer contacts with them and the masses that sympathise with them, and to explain to them in a friendly spirit—on the basis of the experience of all revolutions, and particularly of the three Russian revolutions of the twentieth century—the erroneousness of their views as set forth above, and not to desist from further efforts to amalgamate with these organisations to form a single Communist party.

19. In this connection, the Congress draws the attention of all comrades, particularly in the Latin and Anglo-Saxon countries, to the fact that, since the war, a profound ideological division has been taking place among anarchists all over the world regarding the attitude to be adopted towards the dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet government. Moreover, a proper understanding of these principles is particularly to be seen among proletarian elements that have often been impelled towards anarchism by a perfectly legitimate hatred of the opportunism and

reformism of the parties of the Second International. That understanding is growing the more widespread among them, the more familiar they become with the experience of Russia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Germany.

The Congress therefore considers it the duty of all Communists to do everything to help all proletarian mass elements to abandon anarchism and come over to the side of the Third International. The Congress points out that the measure in which genuinely Communist parties succeed in winning mass proletarian elements rather than intellectual, and petty-bourgeois elements away from anarchism, is a criterion of the success of those Parties.

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SPEECH ON THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY AT THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

July 23, 1920

Comrades, I would like to make a few remarks concerning the speeches of Comrades Tanner and McLaine. Tanner says that he stands for the dictatorship of the proletariat, but he does not see the dictatorship of the proletariat quite in the way we do. He says that by the dictatorship of the proletariat we actually mean the dictatorship of the organised and class-conscious minority of the proletariat.

True enough, in the era of capitalism, when the masses of the workers are subjected to constant exploitation and cannot develop their human capacities, the most characteristic feature of working-class political parties is that they can involve only a minority of their class. A political party can comprise only a minority of a class, in the same way as the really class-conscious workers in any capitalist society constitute only a minority of all workers. We are therefore obliged to recognise that it is only this class-conscious minority that can direct and lead the broad masses of the workers. And if Comrade Tanner says that he is opposed to parties, but at the same time is in favour of a minority that represents the best organised and most revolutionary workers showing the way to the entire proletariat, then I say that there is really no difference between us. What is this organised minority? If this minority is really class-conscious, if it is able to lead the masses, if it is able to reply to every question that appears on the order of the day, then it is a party in reality. But if comrades like Tanner, to whom we pay special heed as representatives of a mass movement—which cannot, without a certain exaggeration, be said of the representatives of the British Socialist Party—if these comrades are

in favour of there being a minority that will fight resolutely for the dictatorship of the proletariat and will educate the masses of the workers along these lines, then this minority is in reality nothing but a party. Comrade Tanner says that this minority should organise and lead the entire mass of workers. If Comrade Tanner and the other comrades of the Shop Stewards' group and the Industrial Workers of the World accept this—and we see from the daily talks we have had with them that they do accept it—if they approve the idea that the class-conscious Communist minority of the working class leads the proletariat, then they must also agree that this is exactly the meaning of all our resolutions. In that case the only difference between us lies in their avoidance of the word "party" because there exists among the British comrades a certain mistrust of political parties. They can conceive of political parties only in the image of the parties of Gompers and Henderson, parties of parliamentary smart dealers and traitors to the working class. But if, by parliamentarianism, they mean what exists in Britain and America today, then we too are opposed to such parliamentarianism and to such political parties. What we want is new and different parties. We want parties that will be in constant and real contact with the masses and will be able to lead those masses.

I now come to the third question I want to touch upon in connection with Comrade McLaine's speech. He is in favour of the British Communist Party affiliating to the Labour Party. I have already expressed my opinion on this score in my theses on affiliation to the Third International. In my pamphlet I left the question open. However, after discussing the matter with a number of comrades, I have come to the conclusion that the decision to remain within the Labour Party is the only correct tactic. But here is Comrade Tanner, who declares, "Don't be too dogmatic." I consider his remark quite out of place here. Comrade Ramsay says: "Please let us British Communists decide this question for ourselves." What would the International be like if every little group were to come along and say: "Some of us are in favour of this thing and some are against; leave it to us to decide the matter for ourselves"? What then

would be the use of having an International, a congress, and all this discussion? Comrade McLaine spoke only of the role of a political party. But the same applies to the trade unions and to parliamentarianism. It is quite true that a larger section of the finest revolutionaries are against affiliation to the Labour Party because they are opposed to parliamentarianism as a means of struggle. Perhaps it would be best to refer this question to a commission, where it should be discussed and studied, and then decided at this very Congress of the Communist International. We cannot agree that it concerns only the British Communists. We must say, in general, which are the correct tactics.

I will now deal with some of Comrade McLaine's arguments concerning the question of the British Labour Party. We must say frankly that the Party of Communists can join the Labour Party only on condition that it preserves full freedom of criticism and is able to conduct its own policy. This is of supreme importance. When, in this connection Comrade Serrati speaks of class collaboration, I affirm that this will not be class collaboration. When the Italian comrades tolerate, in their party, opportunists like Turati and Co., i.e., bourgeois elements, that is indeed class collaboration. In this instance, however, with regard to the British Labour Party, it is simply a matter of collaboration between the advanced minority of the British workers and their vast majority. Members of the Labour Party are all members of trade unions. It has a very unusual structure, to be found in no other country. It is an organisation that embraces four million workers out of the six or seven million organised in trade unions. They are not asked to state what their political opinions are. Let Comrade Serrati prove to me that anyone there will prevent us from exercising our right of criticism. Only by proving that, will you prove Comrade McLaine wrong. The British Socialist Party can quite freely call Henderson a traitor and yet remain in the Labour Party. Here we have collaboration between the vanguard of the working class and the rearguard, the backward workers. This collaboration is so important to the entire movement that we categorically insist on the British Communists serving as a link between the Party,

that is, the minority of the working class, and the rest of the workers. If the minority is unable to lead the masses and establish close links with them, then it is not a party, and is worthless in general, even if it calls itself a party or the National Shop Stewards' Committee—as far as I know, the Shop Stewards' Committees in Britain have a National Committee, a central body, and that is a step towards a party. Consequently, until it is refuted that the British Labour Party consists of proletarians, this is co-operation between the vanguard of the working class and the backward workers; if this co-operation is not carried on systematically, the Communist Party will be worthless and there can be no question of the dictatorship of the proletariat at all. If our Italian comrades cannot produce more convincing arguments, we shall have to definitely settle the question later here, on the basis of what we know—and we shall come to the conclusion that affiliation is the correct tactic.

Comrades Tanner and Ramsay tell us that the majority of British Communists will not accept affiliation. But must we always agree with the majority? Not at all. If they have not yet understood which are the correct tactics, then perhaps it would be better to wait. Even the parallel existence for a time of two parties would be better than refusing to reply to the question as to which tactics are correct. Of course, acting on the experience of all Congress delegates and on the arguments that have been brought forward here, you will not insist on passing a resolution here and now, calling for the immediate formation of a single Communist Party in each country. That is impossible. But we can frankly express our opinion, and give directives. We must study in a special commission the question raised by the British delegation and then we shall say: affiliation to the Labour Party is the correct tactic. If the majority is against it, we must organise a separate minority. That will be of educational value. If the masses of the British workers still believe in the old tactics, we shall verify our conclusions at the next congress. We cannot, however, say that this question concerns Britain alone—that would mean copying the worst habits of the Second Interna-

tional. We must express our opinion frankly. If the British Communists do not reach agreement, and if a mass party is not formed, a split is inevitable one way or another.*

Bulletin of the Second Congress of the Communist International No. 5, August 5, 1920

Collected Works, Vol. 31, pp. 235-39

* Issue No. 5 of the *Bulletin of the Second Congress of the Communist International* gave the concluding sentences of this speech as follows:

"We must express our opinion frankly, whatever it may be. If the British Communists do not reach agreement on the question of the organisation of the mass movement, and if a split takes place in this issue, then better a split than rejection of the organisation of the mass movement. It is better to rise to definite and sufficiently clear tactics and ideology than to go on remaining in the previous chaos."—*Ed.*

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE NATIONAL AND THE COLONIAL QUESTIONS AT THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

July 26, 1920

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

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

The characteristic feature of imperialism consists in the whole world, as we now see, being divided into a large number of oppressed nations and an insignificant number of oppressor nations, the latter possessing colossal wealth and powerful armed forces. The vast majority of the world's population, over a thousand million, perhaps even 1,250 million people, if we take the total population of the world as 1,750 million, in other words, about 70 per cent of the world's population, belong to the oppressed nations, which are either in a state of direct colonial dependence or are semi-colonies, as, for example, Persia, Turkey and

* See *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 144-51.—*Ed.*

China, or else, conquered by some big imperialist power, have become greatly dependent on that power by virtue of peace treaties. This idea of distinction, of dividing the nations into oppressor and oppressed, runs through the theses, not only the first theses published earlier over my signature, but also those submitted by Comrade Roy. The latter were framed chiefly from the standpoint of the situation in India and other big Asian countries oppressed by Britain. Herein lies their great importance to us.

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

Third, I should like especially to emphasise the question of the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. This is a question that has given rise to certain differences. We have discussed whether it would be right or wrong, in principle and in theory, to state that the Communist International and the Communist parties must support the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. As a result of our discussion, we have arrived at the unanimous decision to speak of the national-revolutionary movement rather than of the "bourgeois-democratic" movement. It is beyond doubt that any national movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement, since the overwhelming mass of the population in the backward countries consist of peasants who represent bourgeois-capitalist relationships. It would be utopian to believe that proletarian parties in these backward countries, if indeed they can emerge in them, can pursue communist tactics and a communist policy, without establishing definite relations with the peasant movement and without giving it effective

support. However, the objections have been raised that, if we speak of the bourgeois-democratic movement, we shall be obliterating all distinctions between the reformist and the revolutionary movements. Yet that distinction has been very clearly revealed of late in the backward and colonial countries, since the imperialist bourgeoisie is doing everything in its power to implant a reformist movement among the oppressed nations too. There has been a certain *rapprochement* between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonies, so that very often—perhaps even in most cases—the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries, while it does support the national movement, is in full accord with the imperialist bourgeoisie, i.e., joins forces with it against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes. This was irrefutably proved in the commission, and we decided that the only correct attitude was to take this distinction into account and, in nearly all cases, substitute the term "national-revolutionary" for the term "bourgeois-democratic". The significance of this change is that we, as Communists, should and will support bourgeois-liberation movements in the colonies only when they are genuinely revolutionary, and when their exponents do not hinder our work of educating and organising in a revolutionary spirit the peasantry and the masses of the exploited. If these conditions do not exist, the Communists in these countries must combat the reformist bourgeoisie, to whom the heroes of the Second International also belong. Reformist parties already exist in the colonial countries, and in some cases their spokesmen call themselves Social-Democrats and socialists. The distinction I have referred to has been made in all the theses with the result, I think, that our view is now formulated much more precisely.

Next, I would like to make a remark on the subject of peasants' Soviets. The Russian Communists' practical activities in the former tsarist colonies, in such backward countries as Turkestan, etc., have confronted us with the question of how to apply the communist tactics and policy in pre-capitalist conditions. The preponderance of pre-capitalist relationships is still the main determining feature in these countries, so that there can be no question of a

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

This opens up a very interesting and very important field for our practical work. So far our joint experience in this respect has not been extensive, but more and more data will gradually accumulate. It is unquestionable that the

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

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

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

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

ately begin work in this direction in all parts of the world.

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

Comrade Quelch of the British Socialist Party spoke of this in our commission. He said that the rank-and-file British worker would consider it treasonable to help the enslaved nations in their uprisings against British rule. True, the jingoist and chauvinist-minded labour aristocrats of Britain and America present a very great danger to socialism, and are a bulwark of the Second International. Here we are confronted with the greatest treachery on the part of leaders and workers belonging to this bourgeois International. The colonial question has been discussed in the Second International as well. The Basle Manifesto[53] is quite clear on this point, too. The parties of the Second International have pledged themselves to revolutionary action, but they have given no sign of genuine revolutionary work or of assistance to the exploited and dependent nations in their revolt against the oppressor nations. This, I think, applies also to most of the parties that have withdrawn from the Second International and wish to join the Third International. We must proclaim this publicly for all to hear, and it is irrefutable. We shall see if any attempt is made to deny it.

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

Bulletin of the Second Congress of the Communist International No. 6, August 7, 1920

Collected Works, Vol. 31, pp. 240-45

LETTER TO THE AUSTRIAN COMMUNISTS

The Austrian Communist Party has decided to boycott the elections to the bourgeois-democratic parliament. The Second Congress of the Communist International which ended recently recognised as the correct tactics Communist *participation* in elections to and the activities in bourgeois parliaments.

Judging by reports of the Austrian Communist Party's delegates, I have no doubt that it will set a decision by the Communist International above that of one of the parties.[54] Neither can it be doubted that the Austrian Social-Democrats, those traitors to socialism who have gone over to the bourgeoisie, will gloat over the Communist International decision, which is at variance with the Austrian Communist Party's boycott decision. However, politically-conscious workers will, of course, pay no heed to the malicious glee of people like the Austrian Social-Democrats, those confederates of the Scheidemanns and Noskes, Thomases and Gomperses. The Renners' servility to the bourgeoisie has revealed itself sufficiently, and in all countries the workers' indignation at the heroes of the yellow Second International is ever mounting and spreading.

The Austrian Social-Democrats are behaving in the bourgeois parliament, as in all spheres of their "work", including their own press, in the manner of petty-bourgeois democrats who are capable only of spineless vacillation, while in fact they are totally dependent on the capitalist class. We Communists enter bourgeois parliaments in order to unmask from their rostrums the deception practised by these thoroughly corrupt capitalist institutions, which dupe the workers and all working people.

One of the Austrian Communists' arguments against participation in the bourgeois parliaments deserves somewhat more careful consideration. Here it is:

"Parliament is of importance to Communists only as a platform for agitation. We in Austria have the Council of Workers' Deputies as a platform for agitation. We therefore refuse to take part in elections to the bourgeois parliament. In Germany there is no Council of Workers' Deputies which can be taken in earnest. That is why the German Communists pursue different tactics."

I consider this argument erroneous. As long as we are unable to disband the bourgeois parliament, we must work against it both from without and within. As long as a more or less appreciable number of working people (not only proletarians, but also semi-proletarians and small peasants) still have confidence in the bourgeois-democratic instruments employed by the bourgeoisie for duping the workers, we must expose that deception *from the very platform* which the backward sections of the workers, particularly of the non-proletarian working people, consider most important, and authoritative.

As long as we Communists are unable to take over state power and hold elections, with working people alone voting for *their* Soviets against the bourgeoisie; as long as the bourgeoisie exercise state power and call upon the different classes of the population to take part in the elections, we are in duty bound to take part in the elections with the purpose of conducting agitation among all working people, not only among proletarians. As long as the bourgeois parliament remains a means of duping the workers, and phrases about "democracy" are used to cover up financial swindling and every kind of bribery (the particularly "subtle" brand of bribery the bourgeoisie practises with regard to writers, M.P.s, lawyers, and others is nowhere to be seen on so wide a scale as in the bourgeois parliament), we Communists are in duty bound to be in this very institution (which is supposed to *express the people's will* but actually covers up the *deception of the people by the wealthy)* to untiringly expose this deception, and expose each and every case of the Renners and Co.'s desertion to the capitalists, against the workers. It is in parliament that the relations between bourgeois parties and groups manifest themselves most frequently and reflect the relations between all the classes of bourgeois society. That

is why it is in the bourgeois parliament, from within it, that we Communists must tell the people the *truth* about the relation between classes and parties, and the attitude of the landowners to the farm labourers, of the rich peasants to the poor peasants, of big capital to employees and petty proprietors, etc.

The proletariat *must* know all this, so as to learn to see through all the vile and refined machinations of the capitalists, and to learn to influence the petty-bourgeois masses, the non-proletarian masses of the working people. Without this "schooling" the proletariat cannot cope successfully with the tasks of the *dictatorship of the proletariat,* for even then the bourgeoisie, operating from its new position (that of a deposed class), will carry on, in different forms and in different fields, its policy of duping the peasants, of bribing and intimidating employees, of covering up its self-seeking and unsavoury aspirations with phrases about "democracy".

No, the Austrian Communists will not be frightened by the malicious glee of the Renners and similar lackeys of the bourgeoisie. The Austrian Communists will not be afraid to declare their open and forthright recognition of international proletarian discipline. We are proud that we settle the great problems of the workers' struggle for their emancipation by submitting to the international discipline of the revolutionary proletariat, with due account of the experience of the workers in different countries, reckoning with their knowledge and their will, and thus giving effect in deed (and not in word, as the Renners, Fritz Adlers and Otto Bauers do) to the unity of the workers' class struggle for communism throughout the world.

N. Lenin

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SPEECH IN DEFENCE OF THE TACTICS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL AT THE THIRD CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

July 1, 1921

Comrades! I deeply regret that I must confine myself to self-defence. (*Laughter.*) I say deeply regret, because after acquainting myself with Comrade Terracini's speech and the amendments introduced by three delegations, I should very much like to take the offensive, for, properly speaking, offensive operations are essential against the views defended by Terracini and these three delegations. If the Congress is not going to wage a vigorous offensive against such errors, against such "Leftist" stupidities, the whole movement is doomed. That is my deep conviction. But we are organised and disciplined Marxists. We cannot be satisfied with speeches against individual comrades. We Russians are already sick and tired of these Leftist phrases. We are men of organisation. In drawing up our plans, we must proceed in an organised way and try to find the correct line. It is, of course, no secret that our theses are a compromise. And why not? Among Communists, who have already convened their Third Congress and have worked out definite fundamental principles, compromises under certain conditions are necessary. Our theses, put forward by the Russian delegation, were studied and prepared in the most careful way and were the result of long arguments and meetings with various delegations. They aim at establishing the basic line of the Communist International and are especially necessary now after we have not only formally condemned the real Centrists but have expelled them from the Party. Such are the facts. I have to stand up for these theses. Now, when Terracini comes forward and says that we must continue the fight

against the Centrists, and goes on to tell how it is intended to wage the fight, I say that if these amendments denote a definite trend, a relentless fight against this trend is essential, for otherwise there is no communism and no Communist International. I am surprised that the German Communist Workers' Party[55] has not put its signature to these amendments. (*Laughter.*) Indeed, just listen to what Terracini is defending and what his amendments say. They begin in this way: "On page 1, column 1, line 19, the word 'majority' should be deleted." Majority! That is extremely dangerous! (*Laughter.*) Then further, instead of the words "'basic propositions', insert 'aims'". Basic propositions and aims are two different things; even the anarchists will agree with us about aims, because they too stand for the abolition of exploitation and class distinctions.

I have met and talked with few anarchists in my life, but all the same I have seen enough of them. I sometimes succeeded in reaching agreement with them about aims, but never as regards principles. Principles are not an aim, a programme, a tactic or a theory. Tactics and theory are not principles. How do we differ from the anarchists on principles? The principles of communism consist in the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and in the use of state coercion in the transition period. Such are the principles of communism, but they are not its aim. And the comrades who have tabled this proposal have made a mistake.

Secondly, it is stated there: "the word 'majority' should be deleted." Read the whole passage:

> "The Third Congress of the Communist International is setting out to review questions of tactics under conditions when in a whole number of countries the objective situation has become aggravated in a revolutionary sense, and when a whole number of communist mass parties have been organised, which, incidentally, in their actual revolutionary struggle have nowhere taken into their hands the virtual leadership of the majority of the working class."

And so, they want the word "majority" deleted. If we cannot agree on such simple things, then I do not understand how we can work together and lead the proletariat to victory. Then it is not at all surprising that we cannot

reach agreement on the question of principles either. Show me a party which has already won the majority of the working class. Terracini did not even think of adducing any example. Indeed, there is no such example.

And so, the word "aims" is to be put instead of "principles", and the word "majority" is to be deleted. No, thank you! We shall not do it. Even the German party—one of the best—does not have the majority of the working class behind it. That is a fact. We, who face a most severe struggle, are not afraid to utter this truth, but here you have three delegations who wish to begin with an untruth, for if the Congress deletes the word "majority" it will show that it wants an untruth. That is quite clear.

Then comes the following amendment: "On page 4, column 1, line 10, the words 'Open Letter',[56] etc., should be deleted." I have already heard one speech today in which I found the same idea. But there it was quite natural. It was the speech of Comrade Hempel, a member of the German Communist Workers' Party. He said: "The 'Open Letter' was an act of opportunism." To my deep regret and shame, I have already heard such views privately. But when, at the Congress, after such prolonged debate, the "Open Letter" is declared opportunist—that is a shame and a disgrace! And now Comrade Terracini comes forward on behalf of the three delegations and wants to delete the words "Open Letter". What is the good then of the fight against the German Communist Workers' Party? The "Open Letter" is a model political step. This is stated in our theses and we must certainly stand by it. It is a model because it is the first act of a practical method of winning over the majority of the working class. In Europe, where almost all the proletarians are organised, we must win the majority of the working class and anyone who fails to understand this is lost to the communist movement; he will never learn anything if he has failed to learn that much during the three years of the great revolution.

Terracini says that we were victorious in Russia although the Party was very small. He is dissatisfied with what is said in the theses about Czechoslovakia. Here there are 27 amendments, and if I had a mind to criticise them I

should, like some orators, have to speak for not less than three hours.... We have heard here that in Czechoslovakia the Communist Party has 300,000-400,000 members, and that it is essential to win over the majority, to create an invincible force and continue enlisting fresh masses of workers. Terracini is already prepared to attack. He says: if there are already 400,000 workers in the party, why should we want more? Delete! (*Laughter.*) He is afraid of the word "masses" and wants to eradicate it. Comrade Terracini has understood very little of the Russian revolution. In Russia, we were a small party, but we had with us in addition the majority of the Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country. (*Cries*: "Quite true!") Do you have anything of the sort? We had with us almost half the army, which then numbered at least ten million men. Do you really have the majority of the army behind you? Show me such a country! If these views of Comrade Terracini are shared by three other delegations, then something is wrong in the International! Then we must say: "Stop! There must be a decisive fight! Otherwise the Communist International is lost." (*Animation.*)

On the basis of my experience I must say, although I am taking up a defensive position (*laughter*), that the aim and the principle of my speech consist in defence of the resolution and theses proposed by our delegation. It would, of course, be pedantic to say that not a letter in them must be altered. I have had to read many resolutions and I am well aware that very good amendments could be introduced in every line of them. But that would be pedantry. If, nevertheless, I declare now that in a political sense not a single letter can be altered, it is because the amendments, as I see them, are of a quite definite political nature and because they lead us along a path that is harmful and dangerous to the Communist International. Therefore, I and all of us and the Russian delegation must insist that not a single letter in the theses is altered. We have not only condemned our Right-wing elements—we have expelled them. But if, like Terracini, people turn the fight against the Rightists into a sport, then we must say: "Stop! Otherwise the danger will become too grave!"

Terracini has defended the theory of an offensive struggle. In this connection the notorious amendments propose a formula two or three pages long. There is no need for us to read them. We know what they say. Terracini has stated the issue quite clearly. He has defended the theory of an offensive, pointing out "dynamic tendencies" and the "transition from passivity to activity". We in Russia have already had adequate political experience in the struggle against the Centrists. As long as fifteen years ago, we were waging a struggle against our opportunists and Centrists, and also against the Mensheviks, and we were victorious not only over the Mensheviks, but also over the semi-anarchists.

If we had not done this, we would not have been able to retain power in our hands for three and a half years, or even for three and a half weeks, and we would not have been able to convene communist congresses here. "Dynamic tendencies", "transition from passivity to activity"—these are all phrases the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries had used against us. Now they are in prison, defending there the "aims of communism" and thinking of the "transition from passivity to activity". (*Laughter.*) The line of reasoning followed in the proposed amendments is an impossible one, because they contain no Marxism, no political experience, and no reasoning. Have we in our theses elaborated a general theory of the revolutionary offensive? Has Radek or anyone of us committed such a stupidity? We have spoken of the theory of an offensive in relation to a quite definite country and at a quite definite period.

From our struggle against the Mensheviks we can quote instances showing that even before the first revolution there were some who doubted whether the revolutionary party ought to conduct an offensive. If such doubts assailed any Social-Democrat—as we all called ourselves at that time—we took up the struggle against him and said that he was an opportunist, that he did not understand anything of Marxism and the dialectics of the revolutionary party. Is it really possible for a party to dispute whether a revolutionary offensive is permissible in general? To find such examples in this country one would have to go back some fifteen years. If there are Centrists or disguised Centrists

who dispute the theory of the offensive, they should be immediately expelled. That question cannot give rise to disputes. But the fact that even now, after three years of the Communist International, we are arguing about "dynamic tendencies", about the "transition from passivity to activity"—that is a shame and a disgrace.

We do not have any dispute about this with Comrade Radek, who drafted these theses jointly with us. Perhaps it was not quite correct to begin talking in Germany *about the theory* of the revolutionary offensive when an actual offensive had not been prepared. Nevertheless the March action[57] was a great step forward in spite of the mistakes of its leaders. But this does not matter. Hundreds of thousands of workers fought heroically. However courageously the German Communist Workers' Party fought against the bourgeoisie, we must repeat what Comrade Radek said in a Russian article about Hölz. If anyone, even an anarchist, fights heroically against the bourgeoisie, that is, of course, a great thing; but it is a real step forward if hundreds of thousands fight against the vile provocation of the social-traitors and against the bourgeoisie.

It is very important to be critical of one's mistakes. We began with that. If anyone, after a struggle in which hundreds of thousands have taken part, comes out against this struggle and behaves like Levi, then he should be expelled. And that is what was done. But we must draw a lesson from this. Had we really prepared for an offensive? (*Radek*: "We had not even prepared for defence.") Indeed only newspaper articles talked of an offensive. This theory as applied to the March action in Germany in 1921 was incorrect—we have to admit that—but, in general, the theory of the revolutionary offensive is not at all false.

We were victorious in Russia, and with such ease, because we prepared for our revolution during the imperialist war. That was the first condition. Ten million workers and peasants in Russia were armed, and our slogan was: an immediate peace at all costs. We were victorious because the vast mass of the peasants were revolutionarily disposed against the big landowners. The Socialist-Revolutionaries, the adherents of the Second and the Two-and-a-Half

Internationals,[58] were a big peasant party in November 1917. They demanded revolutionary methods but, like true heroes of the Second and the Two-and-a-Half Internationals, lacked the courage to act in a revolutionary way. In August and September 1917 we said: "Theoretically we are fighting the Socialist-Revolutionaries as we did before, but practically we are ready to accept their programme because only we are able to put it into effect." We did just what we said. The peasantry, ill-disposed towards us in November 1917, after our victory, who sent a majority of Socialist-Revolutionaries into the Constituent Assembly, were won over by us, if not in the course of a few days—as I mistakenly expected and predicted—at any rate in the course of a few weeks. The difference was not great. Can you point out any country in Europe where you could win over the majority of the peasantry in the course of a few weeks? Italy perhaps? (*Laughter.*) If it is said that we were victorious in Russia in spite of not having a big party, that only proves that those who say it have not understood the Russian revolution and that they have absolutely no understanding of how to prepare for a revolution.

Our first step was to create a real Communist Party so as to know whom we were talking to and whom we could fully trust. The slogan of the First and Second congresses was "Down with the Centrists!" We cannot hope to master even the ABC of communism, unless all along the line and throughout the world we make short shrift of the Centrists and semi-Centrists, whom in Russia we call Mensheviks. Our first task is to create a genuinely revolutionary party and to break with the Mensheviks. But that is only a preparatory school. We are already convening the Third Congress, and Comrade Terracini keeps saying that the task of the preparatory school consists in hunting out, pursuing and exposing Centrists and semi-Centrists. No, thank you! We have already done this long enough. At the Second Congress we said that the Centrists are our enemies. But, we must go forward really. The second stage, after organising into a party, consists in learning to prepare for revolution. In many countries we have not even learned how to assume the leadership. We were victorious in Russia not

only because the undisputed majority of the working class was on our side (during the elections in 1917 the overwhelming majority of the workers were with us against the Mensheviks), but also because half the army, immediately after our seizure of power, and nine-tenths of the peasants, in the course of some weeks, came over to our side; we were victorious because we adopted the agrarian programme of the Socialist-Revolutionaries instead of our own, and put it into effect. Our victory lay in the fact that we carried out the Socialist-Revolutionary programme; that is why this victory was so easy. Is it possible that you in the West can have such illusions? It is ridiculous! Just compare the concrete economic conditions, Comrade Terracini and all of you who have signed the proposed amendments! In spite of the fact that the majority so rapidly came to be on our side, the difficulties confronting us after our victory were very great. Nevertheless we won through because we kept in mind not only our aims but also our principles, and did not tolerate in our Party those who kept silent about principles but talked of aims, "dynamic tendencies" and the "transition from passivity to activity". Perhaps we shall be blamed for preferring to keep such gentlemen in prison. But dictatorship is impossible in any other way. We must prepare for dictatorship, and this consists in combating such phrases and such amendments. *(Laughter.)* Throughout, our theses speak of the masses. But, comrades, we need to understand what is meant by masses. The German Communist Workers' Party, the Left-wing comrades, misuse this word. But Comrade Terracini, too, and all those who have signed these amendments, do not know how the word "masses" should be read.

I have been speaking too long as it is; hence I wish to say only a few words about the concept of "masses". It is one that changes in accordance with the changes in the nature of the struggle. At the beginning of the struggle it took only a few thousand genuinely revolutionary workers to warrant talk of the masses. If the party succeeds in drawing into the struggle not only its own members, if it also succeeds in arousing non-party people, it is well on

the way to winning the masses. During our revolutions there were instances when several thousand workers represented the masses. In the history of our movement, and of our struggle against the Mensheviks, you will find many examples where several thousand workers in a town were enough to give a clearly mass character to the movement. You have a mass when several thousand non-party workers, who usually live a philistine life and drag out a miserable existence, and who have never heard anything about politics, begin to act in a revolutionary way. If the movement spreads and intensifies, it gradually develops into a real revolution. We saw this in 1905 and 1917 during three revolutions, and you too will have to go through all this. When the revolution has been sufficiently prepared, the concept "masses" becomes different: several thousand workers no longer constitute the masses. This word begins to denote something else. The concept of "masses" undergoes a change so that it implies the majority, and not simply a majority of the workers alone, but the majority of all the exploited. Any other kind of interpretation is impermissible for a revolutionary, and any other sense of the word becomes incomprehensible. It is possible that even a small party, the British or American party, for example, after it has thoroughly studied the course of political development and become acquainted with the life and customs of the non-party masses, will at a favourable moment evoke a revolutionary movement (Comrade Radek has pointed to the miners' strike as a good example). You will have a mass movement if such a party comes forward with its slogans at such a moment and succeeds in getting millions of workers to follow it. I would not altogether deny that a revolution can be started by a very small party and brought to a victorious conclusion. But one must have a knowledge of the methods by which the masses can be won over. For this thoroughgoing preparation of revolution is essential. But here you have comrades coming forward with the assertion that we should immediately give up the demand for "big" masses. They must be challenged. Without thoroughgoing preparation you will not achieve victory in any country. Quite a small party is sufficient to lead the

masses. At certain times there is no necessity for big organisations.

But to win, we must have the sympathy of the masses. An absolute majority is not always essential; but what is essential to win and retain power is not only the majority of the working class—I use the term "working class" in its West-European sense, i.e., in the sense of the industrial proletariat—but also the majority of the working and exploited rural population. Have you thought about this? Do we find in Terracini's speech even a hint at this thought? He speaks only of "dynamic tendency" and the "transition from passivity to activity". Does he devote even a single word to the food question? And yet the workers demand their victuals, although they can put up with a great deal and go hungry, as we have seen to a certain extent in Russia. We must, therefore, win over to our side not only the majority of the working class, but also the majority of the working and exploited rural population. Have you prepared for this? Almost nowhere.

And so, I repeat: I must unreservedly defend our theses and I feel I am bound to do it. We not only condemned the Centrists but expelled them from the Party. Now we must deal with another aspect, which we also consider dangerous. We must tell the comrades the truth in the most polite form (and in our theses it is told in a kind and considerate way) so that no one feels insulted: we are confronted now by other, more important questions than that of attacks on the Centrists. We have had enough of this question. It has already become somewhat boring. Instead, the comrades ought to learn to wage a real revolutionary struggle. The German workers have already begun this. Hundreds of thousands of proletarians in that country have been fighting heroically. Anyone who opposes this struggle should be immediately expelled. But after that we must not engage in empty word-spinning but must immediately begin to learn, on the basis of the mistakes made, how to organise the struggle better. We must not conceal our mistakes from the enemy. Anyone who is afraid of this is no revolutionary. On the contrary, if we openly declare to the workers: "Yes, we have made mistakes", it

will mean that they will not be repeated and we shall be able better to choose the moment. And if during the struggle itself the majority of the working people prove to be on our side—not only the majority of the workers, but the majority of all the exploited and oppressed—then we shall really be victorious. *(Prolonged, stormy applause.)*

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Collected Works, Vol. 32, pp. 468-77

NOTES

[1] *Credo* (symbol of faith, world outlook)—title of a document published in 1899 and expounding the main propositions of Economism, an opportunist trend which arose at the end of the last century among a section of the Russian Social-Democrats. The Economists claimed that the political struggle against tsarism should be waged mainly by the liberal bourgeoisie and that the workers should confine themselves to economic struggle for better working conditions, higher wages, etc. The Economists opposed the establishment of an independent working-class political party and denied the importance of revolutionary theory for the labour movement. In his book *What Is To Be Done?*, published in 1902, and in other works Lenin proved that the Economists' views were totally untenable and harmful. p. 5

[2] *Narodnaya Volya* (People's Will)—a secret revolutionary organisation founded in 1879. Its members resorted to individual terroristic methods in their struggle against tsarism, made attempts on the life of a number of tsarist officials and on March 1, 1881 assassinated Tsar Alexander II. They were wrong in thinking that a small group of revolutionaries could seize power and destroy the autocracy, without relying on the mass revolutionary movement. In the late 1880s the organisation ceased to exist. p. 6

[3] *Bernsteinism*—an opportunist trend in the German and international socialist movement, initiated by Bernstein, a German Social-Democrat, whose main demand was revision and annulment of the basic principles of revolutionary Marxism on the socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was essentially a demand that Social-Democrats should renounce the struggle for socialism and only strive for some reforms within the framework of capitalist society. p. 6

[4] Lenin quotes the principal proposition of the General Rules of the International Working Men's Association, written by Karl Marx. (See Marx and Engels, *Selected Works,* Vol. I, Moscow, 1962, p. 386.) p. 7

[5] *Socialist-Revolutionaries* (S.R.s)—members of a petty-bourgeois democratic party that came into being in Russia at the end of 1901 and the beginning of 1902. In their fight against the autocracy, they used individual terrorist tactics, which did a great deal of harm to the revolutionary movement and hindered the organisation of the masses for a revolutionary struggle. When the 1905-07 revolution was defeated, the majority of the S.R.s. went over to the bourgeois liberals. After the February 1917 bourgeois-democratic revolution, the S.R. leaders entered the bourgeois Provisional Government, pursued a policy of suppressing the peasant movement and wholly supported the bourgeoisie and landowners in their fight against the working class, which was then preparing for a socialist revolution. After the victory of the October Socialist Revolution the S.R.s. took part in the armed struggle waged by the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie and landowners against the Soviet people. p. 11

[6] *Rabocheye Dyelo*-ists—Economists.

Rabocheye Dyelo—magazine published by the Economists.

New-Iskrists—Mensheviks.

Iskra (Spark)—first all-Russia Marxist revolutionary newspaper, founded by Lenin in 1900. In 1903, at the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P., the Party split into the revolutionary (Bolshevik) and the opportunist (Menshevik) trends, and *Iskra* fell into the hands of the Mensheviks. It was then called *Novaya Iskra* (New Iskra), in contrast to the Leninist old *Iskra*. p. 14

[7] The reference is to Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* p. 16

[8] *The December uprising*—a Moscow workers' armed uprising against the autocracy in December 1905. For nine days, the workers, headed by the Moscow Social-Democrats—Bolsheviks—heroically fought at the barricades against tsarist troops. The government managed to suppress the uprising only when fresh troops arrived from St. Petersburg; the uprising was ruthlessly crushed: workers' districts were drowned in blood and thousands of workers in the city and its suburbs were killed. p. 28

[9] *Fighting squads*—workers' armed detachments formed to fight tsarism in the big cities and industrial centres of Russia in the 1905 revolution. They participated in the December armed uprising in Moscow and other cities.

Moscow Joint Council of Volunteer Fighting Squads consisted of representatives of the volunteer squads formed by Social-Democrats, Socialist-Revolutionaries and members of other parties. p. 28

[10] In October 1905 the Russian revolutionary proletariat staged a nation-wide political strike. All mills, factories and railways came to a standstill. The general strike testified to the great strength of the working class. On October 17, the tsar was forced to issue

a Manifesto promising a constitution and freedom of speech, assembly and the press. The tsar's promises turned out to be a fraud and were never fulfilled. p. 29

[11] See K. Marx, *Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850.* (Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1962, p. 139.) p. 29

[12] Soldiers of the Semyonovsky Guards Regiment were sent from St. Petersburg to Moscow in December 1905, to suppress the workers' uprising. p. 29

[13] Lenin refers to F. Engels's Introduction to K. Marx's *Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850.* When it was being prepared for publication in 1895, the German Social-Democrats distorted it and then interpreted it as renunciation of armed uprising and fighting at barricades. The full text of the Introduction, according to Engels's manuscript, was first published in the U.S.S.R. (See Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1962, pp. 118-38.) p. 34

[14] In December 1905, some Lettish towns were seized by armed detachments of insurgent workers, farm hands and peasants, and the result was a guerrilla war against tsarist troops. It was suppressed by a tsarist punitive expedition in January 1906. p. 35

[15] The reference is to the mutinies at the Sveaborg and Kronstadt fortresses in July 1906. p. 35

[16] The reference is to the elections to the State Duma.

The State Duma—representative assembly the tsarist government forced to convene as a result of the 1905 revolution, nominally a legislative body, but without effective power. The elections to the Duma were neither direct, equal, nor universal. The working people's electoral rights, like those of the non-Russian nationalities inhabiting the country, were considerably restricted. Most of the workers and peasants were not entitled to vote at all. According to the electoral law of December 11 (24), 1905, one landowner vote was equal to three bourgeois votes, 15 peasant votes, and 45 workers' votes.

The First Duma (April-July 1906) and the Second Duma (February-June 1907) were dissolved by the tsarist government. After the June 3, 1907 coup the government passed a new electoral law which further curtailed the electoral rights of workers, peasants and the urban petty bourgeoisie and gave the reactionary bloc of landowners and big capitalists in the Third (1907-12) and the Fourth (1912-17) Dumas full sway. p. 37

[17] *The Black Hundreds*—monarchist gangs organised by the tsarist police to fight the revolutionary movement. They assassinated revolutionaries, attacked progressive intellectuals and organised Jewish pogroms. p. 37

[18] *Cadets*—members of the Constitutional-Democratic Party of the Russian liberal bourgeoisie, set up in 1905. The Cadets wanted a constitutional monarchy in Russia. During the first Russian revolution of 1905-07, the Cadets called themselves "the people's freedom party", but actually betrayed the people's interests by secretly negotiating with the tsarist government to strangle the revolution. The Cadets strove for power, and on the main points of home and foreign policy they supported tsarism.

During the imperialist war of 1914-17, the Cadet leaders, Milyukov among them, were the chief ideologists of the expansionist policy of the Russian imperialist bourgeoisie. After the February 1917 revolution, the Cadets entered the bourgeois Provisional Government and fought the workers' and peasants' revolutionary movement; they stood up for large landed estates. They tried to force the people to continue the imperialist war. After the victory of the October Socialist Revolution, the Cadets took part in the armed counter-revolutionary action against Soviet Russia. p. 38

[19] *Peaceful Renovators*—members of the Party of Peaceful Renovation, a counter-revolutionary party of the bourgeoisie and landowners, set up in 1906. p. 38

[20] *Trudoviks, the Trudovik group*—a group in the State Duma, consisting mainly of peasants and other petty-bourgeois democrats. They demanded that all the land belonging to the landowners, state, monasteries and the tsar's family should be transferred to the peasants, the estates and national inequality be abolished, and universal suffrage granted. The Trudoviks, however, often went back on the principles of consistent democratism and supported the leaders of the liberal bourgeoisie.

Popular Socialists—a party set up by the Right-wing Socialist-Revolutionaries in 1906, and expounding the views close to the Cadets.

Socialist-Revolutionaries—see Note 5. p. 40

[21] Lenin is referring to the draft which the Cadets submitted to the Duma and which said that part of the land belonging to the landowners should be forcibly and for a "fair" price alienated in favour of the peasants; this "fair" redemption actually meant that the peasants would have to pay the landowners much more the land was worth.

A reform carried out *in 1861* abolished serfdom in Russia. Simultaneously, the best lands were cut off from the peasants' plots and transferred to the landowners. For the allotments they received the peasants had to make payments to the landowners well in excess of the actual worth. p. 41

[22] *The Party of Peaceful Plunder*—Lenin is referring to the Party of Peaceful Renovation (see Note 19). This is a pun on the words "obnovleniye" (renovation) and "ogrableniye" (plunder). p. 41

[23] A reference to *liquidationism*—an opportunist trend widespread among Menshevik Social-Democrats after the defeat of the 1905-07 revolution.

The liquidators demanded the liquidation of the working-class underground revolutionary party and called upon the workers to cease revolutionary struggle against tsarism. They intended to convene a non-party "workers' congress" and to organise an opportunist "broad workers' party" renouncing revolutionary slogans and engaging only in legal activity permitted by the tsarist government. Lenin and other Bolsheviks persistently exposed the liquidators, who betrayed the cause of the revolution. The liquidators lost ground among the masses. The Prague Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. in January 1912 expelled the liquidators from the Party. p. 44

[24] That is after the 1905-07 revolution. p. 46

[25] On November 9 (22), 1906, Stolypin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, promulgated a land decree permitting the peasants to leave the communes and set up separate farms. The Stolypin land reform, completely impoverishing the village poor and benefiting the kulaks, was aimed at making the latter the bulwark of tsarism in the countryside. p. 46

[26] That is prior to the all-Russia political strike in October 1905. p. 48

[27] *Octobrists* or the *Union of October 17th*—a monarchist party of big capitalists founded in November 1905. The party's name expressed solidarity with the tsar's Manifesto of October 17, 1905, which promised constitutional liberties for Russia. The party pursued anti-popular activity and upheld the selfish interests of the big bourgeoisie and the landowners, who ran their farms on capitalist lines. The Octobrists gave full support to the tsar's reactionary home and foreign policies. After the victory of the October Socialist Revolution the Octobrists, together with the Cadets, and with the help of foreign imperialists, organised armed struggle against the Soviet people. p. 49

[28] *Otzovists, otzovism*—an opportunist trend which spread within a small group of Bolsheviks after the defeat of the 1905-07 revolution. The otzovists demanded the recall of the Social-Democratic deputies from the Duma and cessation of work in legal organisations. In 1908, they formed a special group and started a campaign against Lenin. The otzovists insistently refused to work in the Duma, the trade unions, co-operative societies and other mass legal and semi-legal organisations. They strove to limit themselves to illegal work. Under the cover of "revolutionary" phrases, the otzovists hindered the Party's contacts with broad sections of the workers, alienated the Party from the masses, thereby weakening it. Lenin sharply criticised them and called them a "new type of liquidators", "inside out Mensheviks". p. 53

[29] *Golos Sotsial-Demokrata* (Voice of a Social-Democrat)—newspaper of the Menshevik liquidators. p. 55

[30] *The Zemstvo campaign* took place from August 1904 to January 1905. At congresses, meetings, and banquets, Zemstvo officials delivered speeches and adopted resolutions with moderate constitutional demands.

On January 9, 1905, the St. Petersburg workers, accompanied by their wives and children, went to the Winter Palace to submit a petition to the tsar. The petition described the intolerable condition of the workers and their complete lack of rights. The tsar ordered his troops to open fire on the peaceful demonstration of unarmed workers. Workers all over Russia countered this brutal shooting-down with mass political strikes and demonstrations under the slogan, "Down with the autocracy!" The January 9 events sparked off the 1905-07 revolution. p. 55

[31] That is for the period of the 1905-07 revolution. p. 62

[32] *Exceptional Anti-Socialist Law* was introduced in Germany by the Bismarck Government in 1878, prohibiting the Social-Democratic Party, all mass workers' organisations and the workers' press. The best representatives of the German Social-Democrats rallied round August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht and began intensive work underground. The Party's influence among the working masses grew. At the 1890 elections to the Reichstag, the Social-Democrats polled almost one and a half million votes. That same year, the government was compelled to repeal the Anti-Socialist Law. p. 65

[33] Writing articles for legal publications, i.e., those that were subject to the tsarist censorship, Lenin had to resort to "Aesopean language". Here, speaking about "parties devoid of proper organisation", Lenin had in mind petty-bourgeois parties which opposed party allegiance and had no clear-cut political platform. p. 70

[34] *Letts*—Social-Democrats of the Lettish territory, who adhered to liquidationism.

The Bund—the abbreviation for the General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland and Russia. It was organised in 1897 and united mainly Jewish artisans in the western regions of Russia. The Bund pursued an opportunist, Menshevik policy; after the defeat of the 1905-07 revolution it joined the liquidators. p. 75

[35] *Zhivoye Dyelo* (Living Cause)—a liquidators' newspaper published in St. Petersburg in 1912.

Initiating groups of Social-Democratic activists of the open workers' movement were set up by the liquidators in certain towns, in opposition to the illegal party organisations. The liquidators regarded them as cells of a new broad legal party which would adapt itself to the Stolypin regime. These groups were few, consisted of

intellectuals, and had no contacts with the working class. They opposed the strike struggle and revolutionary demonstrations by the workers, and campaigned against the Bolsheviks during elections to the Fourth Duma. p. 75

[36] *Organising Committee* was founded in January 1912 at the meeting of liquidators, representatives of the Bund, the Caucasian regional committee and the Social-Democracy of the Lettish territory, to convene a liquidators' conference. p. 75

[37] *Anti-liquidators*—revolutionary Social-Democrats, Bolsheviks, headed by Lenin.
Vperyod (Forward)—the name of the otzovists' group. p.76

[38] The reference is to the Menshevik liquidators' newspaper *Pravda* published by Trotsky in Vienna from 1908 to 1912. p.76

[39] The legal Bolshevik daily, *Pravda*, first appeared in St. Petersburg on April 22 (May 5), 1912. p. 76

[40] *Nasha Zarya* (Our Dawn)—a liquidators' magazine. p. 77

[41] A reference to Socialist-Revolutionaries. p. 78

[42] In April 1917, the Cadet Shingaryov, a Minister of the bourgeois Provisional Government, sent a telegram to the localities prohibiting peasants "to settle the land question independently" and proposing that it be settled by "voluntary agreement" between the landowners and the peasants. Shingaryov's policy was designed to promote the landowners' interests and to prevent the transfer of landowners' lands to the people. p. 79

[43] *The Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany* was founded in April 1917 by the German Centrists (see Note 50), who withdrew from the Social-Democratic Party. In 1920, the Independents split up and a considerable number of them joined the Communist Party of Germany. The Right-wing elements of the Independent Party rejoined the Social-Democratic Party in 1922. p. 83

[44] The reference is to the Bolshevik boycott of the so-called Bulygin Duma. In August 1905 in keeping with the draft drawn up by the commission headed by Bulygin, Minister of the Interior, the tsar announced the convocation of a consultative State Duma (without legislative powers). The Bolsheviks countered with an active boycott of the Duma—they called upon the workers to stay away from the elections and to fight the autocracy. The Bulygin Duma was never convened—it was smashed by the revolutionary movement of the workers and peasants even before it assembled. p. 84

[45] On December 30, 1918, the First Congress of the Communist Party of Germany discussed the question of whether to take part in the elections to the National Assembly. Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg favoured participation and insisted on the need to use the parliamentary rostrum in popularising revolutionary slogans among the masses. The majority of the Congress, however, refused to participate in the elections to the National Assembly and adopted a resolution to that effect. p. 87

[46] In the period between the February 1917 revolution and 1919, Party membership changed as follows: by the Seventh All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. (Bolsheviks) in April 1917, the Party had 80,000 members; by the Sixth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), in July-August 1917, their number was 240,000; by the Seventh Congress of the R.C.P.(B.) in March 1918—at least 270,000, and by the Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.) in March 1919—313,766 Party members. p. 91

[47] *Industrial Workers of the World* (I.W.W.)—a U.S. workers' organisation founded in 1905. Anarcho-syndicalist views, boiling down to the rejection of political struggle, were widespread among its leaders and members.

In 1914-18, the I.W.W. actively opposed the imperialist war and was subjected to brutal repressions. At that time, its membership was over 100,000. Pointing to the fact that it was a "profoundly proletarian mass movement", Lenin criticised the erroneous political line of the Left sectarian I.W.W. leaders, who refused to work among the masses in the reactionary trade unions, and opposed participation in bourgeois parliaments.

Later, the really revolutionary elements withdrew from the I.W.W., leaving it as a small sectarian organisation without influence among the workers' masses. p. 99

[48] On the Bolshevik use of boycott in 1905, see Note 44.

The Bolsheviks also used boycott tactics over the First Duma, convened in April 1906. Subsequently, Lenin admitted that the State Duma in 1906 should not have been boycotted, because the situation differed from that in 1905 and the revolution was at its ebb. "The Bolshevik boycott of 'parliament' in 1905," wrote Lenin, "enriched the revolutionary proletariat with highly valuable political experience and showed that, when legal and illegal, parliamentary and non-parliamentary forms of struggle are combined, it is sometimes useful and even essential to reject parliamentary forms. It would, however, be highly erroneous to apply this experience blindly, imitatively and uncritically to *other* conditions and *other* situations. The Bolshevik boycott of the Duma in 1906 was a mistake, even if a minor and easily remediable one." The boycott of the Duma in 1907, 1908 and subsequent years suggested by the boycottists and the otzovists (see Note 28) and rejected by the Bolsheviks would have been "a

most serious error and difficult to remedy", Lenin pointed out. p. 107

[49] On October 26 (November 8), 1917, the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets adopted the Decree on Land. In Russia, it annulled landed estates and transferred the land to the peasants. The Decree on Land included the Peasant Mandate on Land drawn up on the basis of 242 local mandates and the Socialist-Revolutionary slogan for "equalitarian land tenure". Explaining why the Bolsheviks had opposed it earlier, and later accepted it, Lenin said, "As a democratic government, we cannot ignore the decision of the masses of the people, even though we may disagree with it. In the flames of experience, applying the decree in practice, and carrying it out locally, the peasants will come to realise for themselves where the truth lies." p. 108

[50] *Centre, Centrism*—an opportunist trend in the international working-class movement. In the parties of the Second International, the Centrists occupied an intermediate position between the overt opportunists and the Left revolutionary wing, hence their name. One of their theoreticians was Karl Kautsky. Supporting the Right-wing Social-Democrats on all the principal questions, the Centrists covered it up with Left-wing talk. In 1919-21, with a revolutionary upsurge in Western Europe, the Centrists of a number of countries split away from the Social-Democrats and formed independent parties. Trying to retain their influence among the revolutionarily-minded workers, they expressed their readiness to join the Third, Communist International, founded in March 1919. When the revolutionary movement in Germany, Italy and other countries was defeated, capitalism was temporarily stabilised, the Centrist parties once again joined the Social-Democratic parties. p. 117

[51] The charges levelled by the *Turin section* against the leadership of the Italian Socialist Party were that, in the conditions of the revolutionary upsurge of 1919-20, when an opportunity arose for the proletariat to seize political power, it did not take a correct view of the events, did not advance a single slogan suitable for the revolutionary masses and did not drive out reformists from its midst. The Turin section made a number of practical proposals: to expel the opportunists from the party ranks, to form Communist groups at all factories, in trade unions, co-operatives and barracks and to set up factory committees to establish control over production in industry and agriculture. The Turin section demanded that the masses should immediately be prepared to establish Soviets p. 127

[52] *Shop Stewards' Committees*—elective workers' organisations in many trades in Britain during the First World War. After the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution and during the foreign military intervention against Soviet Russia, the Shop Stewards'

Committees actively opposed intervention. A number of activists of the Shop Stewards' Committees were foundation members of the Communist Party of Great Britain. p. 127

[53] *The Basle Manifesto* was adopted at the extraordinary congress of the Second International, convened in November 1912, in protest to the Balkan War, which had broken out, and the world imperialist war then in preparation. p. 140

[54] In September 1920, the Conference of the Communist Party of Austria repealed the previous decision to boycott elections to parliament. The party took part in the elections under the slogan of revolutionary unity of the working class. p. 141

[55] *The German Communist Workers' Party*—a Leftist group which split away from the Communist Party of Germany in 1919, and in 1920 founded an independent organisation, the Communist Workers' Party of Germany. It took a semi-anarchist stand, had no influence among the working class, and became a sect hostile to the Communists. p. 145

[56] The reference is to the Open Letter of the Central Committee of the United Communist Party of Germany calling upon all trade unions and workers' organisations of Germany to form a united front and jointly fight against the intensified advance of capitalists on the working class. The Open Letter was published in the newspaper *Die Rote Fahne* on January 8, 1921. p. 146

[57] *The March action*—the workers' armed uprising in Central Germany in March 1921. It was not supported by the workers of other industrial districts and, despite the heroic struggle of the workers, was soon suppressed. p. 149

[58] *The Two-and-a-Half International*—the name of the international association founded in Vienna in 1921 at the conference of Centrist parties and groups, which under the pressure of the revolutionary workers' masses left the Second International for a time. In 1923, the Two-and-a-Half International again merged with the Second International. p. 150

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