

A black and white woodcut-style portrait of Joseph Stalin, shown from the chest up. He has a serious expression, a mustache, and a goatee. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark tie. Behind his head, a large, dark, draped fabric or flag is visible, suggesting a sense of grandeur or authority.

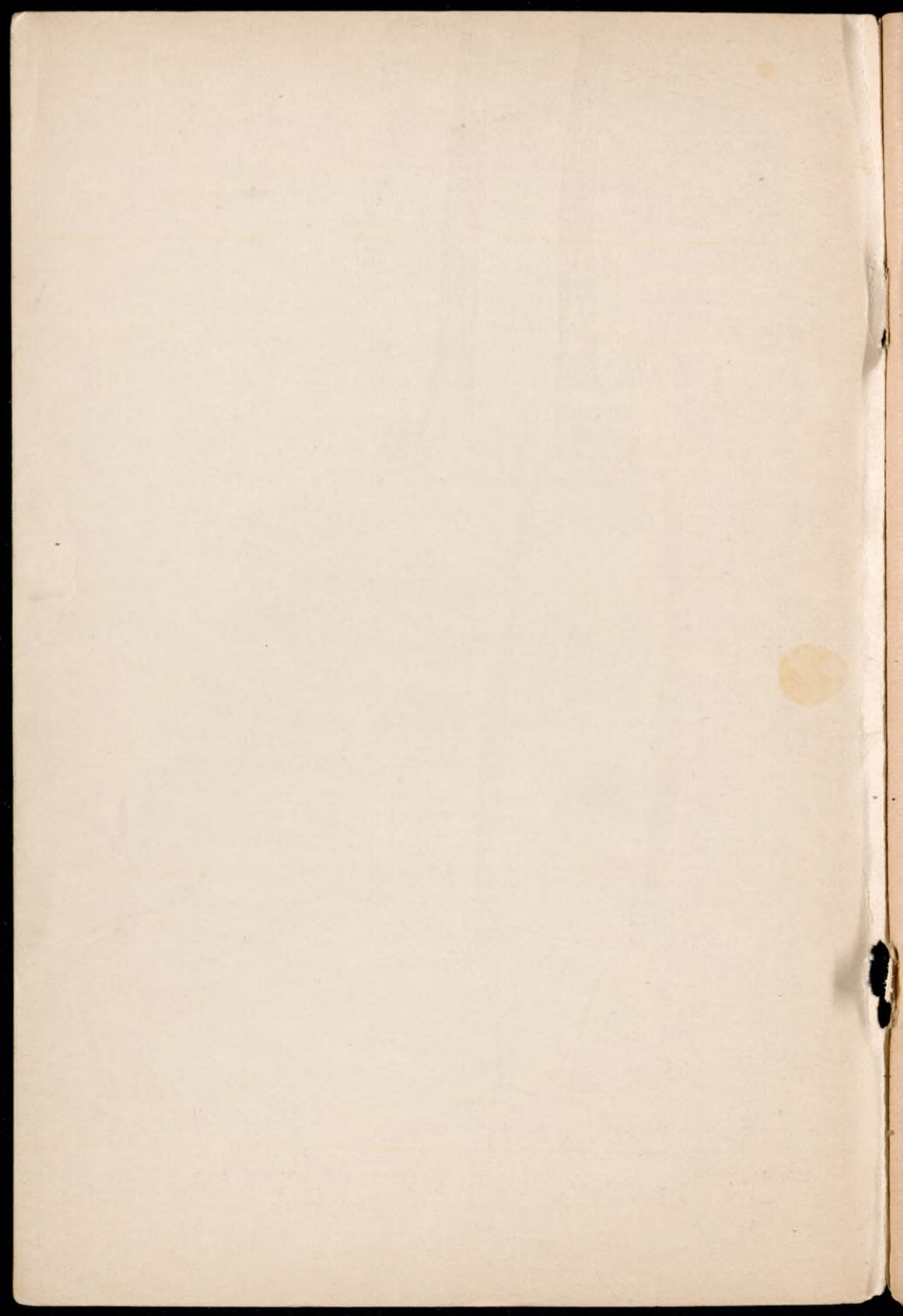
**Joseph
Stalin**

FOUNDATIONS
of **LENINISM**



TENTH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

10c.



FOUNDATIONS OF LENINISM

By the same author:

LENINISM, VOLUME I

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PROBLEMS OF LENINISM

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

REPORT TO XVII CONGRESS OF THE
C.P.S.U.

LENIN

FOUNDATIONS OF LENINISM

BY JOSEPH STALIN

Tenth Anniversary Edition



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TO THE READER

THE present edition of *Foundations of Leninism* is published in 100,000 copies—a bold step, but justified by the rapidly growing interest in the literature of Marxism and Leninism. Its publication is occasioned by two anniversaries. The first is of the book itself. It is the outcome of a series of lectures delivered by Joseph Stalin in 1924 before the students of Sverdlov University in Moscow, shortly after the death of Lenin. A brilliant, systematic exposition of the teachings of Lenin, this book ranks with the outstanding classics of Marxism. It has been translated into 26 languages and issued in the Russian language alone in nearly 10 million copies.

This year also marks the completion of ten years' publishing activity of International Publishers. The tasks which we have set ourselves are by far not accomplished as yet. But numerous works which perhaps otherwise would not have seen the light of day have been made available. These are contained in our growing list of the writings of Marx and Engels, the works of Lenin and Stalin and other foremost Marxists in new and scientific editions; of books dealing with the problems and experiences of the labor movement in the United States; of authoritative books on the Soviet Union; proletarian fiction and numerous pamphlets covering the manifold problems of our time.

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INTRODUCTION

THE foundations of Leninism is a big subject. In order to exhaust it a whole volume is required. More than that, a whole series of volumes is necessary. Naturally, therefore, my lectures cannot serve as an exhaustive exposition of Leninism; at best they can be but a concise synopsis of the foundations of Leninism. Nevertheless, I consider it useful to give this synopsis in order to lay down some of the basic points of departure, which are necessary for the successful study of Leninism.

But expounding the foundations of Leninism does not yet mean expounding the foundations of Lenin's conception of the world. Lenin's conception of the world and the foundations of Leninism are not co-extensive. Lenin was a Marxist and Marxism is naturally the foundation of his conception of the world. But it does not follow from this in the least that an exposition of Leninism ought to begin with an exposition of the foundations of Marxism. To expound Leninism means to expound that which is distinctive and new in the work of Lenin, which he contributed to the general treasury of Marxism and which is naturally connected with his name. It is only in this case that I shall speak of the foundations of Leninism in my lectures.

And so, what is Leninism?

According to some it is the application of Marxism to the peculiar conditions prevailing in Russia. This definition contains a grain of truth, but not the whole truth by any means. Lenin, indeed, applied Marxism to Russian reality and applied it masterfully. But if Leninism were only the application of Marxism to the peculiar situation in Russia

it would be a purely national, and only a national, a purely Russian, and only a Russian, phenomenon. We know, however, that Leninism is an international phenomenon, having its roots in international development as a whole, and not only Russian. That is why in my opinion this definition suffers from being one-sided.

Others declare that Leninism is the revival of the revolutionary elements of Marxism of the forties of the nineteenth century, in contradistinction to the Marxism of subsequent years, when it allegedly became moderate and non-revolutionary. If we ignore this stupid and banal sub-division of the teachings of Marx into two parts, revolutionary and moderate, we must admit that even this inadequate and unsatisfactory definition contains a particle of truth. That particle consists in the fact that Lenin indeed revived the revolutionary content of Marxism, which had been entombed by the opportunists of the Second International. Yet it remains but a particle of the truth. The whole truth about Leninism is that Leninism has not only revived Marxism, but has also taken a step forward in developing it further under the new conditions of capitalism and of the class struggle of the proletariat.

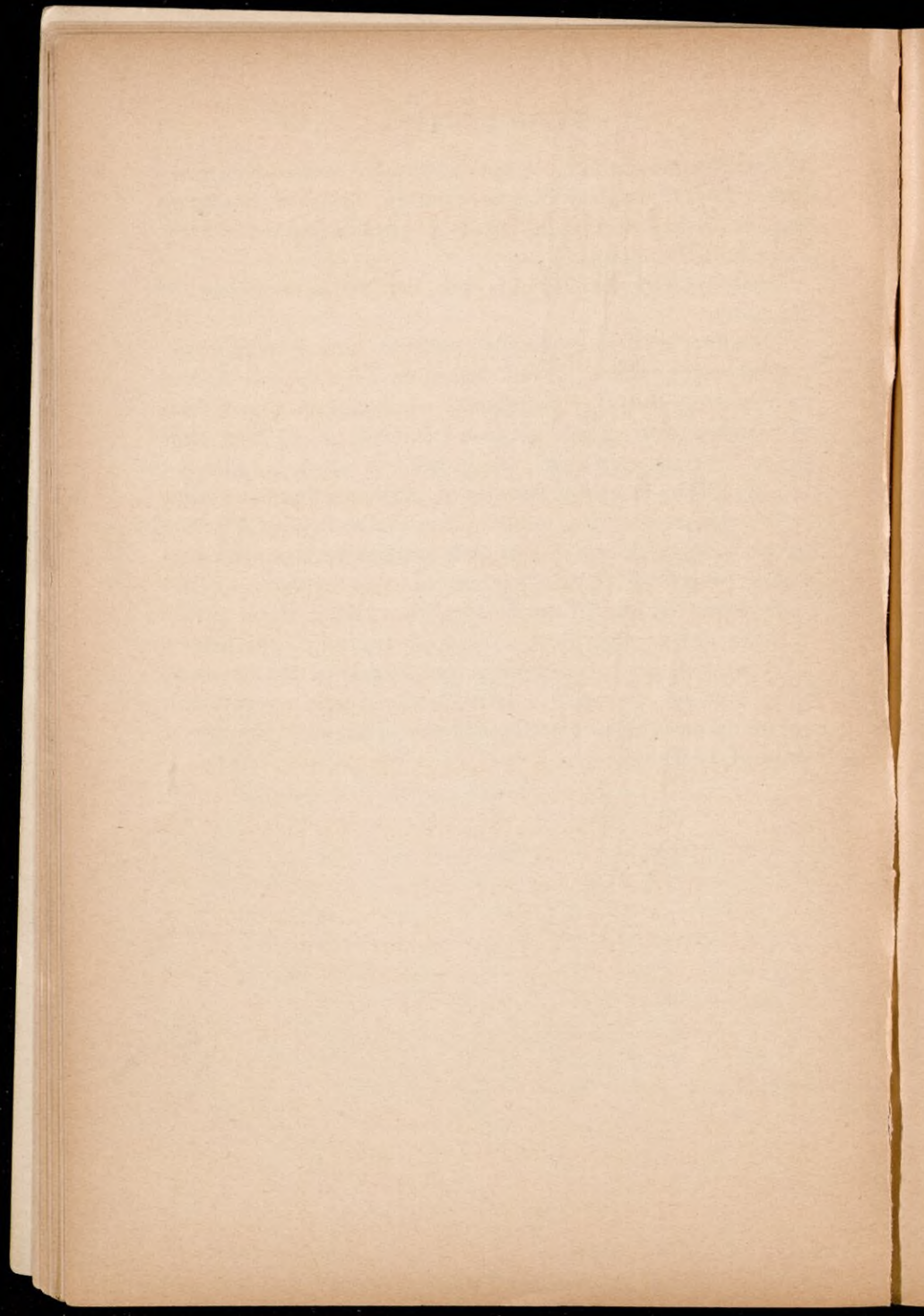
What, then, is Leninism in the last analysis?

Leninism is Marxism in the epoch of imperialism and of the proletarian revolution. Or, to be more exact, Leninism is the theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution in general, the theory and tactics of the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular. Marx and Engels lived and worked in the pre-revolutionary epoch (we have the proletarian revolution in mind) when developed imperialism did not yet exist, in the period of the preparation of the proletarians for the revolution, when the proletarian revolution was not yet a direct, practical inevitability. Lenin, the disciple of Marx and Engels, lived and worked in the epoch of developed imperialism, in the epoch of the developing

proletarian revolution, the epoch when the proletarian revolution has triumphed in one country, smashed bourgeois democracy and ushered in the era of proletarian democracy, the era of the soviets.

That is why Leninism is the further development of Marxism.

Usually, the exceptionally militant and exceptionally revolutionary character of Leninism is emphasised, and rightly so. But this peculiarity of Leninism arises from two causes: first of all, because Leninism has sprung from the proletarian revolution, the imprint of which it could not fail to retain; secondly, because it grew and became strong in the clashes with the opportunism of the Second International, a struggle which was and remains an essential condition precedent to the success of the struggle against capitalism. It should not be forgotten that a whole period of undivided domination by the opportunism of the Second International lies between Marx and Engels on the one hand and Lenin on the other. Relentless struggle against this opportunism could not but become one of the most important tasks of Leninism.



FOUNDATIONS OF LENINISM

I. THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF LENINISM

LENINISM grew up and assumed definite form under the conditions of imperialism, at the time when the contradictions of capitalism had reached a most acute stage, when the proletarian revolution had become an immediate practical question, when the old period of preparation of the working class for the revolution had reached and grown into a new period of direct onslaught against capitalism.

Lenin used to call imperialism "moribund capitalism." Why? Because imperialism carries the contradictions of capitalism to their last bounds, to the extreme limits, beyond which revolution begins. Of these contradictions, three are the most important.

The *first contradiction* is the antagonism between labour and capital. Imperialism denotes the omnipotence of the monopolist trusts and syndicates, of the banks and of the financial oligarchy in the industrial countries. In the fight against this omnipotence, the customary methods of the working class—trade unions and co-operative organisations, parliamentary parties and parliamentary struggle—proved quite inadequate. Either place yourself at the mercy of capital, linger in misery as of old and sink lower and lower, or adopt a new weapon—this is the alternative imperialism puts before the vast masses of the proletariat. Imperialism brings the working class to revolution.

The *second contradiction* is the antagonism between the various financial groups and the imperialist powers in their struggle for sources of raw materials, for foreign territory.

Imperialism is the export of capital to the sources of raw materials, the frantic struggle for exclusive monopoly of these sources, the struggle for redivision of the world that has already been divided, a struggle conducted with particular fury by new financial groups and powers seeking a "place in the sun" against the old ones which tightly cling to their prey. This frantic struggle between various groups of capitalists is remarkable in that an inevitable element of it is imperialist war, war for the annexation of foreign territory. This fact in its turn is remarkable in that it leads to the weakening of the imperialists by one another, to the weakening of the position of capitalism in general; it accelerates the advent of the proletarian revolution and makes this revolution a practical necessity.

The *third contradiction* is the antagonism between the handful of ruling, "civilised" nations and the hundreds of millions of colonial and dependent peoples of the world. Imperialism means the most shameless exploitation and the most inhuman oppression of hundreds of millions of the population of vast colonies and dependent countries. The purpose of this exploitation and oppression is to squeeze out super-profits. But in exploiting these countries imperialism is compelled to construct railways, factories and workshops there, and to create industrial and commercial centres. The appearance of a class of proletarians, the rise of a native intelligentsia, the awakening of national consciousness, the strengthening of the liberation movement—are all the inevitable results of this "policy." The strengthening of the revolutionary movement in all colonies and dependent countries without exception manifestly testifies to this fact. This circumstance is of importance to the proletariat in that it radically undermines the position of capitalism by transforming the colonies and dependent countries from reserves of imperialism into reserves of the proletarian revolution.

Such, in general, are the principal contradictions of imperialism that have transformed the old, "flourishing" capitalism into moribund capitalism.

The significance of the imperialist war that broke loose ten years ago lies, among other things, in the fact that it gathered all these contradictions into a single sheaf and threw them onto the scales, thus accelerating and facilitating the revolutionary battles of the proletariat.

In other words, imperialism has not only brought it about that revolution became a practical inevitability; it has also created favourable conditions for a direct attack on the citadels of capitalism.

Such is the international situation that gave birth to Leninism.

This is all very well, some may say, but how does Russia fit into this picture—Russia, which was not and could not be the classical land of imperialism? In what way is Lenin, who worked above all in Russia and for Russia, concerned with this? Why did Russia of all countries become the home of Leninism, the birthplace of the theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution?

Because Russia was the junction point of all these contradictions of imperialism.

Because Russia more than any other country was pregnant with revolution and she alone was therefore in a position to solve these contradictions in a revolutionary way.

To begin with, tsarist Russia was the home of oppression of every kind—capitalist, colonial and militarist—of oppression in its most inhuman and barbarous form. Who does not know that in Russia the omnipotence of capital was merged with the despotism of tsarism, the aggressive character of Russian nationalism with the rule of the tsarist hangmen over non-Russian peoples, the exploitation of whole regions—Turkey, Persia and China—with the seizure of these regions by tsarism, with wars of conquest? Lenin

was right in saying that tsarism was "militarist-feudal imperialism." Tsarism concentrated within itself the most negative sides of imperialism.

Again, tsarist Russia was an immense reserve force for Western imperialism, not only in that it gave free entry to foreign capital which controlled decisive branches of Russian economy like fuel and metallurgy, but also in that it could furnish millions of soldiers to the Western imperialists. Remember the Russian army, twelve million strong, which shed its blood on the imperialist fronts to safeguard the staggering profits of the Anglo-French capitalists.

Furthermore, tsarism was not only the watchdog of imperialism in Eastern Europe, but also the agent of Western imperialism in squeezing hundreds of millions from the population by way of interest on loans floated in Paris, London, Berlin and Brussels.

Finally, tsarism was the faithful ally of Western imperialism in the partitioning of Turkey, Persia, China, etc. Was not the imperialist war carried on by tsarist Russia in alliance with the Entente powers? Was not Russia an essential factor in this war? Who does not know this?

That is why the interests of tsarism and of Western imperialism interlocked and ultimately merged into a single skein of interests of imperialism. Could Western imperialism resign itself to the loss of this powerful support in the East, this rich source of strength and wealth that the old tsarist bourgeois Russia represented, without exerting all its efforts to wage a mortal struggle against the Russian revolution in order to defend and maintain tsarism? Obviously not.

It follows from this, however, that whoever wanted to strike at tsarism necessarily raised his arm against imperialism; whoever rose against tsarism had at the same time to rise against imperialism; for whoever overthrew tsarism had at the same time to overthrow imperialism, if

his intention really was not only to smash tsarism but to extirpate it without leaving a trace. Thus the revolution against tsarism approximated to and had to grow into a revolution against imperialism, into a proletarian revolution.

Meanwhile, in Russia, a popular revolution was rising, a revolution headed by the most revolutionary proletariat in the world, which could count upon the revolutionary peasantry of Russia as its sturdy ally. It is self-evident that such a revolution could not come to a halt midway; that in case of success it was bound to advance further and raise the banner of revolt against imperialism.

It is for this reason that Russia had to become the junction point of the contradictions of imperialism not only in the sense that these contradictions were exposed more easily in Russia than elsewhere in view of their especially repulsive and intolerable character, and not only because Russia was the most important bulwark of Western imperialism, uniting as it did Western finance capital with the Eastern colonies, but also because only in Russia did the real power exist capable of solving the contradictions of imperialism in a revolutionary way.

From this it follows that in Russia the revolution could not but become a proletarian revolution, that it could not but assume an international character from the very first days of its development and that, therefore, it could not but shake the very foundations of world imperialism.

Under such circumstances, could the Russian Communists have confined their operations within the narrow national limits of the Russian revolution? Certainly not! On the contrary, the whole situation, internal (profound revolutionary crisis) and external (war) pushed them beyond these confines in their work, compelled them to transfer their struggles to the international arena, expose the ulcers of imperialism to full view, demonstrate the inevitable collapse of capitalism, defeat social-chauvinism and social-

pacifism, and finally overthrow capitalism in their own country and forge a new weapon of struggle for the proletariat, the theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution, in order to lighten for the proletariat of all countries the task of overthrowing capitalism. The Russian Communists could not act otherwise, for this was the only path along which such changes in the international situation as would ensure Russia against the restoration of the bourgeois order could be expected.

That is why Russia became the home of Leninism; and that is why Lenin, the leader of the Russian Communists, became its creator.

The same thing more or less "happened" with Russia and Lenin as happened with Germany and Marx and Engels in the forties of the last century. Like Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century, Germany was then pregnant with the bourgeois revolution. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx wrote:

"The Communists turn their attention chiefly to Germany, because that country is on the eve of a bourgeois revolution that is bound to be carried out under more advanced conditions of European civilisation and with a much more developed proletariat than what existed in England in the seventeenth and in France in the eighteenth century, and because the bourgeois revolution in Germany will be but the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution." (*Manifesto of the Communist Party* [International Publishers], p. 44.)

In other words, the centre of the revolutionary movement was being transferred to Germany.

There can hardly be any doubt but that this circumstance, noted by Marx in the above-quoted passage, explains the fact that Germany came to be the fatherland of scientific socialism and that the leaders of the German proletariat, Marx and Engels, were its creators.

The same—only to a still greater degree—must be said of Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century. Russia at that time was on the eve of the bourgeois revolution; she had to accomplish this revolution under more advanced conditions in Europe, and with a more developed proletariat than Germany had, not to mention England and France. Every indication pointed to the fact that this revolution would serve as a ferment and act as a prelude to the proletarian revolution. It was not a mere coincidence that Lenin as early as 1902, when the Russian revolution was still in an inchoate state, wrote the following prophetic words in his pamphlet *What Is to Be Done?*:

“History has now confronted us (*i.e.*, the Russian Marxists—*J. S.*) with an immediate task which is *more revolutionary than all the immediate tasks* that confront the proletariat of any other country. The fulfilment of this task, the destruction of the most powerful bulwark, not only of European, but also (it may now be said) of Asiatic reaction, places the Russian proletariat in the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat.” (*Collected Works*, Vol. IV, Book II, p. 112; also Little Lenin Library, Vol. 4, p. 30.) *

In other words, the centre of the revolutionary movement was to be transferred to Russia.

The course of the revolution has, as we know, more than vindicated Lenin's prediction.

Is it surprising after all this that a country which has accomplished such a revolution and possesses such a proletariat should be the fatherland of the theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution?

Is it surprising that Lenin, the leader of this proletariat, should also become the creator of this theory and of these tactics and the leader of the international proletariat?

* Unless otherwise stated, references are given to available English translations.—*Ed.*

II. THE METHOD

I SAID above that between Marx and Engels on the one hand and Lenin on the other lay a whole period of domination by the opportunism of the Second International. To be more precise, I must add that it was not so much a question of the formal as of the actual domination of opportunism. Formally, the Second International was headed by "orthodox" Marxists like Kautsky and others. Actually, however, its fundamental work followed the line of opportunism. Because of their petty-bourgeois adaptable nature, the opportunists adapted themselves to the bourgeoisie; as for the "orthodox" they adapted themselves to the opportunists in order to "maintain unity" with the latter, to maintain "peace within the Party"! As a result, opportunism dominated; because the links between the policy of the bourgeoisie and the policy of the "orthodox" were joined.

It was a period of relatively peaceful development of capitalism, a pre-war period, so to speak, when the disastrous contradictions of imperialism had not yet so obviously revealed themselves, when economic strikes and trade unions developed more or less "normally," when in the electoral struggles and parliamentary fractions "dizzy" successes were achieved, when the legal forms of struggle were exalted to the skies, and when it was hoped to "kill" capitalism by legal means. In other words, it was a period when the parties of the Second International were becoming gross and stodgy, and no longer wanted to think seriously about revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the revolutionary training of the masses.

Instead of a coherent revolutionary theory, they propounded contradictory theoretical postulates, fragments of theory isolated from the actual revolutionary struggle of the masses, and which had become transformed into threadbare dogmas. For the sake of appearances, they always, of course, referred to the theory of Marx, but only in order to rob it of its living revolutionary spirit.

Instead of a revolutionary policy there was effete philistinism, practical politics, parliamentary diplomacy and parliamentary scheming. For the sake of appearances, of course, "revolutionary" resolutions and slogans were passed only to be pigeonholed.

Instead of educating and teaching the Party true revolutionary tactics from a study of its own mistakes, we find a studied evasion of thorny questions, which were glossed over and veiled. In order to keep up appearances they were not averse to talking about these awkward questions, only to wind up with some sort of "elastic" resolution.

Such were the features, the method of work and the armoury of the Second International.

In the meantime, a new period was approaching, the period of imperialist wars and of revolutionary proletarian struggles. The old methods of struggle proved manifestly inadequate and ineffective in the face of the omnipotence of finance capital.

It was necessary to review the whole activity and the method of work of the Second International, to drive out its philistinism, its narrow-mindedness, its political dickerings, its renegacy, social-chauvinism and social-pacifism. It was necessary to overhaul the armoury of the Second International, to reject all that was rusty and out-of-date, to forge new weapons. Without this preliminary work, it was futile to embark upon war against capitalism. Without this work, the proletariat ran the risk of finding itself inade-

quately armed or even completely weaponless in future revolutionary battles.

The honour of making a general revision and general cleansing of the Augean stables of the Second International fell to Leninism.

It was in this setting that the method of Leninism was born and hammered out.

What are the requirements of this method?

First of all, that the theoretical dogmas of the Second International be *tested* in the crucible of the revolutionary struggle of the masses, in the crucible of everyday experience; that is to say, the restoration of harmony between theory and practice which had been destroyed, and the healing of the rift between them. For only in this way can a truly revolutionary proletarian party, armed with a revolutionary theory, be formed.

Second, that the policy of the parties of the Second International be *tested* not by their slogans and resolutions (these cannot be trusted), but by their deeds and actions, for only in this way can we win and deserve the confidence of the proletarian masses.

Third, that the whole of the work of the Party be *re-organised* along new revolutionary lines, with the view to educating and training the masses for the revolutionary struggle, for only in this way can the masses be prepared for the proletarian revolution.

Fourth, *self-criticism* within the proletarian parties, their education and instruction on the basis of their own mistakes, for only in this way can genuine cadres and genuine leaders of the Party be trained.

Such is the basis and the essence of the method of Leninism.

How was this method applied in practice?

The opportunists of the Second International have a

series of theoretical dogmas which they always use as a starting point. Let us consider some of them.

First dogma: concerning the prerequisites for the seizure of power by the proletariat. The opportunists assert that the proletariat cannot and ought not to seize power if it does not itself constitute a majority in the country. No proofs are adduced, for this absurd thesis cannot be justified either theoretically or practically. Let us admit this for a moment, Lenin replies to these gentlemen of the Second International. But suppose a historic situation arises (war, agrarian crisis, etc.) in which the proletariat, a minority of the population, is able to rally around itself the vast majority of the working masses, why should it not seize power then? Why should it not profit by the favourable internal and international situation to pierce the front of capitalism and hasten the general climax? Did not Marx say, as far back as the 1850's, that the proletarian revolution in Germany would be in a "splendid" position if it could get the backing of a "new edition, so to speak, of the Peasant War"? Does not every one know that at that period the number of proletarians in Germany was relatively smaller than, for example, in the Russia of 1917? Has not the practical experience of the Russian proletarian revolution shown that this favourite dogma of the heroes of the Second International is devoid of all vital significance for the proletariat? Is it not obvious that the experience of the revolutionary mass struggle smashes this obsolete dogma?

Second dogma: The proletariat cannot retain power if it does not possess adequate, educated administrative cadres ready for and capable of organising the administration of the country; first of all, these cadres must be trained under capitalist conditions and only afterwards must power be seized.

Well, suppose that is so, replies Lenin. But why not do

it this way: first seize power, create favourable conditions for the development of the proletariat and then advance with seven-league strides to raise the cultural level of the working masses and form numerous cadres of leaders and administrators recruited from among the workers? Has not Russian experience demonstrated that these working class cadres of leaders are growing a hundred times more rapidly and thoroughly with the proletariat in power than under the rule of capital? Is it not obvious that the experience of the revolutionary mass struggle ruthlessly refutes also this theoretical dogma of the opportunists?

Third dogma: The method of the political general strike is unacceptable for the proletariat because that method is bankrupt in theory (see Engel's criticism) and dangerous in practice (it may disturb the normal course of the economic life of the country and deplete the coffers of the trade unions); it cannot take the place of the parliamentary forms of struggle, which are the principal form of the class struggle of the proletariat. Excellent, reply the Leninists. But, in the first place, Engels did not criticise any and every general strike. He criticised only a certain kind of general strike, namely the *economic* general strike, which the anarchists advocated *in place of* the political struggle of the proletariat; what has that got to do with the method of the *political* general strike? In the second place, what proof is there that the parliamentary struggle is the principal form of struggle of the working class? Does not the history of the revolutionary movement show that the parliamentary struggle is only a school, only an aid for the organisation of the extra-parliamentary struggle of the proletariat, that under the capitalist system the essential questions of the labour movement are settled by force, by direct struggle, the general strike, the insurrection of the proletarian masses? In the third place, who suggested that the parliamentary struggles should be replaced by the method of the political

general strike? Where and when have the supporters of the political general strike tried to substitute extra-parliamentary forms of struggle for parliamentary forms? Fourth, has not the revolution in Russia shown that the political general strike is the greatest school for the proletarian revolution as well as an indispensable means of mobilising and organising the proletarian masses on the eve of an attack on the citadel of capitalism? Why then these philistine lamentations over the disruption of normal economic life and the depletion of the coffers of the trade unions? Is it not obvious that the experience of the revolutionary struggle refutes also this dogma of the opportunists?

And so on and so forth.

This is why Lenin said that "revolutionary theory is not a dogma," that it "undergoes final formulation only when brought into close contact with practice in the actual mass movement and in the actual revolutionary movement" (*"Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder*); for theory ought to be the handmaid of practice; for theory "ought to answer the question raised by practice" (*What the "Friends of the People" Are, etc.*); for it ought to be verified by the data obtained from practice.

As regards the political slogans and resolutions of the parties of the Second International, it is enough to recall the history of the watchword "war against war" in order to realise the utter falsity and rottenness of the political practices of these parties which veil their anti-revolutionary work behind imposing revolutionary slogans and resolutions. You all remember the showy demonstration made by the Second International at the Basle Congress at which they threatened the imperialists with the thunders of insurrection if they decided to commence war, and where they proclaimed the menacing watchword—"war against war." But who does not remember that some time after, before the very

beginning of the war, the Basle resolution was pigeonholed and the workers were supplied with a new watchword—the extermination of each other for the greater glory of the capitalist fatherland? Is it not clear that revolutionary watchwords and resolutions are not worth a farthing if they are not supported by deeds? It suffices to contrast the Leninist policy of transforming the imperialist war into civil war with the treacherous policy of the Second International during the war to understand the absolute banality of the opportunist politicians and the full grandeur of the method of Leninism. I cannot refrain from quoting at this point a passage from *The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky*, in which Lenin severely lashes the opportunist attempts of Kautsky, a leader of the Second International, to judge parties not by their deeds but by their paper slogans and their documents:

“Kautsky follows a typical petty-bourgeois, philistine policy; he imagines . . . that *putting forward a slogan* alters matters. The whole history of bourgeois democracy exposes this illusion; to deceive the people, the bourgeois democrats have always advanced and will continue to advance all sorts of ‘slogans.’ The point is to *test* their sincerity, to compare their *actions* with their words, not to be content with idealistic or quack phrases but to dig down to *class reality*.” (*The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky*, Little Lenin Library, Vol. 21.)

I refrain from speaking of the fear of self-criticism which exists within the parties of the Second International; of their habit of hiding their mistakes, of glossing over thorny problems, of covering up their shortcomings by falsely pretending that all is well, which blunts living thought and hinders the revolutionary training of the Party by learning from mistakes—that habit which was ridiculed and pilloried by Lenin. This is what Lenin wrote about self-criticism in

proletarian parties in "*Left-Wing*" Communism: *An Infantile Disorder*:

"The attitude of a political party towards its own mistakes is one of the most important and surest criteria of the seriousness of the party and of how it fulfils *in practice* its obligations towards its *class* and towards the toiling *masses*. To admit a mistake openly, to disclose its reasons, to analyse the conditions which gave rise to it, to study attentively the means of correcting it—these are the signs of a serious party; this means the performance of its duties; this means educating and training the *class*, and subsequently, the *masses*." (Little Lenin Library, Vol. 20, p. 40.)

Some say that the exposure of its own mistakes and self-criticism are dangerous to the Party because the enemy may use this against the party of the proletariat. Lenin regarded such objections as frivolous and wholly incorrect. This is what he wrote on this point in 1904 in his pamphlet *One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward*, when our Party was still weak and insignificant:

"They (*i.e.*, the opponents of the Marxists—*J. S.*) gloat and grimace over our controversies, and, of course, they will try to pick isolated passages from my pamphlet, which deals with the defects and shortcomings of our Party, and use them for their own ends. The Russian Marxists have already been sufficiently steeled in battle not to let themselves be disturbed by these pinpricks and to continue, in spite of them, with their work of self-criticism and of the ruthless exposure of their own shortcomings which will inevitably and certainly be overcome in the course of the growth of the working class movement." (*Collected Works*, Vol. VI, p. 161, Russian edition.)

Such in general are the characteristic traits of the method of Leninism.

The contents of Lenin's method were already, in sub-

stance, contained in the teachings of Marx which, according to Marx himself, were "in essence critical and revolutionary." From beginning to end the method of Lenin is imbued with just this critical and revolutionary spirit. But it would be wrong to suppose that Lenin's method was merely the restoration of the teachings of Marx. As a matter of fact, Lenin's method is not only a restoration, but also the concrete presentation and a further development of the critical and revolutionary method of Marx, of his materialist dialectics.

III. THEORY

FROM this theme I will take three main questions: (1) the importance of theory for the proletarian movement, (2) criticism of the "theory" of spontaneity, (3) the theory of the proletarian revolution.

(1) THE IMPORTANCE OF THEORY

Some are of the opinion that Leninism signifies the precedence of practice over theory in the sense that the chief thing in Leninism is the translation of the Marxist theses into deeds, their "fulfilment," that Leninism is rather unconcerned with theory. We know that Plekhanov often chaffed Lenin for his "lack of concern" for theory and particularly for philosophy. We also know that theory is not held in great esteem by many present-day Leninist practical workers, particularly because they are overwhelmed with practical work, which the present situation imposes upon them. This very odd opinion of Lenin and Leninism is, I must declare, quite wrong and bears no relation whatsoever to the truth. The tendency of practical workers to brush theory aside runs counter to the whole spirit of Leninism and is fraught with serious dangers to the cause.

Theory is the experience of the labour movement in all countries, taken in its general form. Of course, theory becomes immaterial if it is not connected with revolutionary practice, just as practice gropes in the dark if its path is not illumined by revolutionary theory. But theory can become the greatest force in the labour movement if it is built up in indissoluble connection with revolutionary practice, for it, and it alone, can give to the movement confidence, the

power of orientation and an understanding of the inner connection between events; for it, and it alone, can help us in our practical work to discern how and in which direction classes are moving not only at the present time, but also how and in which direction they will move in the near future. Lenin himself said and often repeated his well-known thesis, that: "Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement." (*What Is To Be Done?*, Little Lenin Library, p. 28.)

Lenin, better than any one else, understood the great importance of theory, particularly for a party like ours, in view of the rôle of vanguard fighter of the international proletariat which has fallen to its lot and in view of the complicated internal and international situation in which it finds itself. Foreseeing this special rôle of our Party, he thought it necessary, as far back as 1902, to point out that "*the rôle of vanguard can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by an advanced theory.*" (*Ibid.*)

Now that Lenin's prediction about the rôle of our Party has come true, it hardly needs to be proved that this thesis acquires special force and special significance.

Perhaps the most striking expression of the great importance which Lenin attached to theory is shown in the fact that he himself undertook, in the realm of materialist philosophy, the very serious task of generalising all the most important achievements of science from the time of Engels down to his own time, as well as subjecting to comprehensive criticism the anti-materialistic currents among Marxists. Engels said that "materialism must take on a new aspect with each new great discovery." We all know that none other than Lenin fulfilled this task, as far as his own time was concerned, in his remarkable work, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.*

It is well known that Plekhanov, who loved to chaff Lenin

* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XIII.—Ed.

for his "lack of concern" for matters of philosophy, did not even dare to make a serious attempt to undertake such a task.

(2) CRITICISM OF THE "THEORY" OF SPONTANEITY, OR THE
RÔLE OF THE VANGUARD IN THE MOVEMENT

The "theory" of spontaneity is the theory of opportunism. It is the theory of deference to the spontaneity of the labour movement, the theory that actually denies to the vanguard of the working class, to the party of the working class, its leading rôle.

The theory of deference to spontaneity is decidedly opposed to the revolutionary character of the labour movement; it is opposed to the movement following the line of struggle against the foundations of capitalism and is in favour of the movement following exclusively the line of "possible" demands which are "acceptable" to and can be carried out under capitalism. It is wholly in favour of the "Line of least resistance." The theory of spontaneity represents the ideology of trade unionism.

The theory of deference to spontaneity is decidedly opposed to giving the spontaneous movement a conscious, methodical character. It is opposed to the Party marching ahead of the working class, elevating the masses to the level of class consciousness and leading the movement. It argues that the class conscious elements of the movement should not prevent the movement from taking its own course and that the Party be subservient to the spontaneous movement and follow in its trail. The theory of spontaneity is the theory of belittling the rôle of the class conscious element in the movement, the ideology of "dragging at the tail," of "*khvostism*"*—the logical basis of *all opportunism*.

In practice this theory, which appeared in Russia even before the first revolution, led its adherents, the so-called

* From the Russian, *khvost*, meaning tail.—*Ed.*

"Economists," to deny the need for an independent workers' party in Russia, to oppose the revolutionary struggle of the working class for the overthrow of tsarism, to preach pure and simple trade unionism in the movement and, in general, to surrender the labour movement to the hegemony of the liberal bourgeoisie.

The fight of the old *Iskra* and the brilliant criticism of the theory of tailism offered by Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?* not only routed so-called "Economism," but also created the theoretical foundation for a truly revolutionary movement of the Russian working class.

Without this fight it would have been quite useless to think of creating, in Russia, an independent workers' party and of its playing a leading part in the revolution.

But the theory of deference to spontaneity is not peculiar to Russia. It is extremely widespread, in a somewhat different form it is true, in all the parties of the Second International, without exception. I have in mind the so-called "productive forces" theory, debased by the leaders of the Second International, the theory that justifies everything and conciliates everybody, and which merely states facts and explains them only after every one has become sick and tired of them, and rests content with having stated them. Marx said that the materialist theory could not limit itself to explaining the world, but that it had to change it. But Kautsky and Co. are not concerned with this; they prefer to rest content with the first part of Marx's formula. Here is one of the numerous examples of the application of this "theory." It is said that before the imperialist war the parties of the Second International threatened to declare "war against war" if the imperialists started a war. It is said that on the very eve of the war these parties pigeon-holed the "war against war" slogan and applied the opposite slogan, *viz.*, "war for the imperialist fatherland." It is said that the effect of this change of slogans was that millions

of workers were sent to their death. But is anybody guilty? Did anybody betray the working class? Oh, no! Everything was as it should have been. In the first place, the International is an "instrument of peace," and not of war. Besides, in view of the "level of the productive forces" which then prevailed, it was impossible to do anything else. And so the "blame" is thrown on the "productive forces." This is precisely the explanation vouchsafed "us" by Mr. Kautsky's "productive forces theory." Whoever does not believe in this "theory" is not a Marxist. The rôle of the parties? Their part in the movement? But what could a party do against so decisive a factor as the "level of the productive forces"?

A host of similar examples of such falsification of Marxism could be quoted.

It is hardly necessary to prove that this spurious Marxism, which is intended to hide the nakedness of opportunism, is only a European adaptation of that theory of "tailism" which Lenin fought even before the first Russian revolution.

It is hardly necessary to prove that the elimination of this theoretical falsification is a prerequisite for the creation of truly revolutionary parties in the West.

(3) THE THEORY OF THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

The Leninist theory of the proletarian revolution is based on three fundamental theses.

First Thesis: The domination of finance capital in the advanced capitalist countries, the issue of stocks and bonds as the principal operation of finance capital; the export of capital to the sources of raw materials, which is one of the bases of imperialism; the omnipotence of a financial oligarchy, a consequence of the domination of finance capital—all these reveal the crudely parasitic character of monopolist capitalism, make the yoke of the capitalist trusts and syndicates a hundred times more burdensome, increase

the growth of the indignation of the working class against the foundation of capitalism and drive the masses to the proletarian revolution as their only means of escape. (Cf. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Little Lenin Library, Vol. 15).

Hence the first conclusion that is to be drawn: an intensification of the revolutionary crisis in the capitalist countries and the growth of the elements of an explosion on the internal, proletarian front in the "mother countries."

Second Thesis: The growth of the export of capital to the colonies and dependent countries, the extension of "spheres of influence" and colonial possessions to the extent of seizing all the territory of the globe, the transformation of capitalism into a *world system* of financial bondage and of the colonial oppression of the vast majority of mankind by a handful of "advanced" countries—these factors have, on the one hand, converted the several national economic systems and national territories into links in a single chain called world economy and, on the other hand, have divided the population of the world into two camps: a handful of "advanced" capitalist countries which exploit and oppress vast colonies and dependencies, and the immense majority of the colonial and dependent countries, compelled to fight to liberate themselves from the imperialist yoke. (Cf. *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism.*)

Hence the second conclusion to be drawn: an intensification of the revolutionary crisis in the colonial countries and an accumulation of the elements of discontent with imperialism on the external front, the colonial front.

Third Thesis: The monopolistic possession of "spheres of influence" and colonies, the uneven development of the different capitalist countries which leads to a bitter struggle for the redivision of the world between the countries which have already seized the territories of the globe and those countries which want to receive their "share"; imperialist

wars, the only method of restoring the disturbed "equilibrium"—all these lead to the reinforcement of the third front, the inter-capitalist front—which weakens imperialism and facilitates the union of the first two fronts against imperialism—the front of the revolutionary proletariat and that of colonial emancipation. (*Cf. ibid.*)

Hence the third conclusion: the inevitability of wars under imperialism and the inevitability of a coalition between the proletarian revolution in Europe and the colonial revolution in the East, thus forming a united world front of the revolution as against the world front of imperialism.

Lenin combines all these conclusions into the general conclusion that "imperialism is the eve of the socialist revolution." (*Cf. ibid.*)

Accordingly, the very approach to the question of the proletarian revolution, of the character of the revolution, its extent, its depth and the scheme of the revolution in general undergoes a corresponding change.

Formerly, the analysis of the premises of the proletarian revolution was usually approached from the point of view of the economic situation in any particular country. This method is now inadequate. To-day, it must start from the point of view of the economic situation in all, or a majority of, countries—from the point of view of the state of world economy, inasmuch as the individual countries and individual national economies are no longer self-contained economic units but have become links of a single chain called world economy; inasmuch as the old "cultured" capitalism has grown into imperialism, and imperialism is a world system of financial bondage and of colonial oppression of the vast majority of the population of the globe by a handful of "advanced" countries.

Formerly, it was customary to talk of the existence or absence of objective conditions for the proletarian revolution in individual countries, or, to be more exact, in this

or that advanced country. This point of view is now inadequate. Now we must say that objective conditions for the revolution exist throughout the whole system of imperialist world economy, which is an integral unit; the existence within this system of some countries that are not sufficiently developed from the industrial point of view cannot form an insurmountable obstacle to the revolution, *if the system as a whole has become, or more correctly, because the system as a whole has already become ripe for the revolution.*

Formerly, the proletarian revolution in this or that advanced country was regarded as a separate and self-contained unit, facing a separate national capitalist front, as its opposite pole. To-day this point of view is inadequate. To-day it is necessary to speak of proletarian world revolution, for the separate national fronts of capital have become links in a single chain called the world front of imperialism, to which should be opposed the united front of the revolutionary movement in all countries.

Formerly, the proletarian revolution was regarded as the consequence of an exclusively internal development in a given country. At the present time this point of view is inadequate. To-day it is necessary to regard the proletarian revolution above all as the result of the development of the contradictions within the world system of imperialism, as the result of the snapping of the chain of the imperialist world front in this or that country.

Where will the revolution begin? Where, in what country, can the front of capital be pierced first?

Formerly, the reply used to be—where industry is more developed, where the proletariat forms the majority, where culture is more advanced, where there is more democracy.

The Leninist theory of the revolution says: No, *not necessarily where industry is most developed*, and so forth; it will be broken where the chain of imperialism is weakest, for

the proletarian revolution is the result of the breaking of the chain of the imperialist world front at its weakest link. The country which begins the revolution, which makes a breach in the capitalist front, may prove to be less developed in a capitalist sense than others which are more developed but have remained, nevertheless, within the framework of capitalism.

In 1917, the chain of the imperialist world front turned out to be weaker in Russia than in the other countries. It was there that it was broken and afforded an outlet for the proletarian revolution. Why? Because in Russia a very great popular revolution was being developed, led by a revolutionary proletariat, which had such an important ally as the vast mass of the peasantry who were oppressed and exploited by the landlords; because the revolution there found itself opposed by tsarism, the hideous representative of imperialism, devoid of all moral authority and deservedly hated by the whole people. The chain proved to be weakest in Russia, although that country was less developed in a capitalistic sense than, for example, France, Germany, England or America.

Where in the near future will the chain be broken next? Once more, precisely where it is weakest. It is not impossible that this may be in India, for example. Why? Because there we find a young and militant revolutionary proletariat which has an ally in the shape of the national liberation movement, unquestionably a very powerful and important ally; because in that country the revolution faces a notorious enemy, a foreign imperialism, devoid of all moral authority and deservedly hated by the oppressed and exploited masses of India.

It is just as possible that the chain will be broken in Germany. Why? Because the factors which are at work in India, for instance, are beginning to become operative in Germany as well. Of course, the tremendous difference in

the level of development between India and Germany cannot but leave its impress on the progress and outcome of the revolution in Germany.

That is why Lenin said that: "The West European capitalist countries are completing their evolution towards socialism . . . not by the even 'maturing' of socialism in these countries, but through the exploitation of some states by others, through the exploitation of the first state that was defeated in the imperialist war in conjunction with the exploitation of the entire East. The East, on the other hand, has definitely entered the revolutionary movement as a result of this first imperialist war; it has definitely been drawn into the common whirlpool of the revolutionary movement." (*Collected Works*, Vol. XXVII, p. 416, Russian edition.)

To put it briefly, the chain of the imperialist front should break, as a rule, where the links are most fragile and, in any event, not necessarily where capitalism is most developed, or where there is a certain percentage of proletarians and a certain percentage of peasants, and so on.

This is why statistical calculations concerning the proportion of the proletariat to the population of a given country lose, in the solution of the question of the proletarian revolution, the exceptional importance so eagerly attached to them by the bookworms of the Second International who do not understand imperialism and who fear revolution like the plague.

To proceed: the heroes of the Second International asserted (and keep on asserting) that between the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the proletarian revolution there is a chasm, or at any rate a Chinese Wall, separating one from the other by a period of time more or less protracted, in the course of which the bourgeoisie, having come into power, develops capitalism, while the proletariat accumulates forces and prepares for the "decisive struggle" against capitalism. This interval is supposed to extend over many decades, if

not longer. That this Chinese Wall "theory" is totally devoid of scientific meaning under imperialism hardly needs to be proved: it is and can be only a means of concealing and camouflaging the counter-revolutionary aspirations of the bourgeoisie. It need hardly be proved that under the conditions of imperialism, which is pregnant with collisions and wars, under the conditions prevailing on the "eve of the socialist revolution," when "flourishing" capitalism is becoming "moribund" capitalism, and when the revolutionary movement is growing in every country in the world, when imperialism is allying itself with all reactionary forces without exception down to and including tsarism and serfdom, thus making the coalition of all revolutionary forces, from the proletarian movement of the West to the national liberation movement of the East, imperative, when the overthrow of the survivals of the feudal-serf régime becomes impossible without a revolutionary struggle against imperialism—it need hardly be proved that the bourgeois-democratic revolution, in a country more or less developed, should under such circumstances approximate to the proletarian revolution, that the one should grow into the other. The history of the revolution in Russia has given palpable proof of the correctness and incontrovertibility of this postulate. It was not for nothing that Lenin, as far back as 1905, on the eve of the first Russian revolution (in his pamphlet, *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution*), depicted the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the socialist revolution as two links in the same chain, as a single and complete picture of the sweep of the Russian revolution:

"The proletariat must carry out to the end the democratic revolution, and in this unite to itself the mass of the peasantry in order to crush by force the resistance of the autocracy and to paralyse the instability of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat must accomplish the socialist revolution and in this unite to itself the mass of the semi-proletarian elements

of the population in order to crush by force the resistance of the bourgeoisie and to paralyse the instability of the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie. Such are the tasks of the proletariat, which the new *Iskra*-ists in their arguments and resolutions about the sweep of the revolution present in such a narrow manner." (Little Lenin Library, Vol. 22, *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*.)

I shall not speak here of other and later works of Lenin in which the idea of the bourgeois revolution growing into the proletarian revolution is set forth still more emphatically than in *Two Tactics* as one of the cornerstones of the Leninist theory of revolution.

It turns out that certain comrades believe that this idea occurred to Lenin only in 1916 and that previously he thought that the revolution in Russia would remain within a bourgeois framework and that power, consequently, would pass from the hands of the organ of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry to the hands of the bourgeoisie and not of the proletariat. This assertion has, it is said, even penetrated into our Communist press. But I am bound to say that this assertion is absolutely incorrect and is absolutely at variance with the facts.

I might refer to Lenin's well-known speech at the Third Party Congress (1905), in which Lenin termed the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, that is to say, the victory of the democratic revolution, not the "organization of order" but the "organization of war." (*Collected Works*, Vol. VII, p. 264, Russian edition.)

Further, I could recall Lenin's well-known articles *On the Provisional Government* (1905), in which Lenin, depicting the prospects of development of the revolution in Russia, assigns to the Party the task of "striving to make the Russian revolution not a movement of a few months but of many years, so that it may lead, not merely to slight concessions on the part of the powers that be, but to the complete over-

throw of these authorities," where, developing further the picture of this revolution, which he connects with that of Europe, Lenin goes on to say:

"And if we succeed . . . the revolutionary conflagration will spread all over Europe; the European worker, languishing under bourgeois reaction, will rise in his turn and will show us 'how the thing is done'; then the revolutionary wave in Europe will sweep back again into Russia and will convert an epoch of a few revolutionary years into an era of several revolutionary decades. . . ." ("Social-Democracy and Provisional Revolutionary Government," *Selected Works*, Vol. III.)

I could also cite the well-known article published in November 1915,* in which Lenin writes:

"The proletariat is fighting, and will valiantly fight, for the conquest of power, for a republic, for land confiscation . . . for the participation of the 'non-proletarian peoples' masses' in freeing *bourgeois* Russia from *military feudal imperialism* (tsarism). This liberation of bourgeois Russia from tsarism, from the land power of the landowners, the proletariat will *immediately* [My italics—J.S.] utilise not to aid the prosperous peasants in their struggle against the village worker, but to complete a socialist revolution in alliance with the proletarians of Europe." (*Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII, p. 363.)

Finally, I could refer to a well-known passage from *The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky* where Lenin, referring to the aforementioned quotation from *Two Tactics* about the scope of the Russian revolution, arrives at the following conclusion:

"Things have turned out just as we said they would. The course taken by the revolution has confirmed the correctness of our reasoning. *First* with 'all' the peasantry against the monarchy, the landlords, the mediæval régime

* *Two Lines of the Revolution*.—Ed.

(and to that extent, the revolution remains bourgeois, bourgeois-democratic). *Then*, with the poorest peasants, with the semi-proletarians, with all the exploited, *against capitalism*, including the rural rich, the kulaks, the speculators, and to that extent the revolution becomes a *socialist* one. To attempt to raise an artificial Chinese Wall between the first and second revolutions, to separate them by anything else than the degree of preparedness of the proletariat and the degree of unity with the poor peasants, is to seriously distort Marxism, to vulgarise it, to substitute liberalism in its stead." (*The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky.*)

This is enough, I think. But, we are told, if that is so, why did Lenin oppose the idea of the "permanent (uninterrupted) revolution"?

Because Lenin proposed that the revolutionary capacities of the peasantry be utilised "to the utmost" and that full use be made of their revolutionary energy for the complete liquidation of tsarism and the transition to the proletarian revolution; whereas the adherents of "permanent revolution" did not understand the important rôle of the peasantry in the Russian revolution, underestimated the revolutionary energy of the peasantry, underestimated the strength and capacity of the Russian proletariat to lead the peasantry, and so hampered the work of emancipating the peasantry from the influence of the bourgeoisie, the work of rallying the peasantry around the proletariat.

Because Lenin proposed to *crown* the revolution with the coming into power of the proletariat, while the adherents of "permanent" revolution wanted to *begin* at once by establishing the power of the proletariat, not realising that by so doing they were closing their eyes to such "trifles" as the existence of survivals of serfdom and overlooking, in their calculations, so important a force as the Russian peasantry, nor did they realise that this policy would retard the

winning over of the peasantry to the side of the proletariat.

Lenin, then, fought the adherents of "permanent" revolution not over the question of "uninterruptedness," because he himself held the point of view of uninterrupted revolution, but because they underestimated the rôle of the peasantry, the proletariat's greatest reserve power, and because they failed to grasp the idea of the hegemony of the proletariat.

The idea of "permanent" revolution is not new. It was propounded for the first time by Marx at the end of the forties in his well-known *Address to the Communist League* (1850). This document is the source from which our "permanentists" derived the idea of uninterrupted revolution. It should be noted, however, that, in taking it from Marx, our "permanentists" slightly altered it and in altering it "spoiled" it and made it unfit for practical use. The skilful hand of Lenin was needed to correct this error, to bring out Marx's idea of uninterrupted revolution in its pure form and make it a corner-stone of his theory of the revolution.

This is what Marx says in regard to uninterrupted revolution in his *Address*. After enumerating a number of the revolutionary-democratic demands which he called upon the Communists to win, he says:

"While the democratic petty bourgeois wish to bring the revolution to a conclusion as quickly as possible, and with the achievement, at most, of the above demands, it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent, until all more or less possessing classes have been displaced from domination, until the proletariat has conquered state power and the association of proletarians, not only in one country but in all the dominant countries of the world, has advanced so far that competition among the proletarians of these countries has ceased and that at least the decisive productive forces are concentrated in the hands of the proletarians."

In other words:

(a) The plan of our "permanentists" notwithstanding, Marx did not at all propose to *begin* the revolution in the Germany of the 'fifties with the direct establishment of the proletarian power.

(b) Marx proposed the establishment of proletarian political power merely as the *crowning event* of the revolution, after hurling step by step one section of the bourgeoisie after another from its height of power, in order to ignite the torch of revolution in every country after the proletariat had come to power. Now this is *perfectly consistent* with all that Lenin taught, with all that he did in the course of our revolution in pursuit of his theory of the proletarian revolution in an imperialist environment.

It turns out that our Russian "permanentists" have not only underestimated the rôle of the peasantry in the Russian revolution and the importance of the conception of the hegemony of the proletariat, but have modified (for the worse) the Marxian idea of "permanent" revolution and deprived it of all practical value.

That is why Lenin ridiculed their theory, ironically calling it "original" and "splendid," and accused them of refusing to "think why life, during a whole decade, has passed by this beautiful theory." (Lenin's article was written in 1915, ten years after the appearance of the theory of the "permanentists" in Russia.) (*Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII, p. 362.)

That is why he thought this theory was semi-Menshevik and said that it "takes from the Bolsheviks their appeal to decisive revolutionary struggle of the proletariat and to the conquest of political power by it; from the Mensheviks it takes the negation of the rôle of the peasantry." (*Cf. ibid.*)

This, then, is how Lenin conceived the growth of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into the proletarian revolution and the utilisation of the bourgeois revolution for the "immediate" transition to the proletarian revolution.

Let us continue. Formerly, the victory of the revolution in a single country was considered impossible, on the assumption that the combined action of the proletarians of all, or at least of a majority, of the advanced countries was necessary in order to achieve victory over the bourgeoisie. This point of view no longer corresponds with reality. Now we must start out from the possibility of such a victory, because the uneven and spasmodic character of the development of the various capitalist countries in the conditions of imperialism, the development of catastrophic contradictions within imperialism, leading inevitably to wars, the growth of the revolutionary movement in all countries of the world—all these lead, not only to the possibility, but also to the necessity of the victory of the proletariat in individual countries. The history of the Russian revolution is definite proof of that. In this connection it need only be borne in mind that the overthrow of the bourgeoisie can be successfully accomplished only when there are certain indispensable prerequisites, in the absence of which the proletariat cannot even dream of seizing power.

This is what Lenin says of these prerequisites in his pamphlet, "*Left-Wing*" Communism:

"The fundamental law of revolution, confirmed by all revolutions, and particularly by all three Russian revolutions in the twentieth century, is as follows: It is not sufficient for revolution that the exploited and oppressed masses understand the impossibility of living in the old way and demand changes; for revolution it is necessary that the exploiters should not be able to live and rule in the old way. Only when the 'lower classes' *do not want the old*, and when the 'upper classes' cannot *continue in the old way* then only can revolution be victorious. This truth may be expressed in other words: *revolution is impossible without a national crisis affecting both the exploited and the exploiters.* [My italics.—J.S.] It follows that for revolution it is essential

first, that a majority of the workers (or at least a majority of the class-conscious, thinking, politically active workers) should fully understand the necessity for revolution and be ready to sacrifice their lives for it; secondly, that the ruling classes be in a state of governmental crisis which draws even the most backward masses into politics . . . weakens the government and makes it possible for the revolutionaries to overthrow it rapidly." (*"Left-Wing" Communism*, p. 65.)

But overthrowing the power of the bourgeoisie and establishing the power of the proletariat in a single country does not yet guarantee the complete victory of socialism. After consolidating its power and leading the peasantry after it, the proletariat of the victorious country can and must build up socialist society. But does that mean that in this way the proletariat will secure a complete and final victory for socialism, *i.e.*, does it mean that with the forces of a single country it can finally consolidate socialism and fully guarantee that country against intervention, which means against restoration? Certainly not. That requires victory for the revolution in at least several countries. It is therefore the essential task of the victorious revolution in one country to develop and support the revolution in others. So the revolution in a victorious country ought not to consider itself as a self-contained unit, but as an auxiliary and a means of hastening the victory of the proletariat in other countries.

Lenin has tersely expressed this thought by saying that the task of the victorious revolution is to do the "utmost possible in one country for the development, support and stirring up of the revolution in all countries." (*The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky*.)

These in general are the characteristic features of Lenin's theory of proletarian revolution.

IV. THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

FROM this theme I will take three main questions: (1) the dictatorship of the proletariat as the instrument of the proletarian revolution; (2) the dictatorship of the proletariat as the domination of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie; (3) the Soviet power as the state form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

(1) THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT AS THE INSTRUMENT OF THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

The question of the proletarian dictatorship is above all a question of the basic content of the proletarian revolution. The proletarian revolution, its movement, its sweep and its achievements acquire flesh and blood only through the dictatorship of the proletariat. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the weapon of the proletarian revolution, its organ, its most important stronghold which is called into being, first, to crush the resistance of the overthrown exploiters and to consolidate its achievements; secondly, to lead the proletarian revolution to its completion, to lead the revolution onward to the complete victory of socialism. Victory over the bourgeoisie and the overthrow of its power may be gained by revolution even without the dictatorship of the proletariat. But the revolution will not be in a position to crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie, maintain its victory and move on to the decisive victory for socialism, unless at a certain stage of its development it creates a special organ in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat as its principal bulwark.

"The question of power is the fundamental question of the revolution." (Lenin.) Does this mean that the only thing required is to assume power, to seize it? No, it does not. The seizure of power is only the beginning. For a number of reasons, the bourgeoisie overthrown in one country for a considerable time remains stronger than the proletariat which has overthrown it. Therefore, the important thing is to retain power, to consolidate it and make it invincible. What is required to attain this end? At least three main tasks confronting the dictatorship of the proletariat "on the morrow" of victory must be fulfilled. They are:

(a) to break the resistance of the landlords and capitalists overthrown and expropriated by the revolution, and to liquidate every attempt they make to restore the power of capital;

(b) to organise construction in such a way as will rally all toilers around the proletariat and to carry on this work in such a way as will prepare for the liquidation, the extinction of classes;

(c) to arm the revolution and to organise the army of the revolution for the struggle against the external enemy and for the struggle against imperialism.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is necessary in order to carry out and fulfil these tasks.

"The transition from capitalism to communism," Lenin says, "represents an entire historical epoch. Until this epoch has terminated, the exploiters will inevitably cherish the hope of restoration, and this *hope* will be converted into *attempts* at restoration. And after their first serious defeat, the overthrown exploiters—who had not expected their overthrow, who never believed it possible, who would not permit the thought of it—will throw themselves with tenfold energy, with furious passion and hatred grown a hundred-fold into the battle for the recovery of their lost 'paradise' on behalf of their families who had been leading such a sweet

and easy life and whom now the 'common herd' is condemning to ruin and destitution (or to 'common' work). . . . In the wake of the capitalist exploiters will be found the broad masses of the petty bourgeoisie, to whose vacillation and hesitation the historical experience of every country for decades bears witness; one day they march behind the proletariat, the next day they will take fright at the difficulties of the revolution, become panic-stricken at the first defeat or semi-defeat of the workers; they become irritable, they run about, snivel and rush from one camp to the other." (*The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky.*)

Now the bourgeoisie has reasons for making attempts at restoration, because for a long time after its overthrow it remains stronger than the proletariat which has overthrown it.

If the exploiters—Lenin says—are vanquished in only a single country, which, of course, is the typical case since a simultaneous revolution in a number of countries is a rare exception, they *still remain stronger* than the exploited. (*Ibid.*)

Wherein lies the strength of the overthrown bourgeoisie?

First, "In the strength of international capital, in the strength and durability of the international connections of the bourgeoisie." (*"Left-Wing" Communism*, p. 9.)

Secondly, in the fact that "for a long time after the revolution, the exploiters will inevitably retain a number of enormous and real advantages: they will have money left (it is impossible to abolish money all at once), some movable property, often of considerable value; there remain their connections, their organising and administrative ability and the knowledge of all the secrets of administration (of usages, of procedure, of ways and means, of possibilities); there remain their superior education, their kinship to the highest ranks of the technical personnel (who live and think like the bourgeoisie); there remains their immeasurable superiority in the

art of war (this is very important), etc., etc.” (*The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky.*)

Thirdly, “In the force of habit, in the strength of *small-scale production*. For unfortunately, very, very much of small-scale production still remains in the world, and small-scale production *gives birth* to capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously, and on a mass scale. . . .” For “the abolition of classes not only means driving out the landlords and capitalists—that we accomplished with comparative ease—it means also *getting rid of the small commodity producers*, and they cannot be driven out or crushed; we must live *in harmony* with them; they can (and must) be remoulded and re-educated, but this can be done only by very prolonged, slow, cautious organisational work.” (“*Left-Wing*” *Communism*, pp. 9, 28.)

That is why Lenin declares: “The dictatorship of the proletariat is the most determined and most ruthless war waged by the new class against the *more powerful* enemy, against the bourgeoisie, whose resistance is increased *tenfold* by its overthrow,” that “the dictatorship of the proletariat is a persistent struggle—sanguinary and bloodless, violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative—against the forces and traditions of the old society.” (*Ibid.*)

It need hardly be emphasised that there is not the slightest possibility of accomplishing these tasks in a short period of time, within a few years. We must, therefore, regard the dictatorship of the proletariat, the transition from capitalism to communism, not as a fleeting period replete with “super-revolutionary” deeds and decrees, but as an entire historical epoch full of civil wars and external conflicts, of persistent organisational work and economic construction, of attacks and retreats, of victories and defeats. This historical epoch is necessary not only in order to create the economic and cultural prerequisites for the complete vic-

tory of socialism, but also in order to enable the proletariat, first, to educate itself and become steeled into a force capable of governing the country; secondly, to re-educate and remould the petty-bourgeois strata along such lines as will assure the organisation of socialist production.

Marx said to the workers: "You will have to go through fifteen, twenty, fifty years of civil wars and conflicts of peoples, not only to change the conditions, but in order to change yourselves and to make yourselves capable of wielding political power."

Developing Marx's thought still further, Lenin goes on to say: Under the dictatorship of the proletariat we will have to re-educate "millions of peasants and petty proprietors, hundreds of thousands of employes, officials and bourgeois intellectuals"; to subordinate "all these to the proletarian state and to proletarian leadership"; to overcome "their bourgeois habits and traditions . . ." just as much as it will be necessary ". . . to re-educate in a protracted struggle, on the basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the proletarians themselves, who do not abandon their petty-bourgeois prejudices at one stroke, by a miracle, at the behest of the Virgin Mary, at the behest of a slogan, resolution or decree, but only in the course of a long and difficult mass struggle against mass petty-bourgeois influences." (*"Left-Wing" Communism*, pp. 92-93.)

(2) THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT AS THE
 DOMINATION OF THE PROLETARIAT OVER
 THE BOURGEOISIE

From the foregoing, it is quite obvious that the dictatorship of the proletariat is not a mere change of personalities in the government, a change of "cabinet," etc., leaving inviolate the old order of things economically as well as politically. The Mensheviks and opportunists of all countries, who fear dictatorship like the plague, and who, in their trepi-

dation, palm off the concept "conquest of power" for the concept "dictatorship of the proletariat," habitually reduce the meaning of "conquest of power" to a change of "cabinet," or to a new ministry composed of people like Scheidemann and Noske, MacDonald and Henderson taking over the helm of the state. There is hardly any need to explain that these and similar cabinet changes have nothing in common with the dictatorship of the proletariat or with the conquest of real power by a real proletariat. With the MacDonalds and Scheidemanns in power, and the old bourgeois order of things allowed to remain, their governments, so to speak, cannot be anything but an apparatus serving the bourgeoisie, a screen to hide the sores of imperialism, a weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie against the revolutionary movement of the oppressed and exploited masses. Capital needs such governments to screen it, when it finds it inconvenient, unprofitable or difficult to oppress and exploit the masses without the aid of such a blind. Of course the appearance of such governments is a symptom that "all is not quiet on Shipka Hill" * (*i.e.*, among the capitalists). Nevertheless, governments of this complexion necessarily remain camouflaged capitalist governments. The government of a MacDonald or a Scheidemann is as far removed from the conquest of power by the proletariat as the earth from the sky. The dictatorship of the proletariat is not a mere change of government, but a new state, with new organs of power, both central and local; it is the proletarian state which has arisen on the ruins of the old state, the state of the bourgeoisie.

The dictatorship of the proletariat does not arise on the basis of the bourgeois order; it arises while this order is being torn down, after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, in the

* A Russian saying carried over from the Russo-Turkish War. Severe fighting was taking place at Shipka Hill in which the Russians were suffering severe losses; but Russian Headquarters in their *communiqué* reported: "All quiet on Shipka Hill."—*Ed.*

process of the expropriation of the landlords and capitalists, during the process of socialisation of the principal instruments and means of production, in the process of violent proletarian revolution. The dictatorship of the proletariat is a revolutionary power based on violence against the bourgeoisie.

The state is an instrument in the hands of the ruling class for suppressing the resistance of its class enemies. *In this respect* the dictatorship of the proletariat in no way differs, in essence, from the dictatorship of any other class, for the proletarian state is an instrument for the suppression of the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, there is an *essential* difference between the two, which is, that all class states that have existed heretofore have been dictatorships of an exploiting minority over the exploited majority, whereas the dictatorship of the proletariat is the dictatorship of the exploited majority over an exploiting minority.

To put it briefly: *the dictatorship of the proletariat is the domination of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, untrammelled by law and based on violence and enjoying the sympathy and support of the toiling and exploited masses.* (Cf. Lenin, *State and Revolution.*)

From this two fundamental deductions may be drawn.

First deduction: the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be "complete" democracy, a democracy for *all*, for rich and poor alike; the dictatorship of the proletariat "must be a state that is democratic *in a new way* (for * the proletariat and the poor in general) and dictatorial *in a new way* (against * the bourgeoisie)." (*State and Revolution*, Little Lenin Library, Vol. 14, p. 31; *Collected Works*, Vol. XXI, Book II, p. 177.) The talk of Kautsky and Co. about universal equality, about "pure" democracy, about "perfect" democracy and the like, are but bourgeois screens to conceal the indubitable fact that equality between exploited and ex-

* My italics.—J.S.

plotters is impossible. The theory of "pure" democracy is the theory of the upper stratum of the working class which is tamed and fed by the imperialist plunderers. It was invented to hide the sores of capitalism, to camouflage imperialism and lend it moral strength in its struggle against the exploited masses. Under the capitalist system there is no true "freedom" for the exploited, nor can there be, if for no other reason than that the buildings, printing plants, paper supplies, etc., indispensable for the actual enjoyment of this "freedom," are the privilege of the exploiters. Under the capitalist system the exploited masses do not, nor can they, really participate in the administration of the country, if for no other reason than that even with the most democratic system under capitalism, the governments are set up not by the people, but by the Rothschilds and Stinneses, the Morgans and Rockefellers. Democracy under the capitalist system is *capitalist* democracy, the democracy of an exploiting minority based upon the restriction of the rights of the exploited majority and directed against this majority. Only under the dictatorship of the proletariat is real "freedom" for the exploited and real participation in the administration of the country by the proletarians and peasants possible. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, democracy is *proletarian* democracy—the democracy of the exploited majority based upon the restriction of the rights of the exploiting minority and directed against this minority.

Second deduction: the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot come about as a result of the peaceful development of bourgeois society and of bourgeois democracy; it can come only as the result of the destruction of the bourgeois state machine, of the bourgeois army, of the bourgeois civil administration and of the bourgeois police.

In their *Civil War in France*, Marx and Engels wrote: "The working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-

made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes." (International Publishers, p. 37.)

In his letter to Kugelmann (April 12, 1871), Marx wrote that the task of the proletarian revolution must "be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to another, but to *smash* it, and that is essential for every real people's revolution on the Continent." (*Letters to Dr. Kugelmann* [International Publishers], p. 123.)

Marx's qualifying phrase about the Continent gave to the opportunists and Mensheviks of all countries a pretext to cry aloud that Marx admitted the possibility of the peaceful evolution of bourgeois democracy into a proletarian democracy at least in certain countries which do not come within the European continental system (England, United States). Marx did in fact concede that possibility, and he had good grounds for doing so in regard to the England and the United States of the seventies of the last century, when monopoly capitalism and imperialism did not yet exist and when these countries, owing to the special conditions of their development, had as yet no developed militarism or bureaucracy. That is how matters stood before developed imperialism made its appearance. But later, after a lapse of thirty to forty years, when the state of affairs in these countries had undergone a radical change, when imperialism was developing and was embracing all capitalist countries without exception, when militarism and bureaucracy appeared in England and the United States also, when the special conditions of peaceful development in England and the United States had disappeared—then the qualification in regard to these countries could no longer apply.

Lenin said: "Today, in 1917, in the epoch of the first great imperialist war, this exception made by Marx is no longer valid. Both England and America, the greatest and last representatives of Anglo-Saxon 'liberty' in the whole

world, in the sense of the absence of militarism and bureaucracy, have today plunged headlong into the all-European dirty, bloody morass of military bureaucratic institutions to which everything is subordinated and which trample everything underfoot. Today, both in England and in America, 'essential for every real people's revolution' is the *break-up, the shattering* of the 'ready-made' state machinery (brought in those countries, between 1914 and 1917, to general 'European' imperialist perfection)." (*State and Revolution*, Little Lenin Library, p. 34; *Collected Works*, Vol. XXI, Book II, p. 180.)

In other words, the law of violent proletarian revolution, the law of destruction of the machinery of the bourgeois state as a condition precedent for such revolution, is an inevitable law of the revolutionary movement in the imperialist countries of the world.

Of course, in the remote future, if the proletariat is victorious in the most important capitalist countries and if the present capitalist encirclement gives way to a socialist encirclement, a "peaceful" course of development is quite possible for some of the capitalist countries whose capitalists, in view of the "unfavourable" international situation, will consider it advisable "voluntarily" to make substantial concessions to the proletariat. But this supposition deals only with the remote and possible future; it has no bearing whatever on the immediate future.

Lenin is therefore right in saying: "The proletarian revolution is impossible without the violent destruction of the bourgeois state machine and its replacement by a *new one*." (*The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky*.)

(3) THE SOVIET POWER AS THE STATE FORM OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

The victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat signifies the suppression of the bourgeoisie, the break-up of the

bourgeois state machine and the displacement of bourgeois democracy by proletarian democracy. That is clear. But what organisations are to be employed in order to carry out this colossal work? There can hardly be any doubt that the old forms of proletarian organisation which grew up with bourgeois parliamentarism as their base are not equal to this task. What are the new forms of proletarian organisation that can serve as the grave-digger of the bourgeois state machine, that are capable not only of breaking this machine, not only of replacing bourgeois democracy by proletarian democracy, but also of serving as the foundation of the state power of the proletariat?

This new form of organisation of the proletariat is the soviets.

In what lies the strength of the soviets as compared with the old forms of organisation?

In that the soviets are the most *all-embracing* mass organisations of the proletariat, for they and they alone embrace all workers without exception.

In that the soviets are the *only* mass organisations that take in all the oppressed and exploited workers and peasants, soldiers and sailors, and for this reason the political leadership of the mass struggle by the vanguard, by the proletariat, can be most easily and most completely exercised through them.

In that the soviets are the *most powerful organs* of the revolutionary mass struggle, of mass political demonstrations and of mass uprising; they are organs capable of breaking the omnipotence of finance capital and its political accessories.

In that the soviets are the direct organisations of the masses themselves, *i.e.*, they are *the most democratic*, and therefore the most authoritative organisations of the masses, that provide them with the maximum facilities for participating in the building up of the new state and its

administration; they develop to their fullest extent the revolutionary energy, the initiative and the creative faculties of the masses in the struggle for the destruction of the old system, in the struggle for the new proletarian system.

The Soviet power is the unification and the crystallisation of the local soviets into one general state organisation, into a state organisation of the proletariat which is both the vanguard of the oppressed and exploited masses and the ruling class—it is their unification into the republic of soviets.

The essence of the Soviet power is the fact that the most pronounced mass and revolutionary organisations of precisely those classes that were oppressed by the capitalists and landlords now constitute the “*permanent and sole foundation of all state power, of the entire state apparatus*”; that “*precisely those masses which in the most democratic bourgeois republics*” enjoy equal rights according to the letter of the law, but “*in fact, by a thousand tricks and machinations were prevented from participating in political life and from exercising their democratic rights and liberties, are now constantly, imperatively drawn into participation, and, moreover, into decisive participation in the democratic administration of the state.*” (*Collected Works*, Vol. XXIV, p. 13, Russian edition.)

For this reason the Soviet power is a *new form* of state organisation different in principle from the old bourgeois-democratic and parliamentary form—a *new type* of state adapted, not to the task of exploiting and oppressing the toiling masses, but to the task of completely emancipating them from all oppression and exploitation and to the tasks facing the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Lenin rightly says that with the appearance of the Soviet power “*the epoch of bourgeois-democratic parliamentarism has come to an end and a new chapter in world history has commenced: the epoch of proletarian dictatorship.*”

What are the main characteristics of the Soviet power?

They are that the Soviet power has a most pronounced mass character and is the most democratic of all state organisations possible while classes continue to exist; for, being the arena of the bond and co-operation of the workers and exploited peasants in their struggle against the exploiters, and basing itself in its work on this bond and co-operation, the Soviet power by this very fact represents the rule of the majority of the population over the minority, it is the state of that majority, the expression of its dictatorship.

That the Soviet power is the most international of all state organisations in class society, for, by extirpating every kind of national oppression and basing itself on the co-operation of the toiling masses of the various nationalities it facilitates the amalgamation of these masses into a single union of states.

That the Soviet power by its very structure facilitates the leadership of the oppressed and exploited masses by the vanguard of these masses, *i.e.*, the proletariat—the most compact and most class conscious nucleus of the soviets.

“The experience of all revolutions and of all movements of the oppressed classes, the experience of the world socialist movement teaches us,” says Lenin, “that only the proletariat is able to unite the scattered, backward strata of the toiling and exploited population and to lead them.” (*Collected Works*, Vol. XXIV, p. 14, Russian edition.) The structure of the Soviet power facilitates the practical application of the lessons to be drawn from this experience.

That the Soviet power, by combining the legislative and executive functions in a single state body and replacing territorial electoral divisions by units of production, *i.e.*, factories and workshops, thereby directly connects the workers and the labouring masses in general with the apparatus of state administration and teaches them how to administer the country.

That only the Soviet power is capable of releasing the army from its position of subordination to bourgeois command and of converting it from an instrument of oppression of the people, which it is under the bourgeois order, into an instrument for the liberation of the people from the yoke of the bourgeoisie, both native and foreign.

That "only the Soviet state organisation can definitely destroy at one blow the old, *i.e.*, the bourgeois-bureaucratic and judicial apparatus." (*Ibid.*)

That the Soviet form of state alone, by drawing the mass organisations of the toilers and of the exploited into constant and unconditional participation in the administration of the state, is capable of preparing the ground for the dying out of the state which is one of the basic elements of the future stateless communist society.

The republic of soviets is thus the political form, so long sought and finally found, within the framework of which the economic emancipation of the proletariat and the complete victory of socialism is to be accomplished.

The Paris Commune was the embryo of this form; the Soviet power is its development and culmination.

That is why Lenin says that: "The republic of soviets of workers, soldiers' and peasants' deputies is not only the form of a higher type of democratic institution . . . but is also the *only form* capable of ensuring the least painful transition to socialism." (*Collected Works*, Vol. XXII, p. 131, Russian edition.)

V. THE PEASANT QUESTION

FROM this theme I shall take four subjects: (1) the presentation of the problem, (2) the peasantry during the bourgeois-democratic revolution, (3) the peasantry during the proletarian revolution, (4) the peasantry after the Soviet power has become consolidated.

(1) THE PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM

Some think that the fundamental thing in Leninism is the peasant question, that the point of departure in Leninism is the question of the peasantry, its rôle, its relative importance. This is absolutely incorrect. The fundamental question in Leninism, its point of departure, is not the peasant question but the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of the conditions under which it can be won, of the conditions in which it can be consolidated. The peasant question, as the question of the ally of the proletariat in its struggle for power, is a secondary question resulting from the fundamental question.

This circumstance, however, does not by any means deprive the peasant question of the serious and vital importance it undoubtedly has for the proletarian revolution. It is well known that the Russian Marxists began seriously to study the peasant question on the eve of the first revolution (1905). At that time the question of the overthrow of tsarism and the establishment of the hegemony of the proletariat confronted the Party in all its scope; and the question of the ally of the proletariat in the imminent bourgeois revolution assumed vital importance. We also know that the peasant question in Russia became still more urgent

during the proletarian revolution, when the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of how to win and maintain it, led to the question of allies for the proletariat in the impending proletarian revolution. Naturally, anybody marching towards and preparing to seize power cannot but be interested in the question as to who his real allies are.

In this sense the peasant question is part of the general question of the dictatorship of the proletariat and, as such, is one of the most vital questions of Leninism.

The indifference and positive dislike displayed by the parties of the Second International towards the peasant question is not only to be explained by the special circumstances attending developments in the West. It is to be explained primarily by the fact that these parties do not believe in the dictatorship of the proletariat, that they fear revolution and do not intend to lead the proletariat to power. Those who are afraid of revolution, who do not want to lead the proletariat to power, cannot be interested in the question of the allies of the proletariat in the revolution—for them the question of allies is irrelevant, is not an urgent one. The heroes of the Second International regard a sarcastic attitude toward the peasant question as a mark of good breeding, a token of "true" Marxism. As a matter of fact, there is not a grain of Marxism in this, for indifference towards an important question like the peasant question on the eve of the proletarian revolution is merely the reverse side of the rejection of the dictatorship of the proletariat—an infallible sign of the direct betrayal of Marxism.

The question is as follows: have the revolutionary possibilities inherent among the peasantry *already been exhausted*, as a consequence of certain conditions of its existence, or not? If they have not been exhausted, *is there any hope, any basis* for utilising these possibilities for the proletarian revolution, for transforming the peasantry, the exploited majority of the peasantry, from a reserve of the

bourgeoisie, which it has been during the bourgeois revolutions of the West and still is even now, into a reserve of the proletariat—into its ally?

Leninism replies to this question in the affirmative, *i.e.*, in the sense that it recognises the revolutionary potentialities to be found in the ranks of the majority of the peasantry, that it recognises the possibility of utilising them in the interests of the proletarian dictatorship. The history of the three revolutions in Russia fully substantiates the deductions made by Leninism in this respect.

Hence the practical deduction that the toiling masses of the peasantry must without fail be supported in their struggle against bondage and exploitation, in their struggle for deliverance from their misery and oppression. This does not mean, of course, that the proletariat should support *every* peasant movement. We are now speaking of supporting a movement and struggle of the peasantry which, directly or indirectly, assists the movement for the emancipation of the proletariat; which, in one way or another, brings grist to the mill of the proletarian revolution and which facilitates the transformation of the peasantry into a reserve and ally of the working class.

(2) THE PEASANTRY DURING THE BOURGEOIS-DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

This period extends from the first Russian revolution (1905) up to and including the second revolution (February 1917). The characteristic feature of this period is the liberation of the peasantry from the influence of the liberal bourgeoisie, the *desertion* of the Cadets by the peasantry, the *turn* made by the peasantry towards the proletariat, towards the Party of the Bolsheviks. The history of this period is the history of the struggle between the Cadets (the liberal bourgeoisie) and the Bolsheviks (the proletariat) for the peasantry. The outcome of this conflict

was decided by the period of the Dumas, for the period of the four Dumas served as an object lesson for the peasantry, and this lesson brought home to them the fact that they would never receive land or liberty at the hands of the Cadets, that the tsar was wholeheartedly on the side of the landlords and that the Cadets were supporting the tsar; that the only force on which they could count was the city workers, the proletariat. The imperialist war merely confirmed the lessons of the Duma period by completing the desertion of the peasantry from the bourgeoisie and by completing the isolation of the liberal bourgeoisie. For the years of the war brought out the utter futility and the absolute frustration of all hopes of obtaining peace from the tsar and from his bourgeois allies. Without these object lessons of the Duma period, the hegemony of the proletariat would have been impossible.

In this way the alliance of the workers and peasants during the bourgeois-democratic revolution took shape; in this way the hegemony (leadership) of the proletariat arose in the common struggle for the overthrow of tsarism, the hegemony which led to the February Revolution of 1917.

We know that the bourgeois revolutions of the West (England, France, Germany and Austria) proceeded along a different road. There the hegemony during the revolution belonged not to the proletariat, which did not, and by reason of its weakness could not, represent an independent political factor, but to the liberal bourgeoisie. Emancipation from serfdom was bestowed upon the peasantry not by the hands of the proletariat, which was numerically weak and unorganised, but by the hands of the bourgeoisie. The peasantry marched against the old régime side by side with the liberal bourgeoisie. The peasantry acted as the reserve of the bourgeoisie. In view of this, the revolution in those countries resulted in a tremendous increase in the political influence of the bourgeoisie.

In Russia, on the contrary, the bourgeois revolution had exactly the opposite results. The revolution in Russia had the effect, not of strengthening but of weakening the bourgeoisie as a political factor, it did not lead to an augmentation of its political reserves but to the loss of its main reserve force, to the loss of the peasantry. The bourgeois revolution in Russia brought to the fore not the liberal bourgeoisie, but the revolutionary proletariat with the millions of the peasantry rallied around it.

This, by the way, explains the fact that the bourgeois revolution in Russia grew into a proletarian revolution in a comparatively short time. The hegemony of the proletariat was the inception of and the transition stage leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

How is this peculiar phenomenon of the Russian revolution, without precedent in the history of the bourgeois revolutions of the West, to be explained? Whence this peculiarity?

The explanation is to be found in the fact that the bourgeois revolution in Russia was progressing under more advanced conditions of class struggle than in the West; that the Russian proletariat, already at that time, had succeeded in becoming an independent political force, while the liberal bourgeoisie, frightened by the revolutionary spirit of the proletariat, lost all semblance of being revolutionary (especially after the lessons of 1905) and entered into an alliance with the tsar and the landlords against the revolution, against the workers and peasants.

The following circumstances should be borne in mind as having determined the peculiarity of the Russian bourgeois revolution.

(a) The unprecedented concentration of Russian industry on the eve of the revolution. For instance, it is known that in Russia more than 54 per cent of all the workers were employed in enterprises employing over 500 workers each,

whereas in so highly developed a country as the United States no more than 33 per cent of all the workers were employed in similar enterprises. It hardly requires proof that this circumstance alone, together with the existence of a revolutionary party like that of the Bolsheviks, transformed the working class of Russia into the most potent force in the political life of the country.

(b) The monstrous forms of exploitation in these enterprises, coupled with the intolerable police régime of the tsarist hirelings, which transformed every serious strike into an imposing political action, steeled the working class until it became a force that was revolutionary to the core.

(c) The political flabbiness of the Russian bourgeoisie which, after the Revolution of 1905, took the form of servility to tsarism and downright counter-revolutionary activity, which is to be explained not only by the revolutionary spirit of the Russian proletariat which had repelled the Russian bourgeoisie into the arms of tsarism, but also by the direct dependence of this bourgeoisie upon government contracts.

(d) The survival in the countryside of the most outrageous and most unbearable remnants of serfdom with the concomitant complete sway of the landlord—circumstances which threw the peasantry into the arms of the revolution.

(e) Tsarism, stifling every sign of life, and by its tyranny increasing the burden of the yoke of the capitalist and landlord—this circumstance united the struggle of the workers and of the peasants into a single torrent of revolution.

(f) The imperialist war, which fused all these contradictions in the political life of Russia into one profound revolutionary crisis and which gave a tremendous impetus to the revolution.

Where should the peasantry have turned under these circumstances; where should it have sought support against the all-powerful landlords, against the tyranny of the tsar,

against the devastating war that had played havoc with its economy? To the liberal bourgeoisie? But that was its enemy, as years of experience with all four Dumas had eloquently proved. To the Socialist-Revolutionary Party? They were "better" than the Cadets, of course, and their programme was more "suitable," in fact almost a peasant programme; but what could the Socialist-Revolutionary Party offer, since it contemplated finding support only among the peasants, for it was weak in the cities, the main recruiting ground of the enemy? Where was the new force that would stop at nothing, neither in town nor in country, which would boldly march in the front ranks to give battle to the tsar and the landlords, which would help the peasantry extricate itself from bondage, from land-hunger, from oppression, from war? Was there such a force in Russia? Yes, there was. It was the Russian proletariat, which as early as 1905 had shown its strength, its ability to fight to the end, its fearlessness and revolutionary spirit.

At any rate, there was no other force. Nor could any other force arise.

That is why the peasantry, while deserting the Cadets and attaching themselves to the Socialist-Revolutionaries, nevertheless saw the necessity of accepting the guidance of a courageous leader of the revolution like the Russian proletariat.

These are the circumstances that determined the peculiar course of the Russian bourgeois revolution.

(3) THE PEASANTRY DURING THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

This period extends from the February Revolution of 1917 to the October Revolution of 1917. It is a comparatively short period, lasting altogether eight months; but from the point of view of the political enlightenment and revolutionary training which the masses received, these eight

months can easily be compared with decades of constitutional development along the usual lines, for they denote eight months of *revolution*. The characteristic feature of this period was the further revolutionisation of the peasantry, their disillusionment with the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the *desertion* of the peasantry from the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the new *turn* of the peasantry towards *rallying directly* to the proletariat as the only force which remains revolutionary to the end and which is capable of leading the country towards peace. The history of this period is the history of the struggle between the Socialist-Revolutionaries (petty-bourgeois democracy) and the Bolsheviks (proletarian democracy) for the peasantry—for winning the majority of the peasantry. The outcome of this struggle was decided by the coalition period, the Kerensky period—the refusal of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks to confiscate the land of the landlords, the fight of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks to continue the war, the June offensive at the front, the introduction of the death penalty for soldiers, the Kornilov mutiny.

In the preceding period, the fundamental question of revolution had been the overthrow of the tsar and the landlords. Now, during the post-February period of the revolution, when there was no longer any tsar, and when the interminable war spelt ruin for the economic forces of the country and brought the peasantry to the brink of destitution, the liquidation of the war became the fundamental question of the revolution. The centre of gravity shifted visibly from questions purely internal in character to the fundamental question: the war. "Stop the war," "Let's get out of this war," were the cries heard everywhere throughout the war-weary land, and among the peasants more than elsewhere.

But in order to get out of the war it was necessary to overthrow the Provisional Government, it was necessary to

overthrow the power of the bourgeoisie, to overthrow the power of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and of the Mensheviks, as they and they alone were dragging out the war to a "victorious finish." Practically there was no other way to get out of the war except by overthrowing the bourgeoisie.

This meant a new revolution, a proletarian revolution, for it ousted from power the last, the extreme Left wing of the imperialist bourgeoisie, the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks, in order to set up a new proletarian power, the Soviet power, in order to put in power the party of the revolutionary proletariat, the party of the Bolsheviks, the party of the revolutionary struggle against the imperialist war and for a democratic peace. The majority of the peasantry supported the struggle of the workers for peace and for the power of the Soviets.

There was no other way out for the peasantry; there could be no other way out.

The Kerensky period was therefore a great object lesson for the toiling masses of the peasantry, as they could see with their own eyes that the country would never extricate itself from the war with the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks in power, that they, the peasants, would get neither land nor liberty, that the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries differed from the Cadets only in that they used honeyed phrases and false promises while in reality pursuing the same imperialist, Cadet policy; that the only power that could lead the country on to the proper road was the power of the Soviets. The further continuation of the war confirmed this lesson, spurred on the revolution and drove millions of peasants and soldiers towards rallying directly round the proletarian revolution. The isolation of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks became an unalterable fact. Without the object lessons of

the coalition period the dictatorship of the proletariat would have been impossible.

Such are the circumstances that facilitated the process of transformation of the bourgeois revolution into the proletarian revolution.

This is how the dictatorship of the proletariat took shape in Russia.

(4) THE PEASANTRY AFTER THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE SOVIET POWER

During the first period of the revolution the main thing was to overthrow tsarism. Later, after the February Revolution, the main thing was to extricate the country from the imperialist war by overthrowing the bourgeoisie. Now, after the civil war has been brought to an end and the Soviet power has been consolidated, the questions that come to the forefront are questions connected with economic construction. Nationalised industry must be developed and strengthened; for this purpose industry must be linked with agriculture through state regulated trade, the food quotas must be replaced by the tax in kind, which is to be gradually reduced and ultimately to be transformed into a system of exchanging products of industry for the products of peasant agriculture; trade must be revived and co-operation developed, the masses of the peasantry must be drawn into the co-operative societies. This is how Lenin outlined the immediate tasks of economic construction that had to be carried out in the course of laying the foundation for socialist economy.

Some say that this task may prove beyond the strength of a peasant country like Russia. Some sceptics even assert that it is simply utopian, impossible, for peasants will be peasants—they are small producers and cannot, therefore, be of use in organising the work of laying the foundation of socialist production.

But the sceptics are mistaken; they fail to take into account several factors of capital importance in the matter at issue. Let us examine the most important of these:

First, the peasantry in the Soviet Union should not be confused with the peasantry in the West. A peasantry that has been schooled in three revolutions, that has fought against the tsar and the power of the bourgeoisie side by side with the proletariat, under the leadership of the proletariat, a peasantry that received land and peace at the hands of the proletarian revolution and by reason of this became the reserve of the proletariat—such a peasantry must necessarily be different from a peasantry which during the bourgeois revolution fought under the leadership of the liberal bourgeoisie, which received land at the hands of that bourgeoisie and in view of this became the reserve of the bourgeoisie. It hardly requires proof that the Soviet peasantry, which is accustomed to appreciate political friendship and political collaboration with the proletariat and which obtained its freedom because of that friendship and collaboration cannot but serve as exceptionally favourable material for economic collaboration with the proletariat.

Engels said that “the conquest of political power by the Socialist Party has become a question of the near future,” that “in order to capture power the Party must first go from the city into the country and become strong in the countryside.” (Engels, *The Peasant Question*.) He wrote this in the nineties of the last century, having the Western peasantry in mind. Is there any doubt that the Russian Communists, after accomplishing an enormous amount of work in this field in the course of three revolutions, have succeeded in creating an influence and backing in the rural districts that our Western comrades never dare dream of? How can it be denied that this circumstance enormously

facilitates the organisation of economic co-operation between the working class and the peasantry of Russia?

The sceptics maintain that the small peasantry is a factor incompatible with socialist construction. But listen to what Engels has to say about the small peasantry of the West:

“And indeed we stand decidedly on the side of the small peasant; we will do everything in any way admissible to make his lot more bearable, to facilitate his transition to the co-operative, if he decides to take this step, and even, if he cannot as yet bring himself to this decision, to give him plenty of time to ponder over it on his holding. We do this not only because we regard the small peasant who does his own work as virtually belonging to us, but also in the direct interest of the Party. The greater the number of peasants whom we can save from actual downfall into the proletariat and win for ourselves while they are still peasants, the more rapidly and easily will the social transformation take place. It cannot be to our advantage if we had to wait with this transformation until capitalist production has developed everywhere up to its final consequences, until the last petty artisan and the last peasant has fallen a victim to capitalist large-scale production. The material sacrifices which will have to be made out of public funds in this direction in the interests of the peasants can only appear as money thrown away from the point of view of capitalist economy, but they are nevertheless an excellent investment for they will save perhaps ten times the amount in the costs of social organisation in general. In this sense, therefore, we can afford to deal very liberally with the peasants.” (F. Engels, *The Peasant Question in France and Germany*.)

This is what Engels said, having the Western peasantry in mind. Is it not clear that nowhere can what Engels said be realised so easily and so completely as in the land of the dictatorship of the proletariat? Is it not obvious that only

in Soviet Russia can "the small peasant who does his own work" be regarded as "belonging to us," can the "material sacrifices" necessary for that be made, and the "liberality towards the peasants" required to attain that end be shown immediately and to the fullest extent? Is it not true that these and similar measures in favour of the peasantry are already being carried out in Russia? How can it be denied that this circumstance in turn must facilitate and further economic construction in the Land of the Soviets?

Secondly, agriculture in Russia must not be confused with agriculture in the West. There, agriculture is developing along the usual lines of capitalism, situated as it is in an environment of profound differentiation among the peasantry, with immense landed estates and private capitalist latifundia at the one extreme, and pauperism, destitution and wage slavery at the other. It is natural, therefore, that ruin and deterioration should exist there. Not so in Russia. With us, agriculture cannot develop along this path, if for no other reason than that the existence of the Soviet power and the nationalisation of the principal instruments and means of production will not permit of such a development. In Russia, the development of agriculture must take a different course, the course of organising millions of small and middle peasants in co-operative societies, the course of developing mass co-operation in the countryside supported by the state in the form of credits on easy terms. Lenin rightly pointed out in his articles on co-operation that with us the development of agriculture must take a different course, a course that will draw the majority of the peasants into socialist construction through co-operation, a course that will constantly introduce into agriculture the principles of collectivism, at first in the sphere of marketing and afterwards in the sphere of raising agricultural products.

Several new phenomena observed throughout the country

in connection with work done on agricultural co-operation are of extreme interest in this respect. We all know that new immense agricultural co-operative organisations are springing up within the *Selskosoyuz** system covering various branches of agriculture, flax, potatoes, butter, etc., which have a great future before them. Of these, the Flax Centre** comprises a complete network of peasant flax-growers' associations. This central co-operative supplies the peasants with seeds and implements; afterwards, it buys all the flax raised by these peasants, disposes of it on the market in mass quantities, guarantees to the peasants a share in the profits and in this way links peasant economy with state industry through the *Selskosoyuz*. What shall we call this form of organisation of production? This, in my opinion, is the domestic system of large-scale state-socialist production in the sphere of agriculture. In speaking of the domestic system of state-socialist production, I draw an analogy with the domestic system under capitalism, let us say in the textile industry, where the artisans received their raw material and tools from the capitalist and turned over to him the entire product of their labour, thus being in fact semi-wage earners working at home. This is one of numerous indices showing the road of development our agriculture must take. I will not mention similar indices in regard to other branches of agriculture.

It is hardly necessary to prove that the vast majority of the peasantry will eagerly take to this new road of development and will abandon the old road of large landed estates and wage slavery, the road of poverty and ruin.

This is what Lenin says about the course of our agricultural development:

"The power of state over all large-scale means of pro-

* *Selskosoyuz*, the central organisation of rural co-operative societies.—*Ed.*

** The Central Co-operative for Flax-growing and Marketing.—*Ed.*

duction, the power of state in the hands of the proletariat, the alliance of this proletariat with the many millions of small and very small peasants, the assured leadership of the peasantry by the proletariat, etc.—is not this all that is necessary in order to build complete socialist society from the co-operatives, from the co-operatives alone, which we formerly treated as huckstering and which from a certain aspect we have the right to treat as such now, during N.E.P.? Is this not all that is necessary for the purpose of building a complete socialist society? This is not yet the building of socialist society, but it is all that is necessary and sufficient for this building.” (*Collected Works*, Vol. XXVII, p. 392, Russian edition.)

Further on, in speaking of the necessity of lending financial and other support to the co-operatives as a “new principle of organisation of the people” and a new “social system” under the dictatorship of the proletariat, Lenin continues:

“Every social system comes into being only with the financial support of a definite class. There is no need to recall the hundreds upon hundreds of millions of rubles that the birth of ‘free’ capitalism cost. Now we must realise that at the present time the social system to which we must give more than the usual support is the co-operative system and we must act accordingly. But this must be support in the real sense of the word, *i.e.*, it is not sufficient to interpret this support as meaning support for any kind of co-operative trade—this support must be taken to mean support for co-operative trade in which *really large masses of the population really participate.*” (*Ibid.*)

What do these things prove?

That the sceptics are wrong.

That Leninism is right in regarding the masses of toiling peasants as the reserve of the proletariat.

That the proletariat in power can and must use this re-

serve in order to link industry with agriculture, to raise socialist construction and to lay down for the dictatorship of the proletariat that indispensable foundation without which the transition to socialist economy is impossible.

VI. THE NATIONAL QUESTION

FROM this theme I shall take the two principal questions: (1) the presentation of the problem; (2) the liberation movement of the oppressed peoples and the proletarian revolution.

(1) PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM

In the course of the last twenty years the national question has undergone a series of changes of very great importance. The national question in the period of the Second International and the national question in the period of Leninism are by no means the same thing. They differ profoundly from each other, not only in their scope, but also in their inherent character.

Formerly, the national question was usually confined to a small group of questions chiefly affecting "cultured" nationalities. The Irish, the Hungarians, the Poles, the Finns, the Serbs and several other nationalities in Europe made up the list of disfranchised nations in whose destinies the heroes of the Second International were interested. The countless millions of Asiatic and African peoples who were suffering under the yoke of national oppression in its crudest and most horrible form usually remained outside of their field of vision. They could not make up their minds to put whites and blacks, "cultured" and "uncultured" on the same plane. Two or three meaningless noncommittal resolutions, which carefully evaded the question of colonial emancipation, were all the leaders of the Second International could boast of. Such duplicity and half measures with respect to the national question must now be considered a thing of the

past. Leninism laid bare this shocking incongruity, tore down the wall between whites and blacks, between Europeans and Asiatics, between the "cultured" and "uncultured" slaves of imperialism and thus linked the national question with the question of the colonies. By this the national question was transformed from a specific question, affecting the internal policies of a particular state, into a general and international question, into a world question of the emancipation of the oppressed people in the dependencies and colonies from the yoke of imperialism.

Formerly, the principle of self-determination of nations was wrongly interpreted, and not infrequently it was narrowed down to the right of nations to autonomy. Certain leaders of the Second International went so far as to convert the right of self-determination into the right to cultural autonomy, *i.e.*, the right of oppressed nations to have their own cultural institutions while the dominant nation retains all political power in its own hands. The result was that the idea of self-determination was in danger of becoming a means for justifying annexations rather than a means of fighting against annexations. Now we can say that this confusion has been cleared up. Leninism has broadened the conception of self-determination and interprets it as the right of the oppressed peoples in dependent countries and colonies to complete separation, as the right of nations to independent state existence. This has precluded the possibility of justifying annexations on the grounds that the right of self-determination merely means the right to autonomy. The very principle of self-determination was thus changed from a means to deceive the masses that it undoubtedly was in the hands of the social-chauvinists during the imperialist war, into an instrument for exposing all imperialist aspirations or chauvinist machinations, a means for the political education of the masses in the spirit of internationalism.

Formerly, the question of the oppressed nations used to be regarded purely as a question of law. Solemn proclamations regarding "equal rights of nationalities" and innumerable declarations about the "equality of nations" were the staff of life of the parties of the Second International, which gloss over the fact that "equality of nations" under imperialism, while one group of nations (a minority) lives by exploiting another group of nations, is sheer mockery of the oppressed nations. We can consider this bourgeois juridical point of view on the national question as having been exposed. Leninism brought the national question down from the lofty heights of high-sounding declarations to solid ground and declared that pronouncements about the "equality of nations" which are not reinforced by the direct support of the proletarian parties to the liberation struggle of the oppressed nations are meaningless and false. In this way the question of the oppressed nations became a question of rendering support and assistance, real and continuous, to the oppressed nations in their struggle against imperialism, their struggle for real equality of nations and for their independent existence as states.

Formerly, the national question was regarded from the reformist point of view; it was regarded as an independent question entirely separated from the general question of capitalist rule, of the overthrow of imperialism and the proletarian revolution. It was tacitly understood that the victory of the proletariat in Europe was possible without a close alliance with the liberation movement in the colonies, that the national colonial question could be solved quietly, "automatically," off the beaten track of the proletarian revolution, entirely separate from the revolutionary struggle with imperialism. To-day we can say that this anti-revolutionary outlook has been exposed. Leninism has proved, and the imperialist war and the revolution in Russia have confirmed it, that the national question can be solved only in connection

with and on the basis of the proletarian revolution, and that the road to victory in the West leads through the revolutionary alliance with the liberation movement of the colonies and dependent countries against imperialism. The national question is part and parcel of the general question of the proletarian revolution and of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The question then is as follows: are the revolutionary possibilities inherent in the revolutionary liberation movement of the oppressed countries *already exhausted* or not; and if not, is there any hope, any basis on which these possibilities may be made available to the proletarian revolution, on which the dependent and colonial countries may be transformed from a reserve of the imperialist bourgeoisie into a reserve of the revolutionary proletariat, into an ally of the latter?

Leninism replies to this question in the affirmative, *i.e.*, to the effect that there are inherent within the national liberation movement of the oppressed countries revolutionary capabilities that can be utilised for the purpose of overthrowing the common enemy, for the overthrow of imperialism. The mechanics of the development of imperialism, the imperialist war and the revolution in Russia completely confirm the deductions of Leninism on this score.

Hence, the proletariat must support, whole-heartedly and actively support, the national liberation movement of the oppressed and dependent peoples.

This of course does not mean that the proletariat must support *every* national movement, everywhere and always, in every single, concrete instance. It means that support must be given to those national movements, the aim of which is to weaken imperialism and bring about its overthrow, and not such as strive to strengthen and preserve it. Cases occur when the national movements in certain oppressed countries conflict with the interests of the development of the proletarian movement. In such cases support is of course en-

tirely out of the question. The question of the rights of nations is not an isolated question, complete in itself; it is a part of the general question of the proletarian revolution, a part which is subordinate to the whole and must be dealt with from the point of view of the whole question. In the forties of the last century, Marx supported the national movement of the Poles and the Hungarians and was opposed to the national movement of the Czechs and the Jugo-Slavs. Why? Because the Czechs and the Jugo-Slavs were then "reactionary nations," "Russian outposts" in Europe, outposts of absolutism; whereas the Poles and the Hungarians were "revolutionary nations," fighting against absolutism; because support of the national movement of the Czechs and Jugo-Slavs at that time would have been equivalent to giving indirect support to tsarism, the most dangerous enemy of the revolutionary movement in Europe.

"The various demands of democracy," writes Lenin, "including self-determination, are not an absolute, they are *particles* of the general democratic (at present socialist) *world* movement. In individual concrete cases, a particle may contradict the whole; if it does, then it must be rejected." (*Collected Works*, Vol. XIX.)

That, then, is the position in regard to the question of certain national movements, of the possibly reactionary character of these movements, that is, of course, if they are examined concretely, from the point of view of the interests of the revolutionary movement and not from the formal point of view, from the point of view of abstract rights.

The same must be said of the revolutionary character of national movements in general. The unquestionably revolutionary character of the overwhelming majority of national movements is as relative and peculiar as the possibly reactionary character of certain national movements. The revolutionary character of a national movement in the condi-

tions of imperialist oppression does not necessarily presuppose the existence of proletarian elements in the movement, the existence of a revolutionary or a republican programme of the movement, the existence of a democratic basis for the movement. The struggle the Emir of Afghanistan is waging for the independence of his country is objectively a *revolutionary* struggle, despite the monarchist views of the Emir and his entourage, for it weakens, disintegrates and undermines imperialism, whereas the struggle waged by "desperate" democrats and "socialists," "revolutionaries" and republicans, like, for example, Kerensky and Tsereteli, Renaudel and Scheidemann, Chernov and Dan, Henderson and Clynes, during the imperialist war, was a *reactionary* struggle, for it resulted in placing imperialism in a favourable light, in strengthening it and in its victory. For the same reason, the struggle the Egyptian merchants and bourgeois intellectuals are waging for the independence of their country is objectively *revolutionary* despite the bourgeois origin and bourgeois calling of the leaders of the Egyptian national movement and despite the fact that they are opposed to socialism; whereas the fight the English Labour government is waging to perpetuate Great Britain's domination over Egypt is for the same reasons a *reactionary* struggle despite the proletarian origin and the proletarian calling of the members of that movement and despite the fact that they are "for" socialism. I will not deal in detail with the national movement in other more extensive colonial and dependent countries like India and China, every step of which along the road to liberation, even though it runs counter to the formal demands of democracy, is a steam hammer blow at imperialism, *i.e.*, is undoubtedly a *revolutionary* step.

Lenin was right in saying that the national movement of the oppressed countries should be evaluated not from the point of view of formal democracy but from the point of

view of the actual net results obtained as shown by the general balance sheet of the struggle against imperialism, that is to say, "not in an isolated way but on a world scale." (*Collected Works*, Vol. XIX.)

(2) THE LIBERATION MOVEMENT OF THE OPPRESSED PEOPLES AND THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

In solving the national question Leninism proceeds from the following propositions:

(a) The world is divided into two camps: the camp of a handful of civilised nations which possess finance capital and exploit the vast majority of the population of the globe, and the camp of the oppressed and exploited people in the colonies and dependent countries that comprise that majority;

(b) The colonies and the dependent countries, oppressed and exploited by finance capital, constitute the greatest reserve power and the most important source of strength of imperialism;

(c) The revolutionary struggle of the oppressed peoples in the dependent and colonial countries against imperialism is the only road that leads to their emancipation from oppression and exploitation;

(d) The principal colonial and dependent countries have already entered upon the path of the national liberation movement which will inevitably bring about a crisis in world capitalism;

(e) The interests of the proletarian movement in the advanced countries and of the national liberation movement in the colonies require that these two aspects of the revolutionary movement shall form a united front against the common enemy, against imperialism;

(f) The victory of the working class in the developed countries and the liberation of the oppressed peoples from

the yoke of imperialism are impossible without the formation and the consolidation of the united revolutionary front;

(g) The formation of a united revolutionary front is impossible unless the proletariat of the oppressor nations renders direct and determined support to the liberation movement of the oppressed peoples against the imperialism "of their own country," for "a nation that oppresses other nations can never be free" (Marx);

(h) This support implies the advocacy, defence and carrying out of the slogan of the right of nations to secession and to independent state existence;

(i) Until this slogan has been carried out, the unification and collaboration of nations within a single world system of economy, which represents the material basis for the victory of socialism, will be impossible;

(j) This unification can only come about voluntarily and must be based on mutual confidence and fraternal inter-relations between the nations.

This gives rise to two aspects, two tendencies in the national question: the tendency towards political emancipation from the shackles of imperialism and towards the formation of an independent national state, which tendency arose as a consequence of imperialist oppression and colonial exploitation; and the tendency towards economic *rapprochement* among the nations due to the formation of a world market and of world economy.

"Developing capitalism," says Lenin, "knows of two historical tendencies in the national question. The first is the awakening of national life and of national movements, the struggle against all national oppression, the creation of national states. The second is the development and growing frequency of all sorts of relations between nations, the breaking down of national barriers, the creation of the international unity of capital and of economic life in general, of politics, of science and so forth. Both tendencies are the

universal law of capitalism. The first predominates at the beginning of its development, the second characterises capitalism, mature and marching towards its transformation into socialist society." ("Critical Remarks on the National Question," *Collected Works*, Vol. XVII, pp. 139-40, Russian edition.)

For imperialism these two tendencies represent irreconcilable contradictions because imperialism cannot subsist without the exploitation of colonies and their forcible retention within the frame-work of "one integral unit," for imperialism can bring the nations closer to each other only through annexations and colonial expansion, without which it is, generally speaking, inconceivable.

For communism, on the contrary, these tendencies are only two sides of a single cause—that of the emancipation of the oppressed peoples from the yoke of imperialism, for communism knows that the amalgamation of the nations into a single world economic system is possible only on the basis of mutual confidence and voluntary agreement; that the formation of a voluntary union of nations must be preceded by the separation of the colonies from the "united" imperialist "whole," by the transformation of the colonies into independent states.

This necessitates a stubborn, incessant and determined struggle against the imperialist jingoism of the "socialists" of the dominant nations (England, France, America, Italy, Japan, etc.), who do not want to fight their imperialist governments, who do not want to support the struggle of the oppressed peoples in "their" colonies for emancipation from oppression and for state separation.

Unless such a struggle is carried on it will be impossible to educate the working class of the dominant nations in the spirit of true internationalism, in the spirit that seeks close contact with the toiling masses of the dependent countries and colonies, in the spirit of actual preparation for the pro-

letarian revolution. The revolution would not have triumphed in Russia, and Kolchak and Denikin would not have been crushed, if the Russian proletariat did not have on its side the sympathies and the support of the oppressed peoples in the former Russian empire. But to win the sympathies and the support of these peoples, it had first of all to break the chain forged by Russian imperialism and free these peoples from the yoke of national oppression. Without this it would have been impossible firmly to establish the Soviet power, to implant true internationalism and to create that remarkable organisation for the collaboration of nations which is called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and which is the living prototype of the future union of nations in a single world economic system.

Hence the necessity of fighting against the national insularity, narrowness and aloofness of the Socialists in the oppressed countries who have no desire to look beyond their national "village pump" and who do not understand the connection between the liberation movement of their country and the proletarian movement in the dominant countries.

Unless such a struggle is waged it will be impossible for the proletariat of the oppressed nations to pursue an independent policy and maintain class solidarity with the proletariat of the dominant countries in the fight for the overthrow of the common enemy, in the fight for the overthrow of imperialism; without such a struggle, internationalism would be impossible.

This is the way to educate the toiling masses of the dominant and of the oppressed nations in the spirit of revolutionary internationalism.

Speaking of the twofold task that communism must fulfil in educating the workers in the spirit of internationalism, Lenin said:

" . . . Can this education . . . be *concretely identical* in

great oppressing nations and in small oppressed nations, in annexing nations and in annexed nations?

“Obviously not. The way to the one goal: to complete equality, to the most intimate friendship and to the subsequent *amalgamation of all* nations, obviously proceeds by different roads in each concrete case—in the same way, let us say, as the direction to a point in the middle of this page is towards the left from one side, and towards the right from the other. If a Socialist, belonging to a great, oppressing, annexing nation, in advocating the amalgamation of nations in general, were to forget even for one moment that ‘his’ Nicholas II, ‘his’ Wilhelm, George, Poincaré, etc., *also stands for amalgamation* with the small nations (by means of annexations)—Nicholas II being for ‘amalgamation’ with Galicia, Wilhelm II for ‘amalgamation’ with Belgium, etc.—such a Socialist would prove to be a ridiculous doctrinaire in theory and an abettor of imperialism in practice.

“The weight of emphasis in internationalist education for the workers in the oppressing countries must necessarily be concentrated upon preaching and getting them to demand the right of secession for the oppressed countries. Without this there is *no* internationalism. It is our right and duty to condemn every Socialist of an oppressing nation who *fails* to conduct such propaganda, as an imperialist and a scoundrel. This is an absolute demand, even if the chance of secession being possible and ‘feasible’ before the introduction of socialism is only one in a thousand. . . .

“On the other hand, a Socialist belonging to a small nation must concentrate the weight of his agitation on the *second* word of our general formula: ‘voluntary *amalgamation*’ of nations. Without violating his duties as an internationalist he may be in favour of *either* the political independence of his nation *or* its inclusion in the neighbouring state X, Y, Z, etc. But in all cases he must fight *against* small-nation narrow-mindedness, insularity and aloofness, he

must fight for the recognition of the general and the whole, for subordinating the interests of the particular to the interests of the general.

“Those who have not thought over the question thoroughly think there is a ‘contradiction’ in Socialists of oppressing nations demanding the ‘right of *secession*’ while Socialists of oppressed nations demand the ‘right to amalgamate.’ A little reflection, however, will show that from *this* position there is not, nor can there be, any *other* road towards internationalism and the amalgamation of nations.” (“The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up,” *Selected Works*, Vol. V.)

VII. STRATEGY AND TACTICS

FROM this theme I shall take six questions: (1) strategy and tactics as the science of leadership in the class struggle of the proletariat; (2) stages of the revolution and strategy; (3) the flow and ebb of the movement and tactics; (4) strategic leadership; (5) tactical leadership; (6) reformism and revolution.

(1) STRATEGY AND TACTICS AS THE SCIENCE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE CLASS STRUGGLE OF THE PROLETARIAT

The period of the domination of the Second International was mainly the period of the formation and instruction of the proletarian armies in an environment of more or less peaceful development. This was the period when parliamentarism was the outstanding form of class struggle. Questions of great class conflicts, of preparing the proletariat for revolutionary combats, of the ways and means leading to the conquest of the dictatorship of the proletariat, did not seem to be on the order of the day at that time. The task reduced itself to utilising all paths of legal development for the formation and instruction of the armies of proletarians; for the utilisation of parliamentarism in conformity with the conditions under which the proletariat was (and as it seemed then, was destined to remain) in the opposition. It need hardly be pointed out that during such a period and with such a conception of the tasks of the proletariat, there could be neither complete strategy nor any elaborated tactics. There were fragmentary and detached ideas about tactics and strategy, but no tactics or strategy as such.

The mortal sin of the Second International was not that it adopted the tactic of utilising the parliamentary forms of struggle, but that it overestimated the importance of these forms, that it considered them to be virtually the only forms; and when the period of open revolutionary combats arrived and the question of extra-parliamentary forms of struggle came to the fore, the parties of the Second International turned their backs on these new tasks and refused to shoulder them.

Only in the subsequent period, the period of direct action by the proletariat, in the period of proletarian revolution, when the question of the overthrow of the bourgeoisie became a question of immediate practice, when the question of the reserves of the proletariat (strategy) became one of the most burning questions, when all forms of struggle and of organisation, parliamentary and extra-parliamentary (tactics), assumed definite shape—only in this period could a complete strategy and detailed tactics for the struggle of the proletariat be elaborated. It was precisely in that period that Lenin dragged into the light of day the brilliant ideas of Marx and Engels on tactics and strategy, that had been immured by the opportunists of the Second International. But Lenin did not rest content with restoring certain tactical theses of Marx and Engels. He developed them further and supplemented them with new ideas and new theses, correlating them all in a system of rules and guiding principles for the leadership of the class struggle of the proletariat. Lenin's pamphlets such as *What Is to Be Done?*, *Two Tactics*, *Imperialism*, *State and Revolution*, *The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky*, "*Left-Wing*" *Communism*, etc., will doubtless be treasured as priceless contributions to the general store of Marxism and to its revolutionary arsenal. The strategy and tactics of Leninism constitute the science of leadership of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat.

(2) STAGES OF THE REVOLUTION AND STRATEGY

Strategy is the determination of the direction of the main blow of the proletariat at a given stage of the revolution; the elaboration of a corresponding plan of disposition of the revolutionary forces (the main and secondary reserves); the struggle to carry out this plan during the whole period of the given stage of the revolution.

Our revolution had already passed through two stages and, after the October Revolution, entered upon a third stage. Our strategy was changed accordingly.

First stage, 1903 to February 1917. Aim: to overthrow tsarism and completely liquidate the survivals of mediævalism. The main force of the revolution: the proletariat. Immediate reserve: the peasantry. Direction of the main blow: the isolation of the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie which was striving to win over the peasantry and liquidate the revolution by *compromising* with tsarism. Plan for the disposition of forces: alliance of the working class with the peasantry. "The proletariat must carry out to the end the democratic revolution, and in this unite to itself the masses of the peasantry in order to crush by force the resistance of the autocracy and to paralyse the instability of the bourgeoisie." (*Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution.*)

Second stage, February 1917 to October 1917. Aim: to overthrow imperialism in Russia and to withdraw from the imperialist war. The main force of the revolution: the proletariat. Immediate reserve: the poorest section of the peasantry. Probable reserve: the proletariat of neighbouring countries. Favourable circumstances: the protracted war and the crisis of imperialism. Direction of the main blow: isolation of the petty-bourgeois democrats (Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries) who were striving to win over the toiling peasantry and put an end to the revo-

lution by *compromising* with imperialism. Plan for the disposition of forces: alliance of the proletariat with the poorest section of the peasantry. "The proletariat must accomplish the socialist revolution and in this unite to itself the mass of the semi-proletarian elements of the population in order to crush by force the resistance of the bourgeoisie and to paralyse the instability of the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie." (*Ibid.*)

Third stage, commenced after the October Revolution. Aim: consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country, using it as a stronghold for the overthrow of imperialism in all countries. The revolution goes beyond the confines of one country and the period of world revolution commences. The main forces of the revolution: the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country and the revolutionary movement of the proletariat in all countries. Main reserves: the semi-proletarian and small peasant masses in the advanced countries and the liberation movement in the colonies and dependent countries. Direction of the main blow: the isolation of the petty-bourgeois democrats and the isolation of the parties of the Second International which constitute the main support of the policy of *compromise* with imperialism. Plan for the disposition of forces: alliance of the proletarian revolution with the liberation movement of the colonies and the dependent countries.

Strategy deals with the main forces of the revolution and their reserves. It changes with the transition of the revolution from one stage to another, but remains essentially unchanged throughout the entire duration of a given stage.

(3) THE FLOW AND EBB OF THE MOVEMENT AND TACTICS

Tactics are the determination of the line of conduct of the proletariat for the comparatively short period of the ebb or flow of the movement, of the rise or decline of the

revolution, the struggle to carry out this line by replacing old forms of struggle and of organisation by new ones, old slogans by new ones, by combining these forms, etc. While the aim of strategy is to win the war, let us say against tsarism or against the bourgeoisie, to carry the struggle against tsarism or against the bourgeoisie to its end, tactics concern themselves with less important aims, as they strive, not to win the war as a whole, but rather to win a particular engagement, or a particular battle; to carry through successfully a particular campaign or action corresponding to the concrete circumstances of the rise or decline of the revolution. Tactics are a part of strategy, subordinate and subservient to it.

Tactics change according to flow and ebb. While during the first stage of the revolution (1903 to February 1917), the strategic plan remained unchanged, tactics changed several times during that period. From 1903 to 1905 the Party pursued offensive tactics because the tide of the revolution was flowing, the movement rose and tactics had to be based on this fact.

Accordingly, the forms of struggle were revolutionary, in compliance with the requirements of the flowing tide of the revolution. Local political strikes, political demonstrations, the general political strike, the boycott of the Duma, insurrection, revolutionary fighting slogans—such were the successive changes which the struggle underwent during that period. These changes in the forms of struggle were accompanied by corresponding changes in the forms of organisation. Factory and shop committees, revolutionary peasant committees, strike committees, soviets of workers' deputies, a workers' party operating more or less openly—such were the forms of organisation during that period.

In the period from 1907 to 1912 the Party was compelled to resort to tactics of retreat, as we then experienced a decline in the revolutionary movement, the tide of the revo-

lution was at ebb, and tactics necessarily had to take this fact into consideration. The forms of struggle as well as the forms of organisation were correspondingly changed; in place of the boycott of the Duma, there was participation in the Duma; in place of open, direct revolutionary action outside of the Duma, there were parliamentary speeches and work in the Duma; in place of general political strikes, there were partial economic strikes, or simply a lull in activities. Of course, the Party had to go underground during that period, while cultural, educational, co-operative, insurance and other organisations permitted by the law took the place of revolutionary mass organisations.

The same must be said of the second and third stages of the revolution during which tactics changed dozens of times whereas the strategic plans remained unchanged.

Tactics deal with the forms of struggle and the forms of organisation of the proletariat, with their changes and correlations. Tactics may have to be changed several times in the period of a given stage of the revolution according to the flow and ebb, the rise and fall of the revolution.

(4) STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

The reserves of the revolution can be:

Direct: (a) the peasantry and in general the intermediate strata of the population within the country; (b) the proletariat of the neighbouring countries; (c) the revolutionary movement in the colonies and the dependent countries; (d) the gains and achievements of the dictatorship of the proletariat—part of which the proletariat may renounce temporarily, while retaining superiority of forces, in order to buy off a powerful enemy and thus gain a respite; and

Indirect: (a) the contradictions and conflicts between the non-proletarian classes within the country that can be utilised by the proletariat to weaken the enemy or to strengthen

its own reserves; (b) contradictions, conflicts and wars (the imperialist war, for instance) between bourgeois states inimical to the proletarian state which can be utilised by the proletariat in its offensive or in manœuvring in the event of a forced retreat.

There is no need to speak at length about the reserves of the first category, as their significance is understood by every one. As for the reserves of the second category, the significance of which is not always clear, it must be said that sometimes they become of prime importance in the course of the revolution. For instance, the supreme importance of the conflict between the petty-bourgeois democrats (Socialist-Revolutionaries) and the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie (the Cadets) during the first revolution and afterwards, can hardly be denied, for it undoubtedly played its part in the liberation of the peasantry from the influence of the bourgeoisie. Still less grounds are there for denying the tremendous importance of the fact that the principal groups of imperialists were engaged in mortal combat among themselves at the time of the October Revolution, when the imperialists busy with their internecine strife were not in a position to concentrate their forces against the young Soviet power, for which very reason the proletariat was able to devote its entire attention to the organisation of its forces and the fortification of its power, and to prepare for the rout of Kolchak and Denikin. We must, therefore, assume that now, when the contradictions between the imperialist groups are becoming more and more profound, when a new war among them is becoming inevitable, reserves of this description will become more and more important for the proletariat.

The task of strategic leadership is to utilise properly all these reserves for the achievement of the basic aims of the revolution at a given stage of its development.

What does proper utilisation of the reserves mean?

It means complying with several necessary conditions of which the following must be regarded as the principal ones:

First: the concentration of the main forces of the revolution at the decisive moment at the most vulnerable point of the enemy, when the revolution has already become ripe, when the offensive is in full swing, when insurrection knocks at the door and when the moving up of reserves to the front line is the decisive condition of success. The strategy of the Party, during the period April to October 1917, well illustrates this manner of utilising reserves. At that time the most vulnerable point of the enemy was undoubtedly the war. It was undoubtedly on this very question, a fundamental one, that the Party rallied the broadest masses of the population around the proletarian vanguard. The strategy of the Party during that period was, while training the vanguard in street action by means of demonstrations, etc., to bring up the reserves to the vanguard by means of the soviets in the rear and the soldiers' committees at the front. The outcome of the revolution has shown that proper use was made of the reserves.

This is what Lenin, paraphrasing the well-known theses of Marx and Engels on insurrection, says about this condition of the strategic utilisation of the forces of the revolution:

“Never *play* at uprising, but once it is begun, remember firmly that you have to *go to the very end*. . . . It is necessary to gather a *great preponderance of forces* in a decisive place at a decisive moment, else the enemy, being in a position of better preparation and organisation, will annihilate the insurgents. . . . Once the uprising has begun, one must act with the greatest decisiveness, one must take the offensive, absolutely, and under all circumstances. ‘Defence is the death of an armed uprising.’ One must strive to take the enemy by surprise, to take advantage of a moment when his troops are scattered. . . . One must try *daily* for at

least small successes (one may even say hourly, when it is a question of one city), thus maintaining under all circumstances a 'moral superiority.'” (*Collected Works*, Vol. XXI, Book II, pp. 97-98.)

Second: the selection of the moment for striking the decisive blow, the moment for initiating the insurrection so timed as to coincide with the moment when the crisis has attained its highest pitch, when the preparedness of the vanguard to fight it out to the end, the preparedness of the reserves to support the vanguard and when the maximum consternation in the ranks of the enemy are evident.

“The decisive battle,” says Lenin, may be deemed to be fully matured *when* “all the class forces hostile to us have become sufficiently confused, are sufficiently at loggerheads with each other, have sufficiently weakened themselves in a struggle beyond their capacities”; *when* “all the vacillating, wavering, unstable, intermediate elements—the petty bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeois democracy as distinct from the bourgeoisie—have sufficiently exposed themselves before the people and have sufficiently disgraced themselves through their practical bankruptcy”; *when* “among the proletariat a mass mood in favour of supporting the most determined, unreservedly bold, revolutionary action against the bourgeoisie has arisen and begins to grow powerfully. Then, indeed, revolution is ripe; then, indeed, if we have correctly gauged all the conditions outlined above and if we have correctly chosen the moment, our victory is assured.” (*“Left-Wing” Communism*, p. 74.)

The manner in which the October insurrection was carried out may be taken as a model of such strategy.

Failure to observe this condition leads to a dangerous error called “loss of tempo,” as when the Party lags behind the course of the movement or runs far ahead of it, courting the danger of failure. An example of this “loss of tempo,” of the inopportune choice of the moment of insurrection,

may be seen in the attempt made by a section of our comrades to begin an uprising with the arrest of the Democratic Conference in August 1917, when hesitation was still rife in the soviets, when the front was still at the crossroads and the reserves had not yet been brought up to the vanguard.

Third: a course having been mapped out, it must be pursued no matter what difficulties and complications may be encountered on the road. This is necessary so that the vanguard may not lose sight of the main aim of the struggle and the masses may not stray from the road while marching to that goal and attempting to rally around the vanguard. Disregard of this condition leads to a grievous error well known to sailors as "losing the course." As an example of this "loss of course" we may mention the mistaken conduct of our Party immediately after the Democratic Conference when it (the Party) adopted a resolution to participate in the Preliminary Parliament. For the moment the Party seemed to have forgotten that the Preliminary Parliament represented an attempt of the bourgeoisie to lead the country away from the path of the soviets to the path of bourgeois parliamentarism, that participation by the Party in any such body might result in a reshuffling of all the cards and mislead the workers and peasants who were waging a revolutionary struggle under the slogan: "All Power to the Soviets." This error was corrected by the withdrawal of the Bolsheviks from the Preliminary Parliament.

Fourth: manœuvring with the reserves calculated to effect a correct retreat when the enemy is strong, when retreat is inevitable, when the disadvantages of engaging in a battle forced upon us by the enemy are obvious, when retreat is the natural way under the given alignment of forces to ward off a blow from the vanguard and keep the reserves intact.

"The revolutionary parties," says Lenin, "must complete their education. They have learned to attack. Now they must understand that it is necessary to supplement this

knowledge with the knowledge of how to retreat properly. They must understand—and the revolutionary class by its own bitter experience learns to understand—that victory is impossible without having learned both how to attack and how to retreat correctly.” (*“Left-Wing” Communism*, p. 13.)

The object of this strategy is to gain time, to disintegrate the enemy and to accumulate forces in order to assume the offensive later.

The signing of the Brest-Litovsk Peace may be taken as a model of this strategy, for it enabled the Party to gain time, to make use of the clashes in the camps of the imperialists, to disintegrate the forces of the enemy, to retain the support of the peasantry and accumulate forces in preparation for the attacks upon Kolchak and Denikin.

“In concluding a separate peace,” said Lenin at that time, “we free ourselves as far as is possible at the present moment from both groups of imperialist belligerents, we take advantage of their mutual enmity and warfare which hamper concerted action on their part against us, and for a certain period have our hands free to advance and to consolidate the socialist revolution.” (*“Theses on Peace,” Collected Works*, Vol. XXII, p. 198, Russian edition.)

“Now even the biggest fool,” said Lenin, three years after the Brest-Litovsk Peace, “can see that the ‘Brest-Litovsk Peace’ was a concession that strengthened us and broke up the forces of international imperialism.” (*Collected Works*, Vol. XXVII, p. 7, Russian edition.)

These are the principal conditions underlying correct strategic direction.

(5) TACTICAL LEADERSHIP

Tactical leadership is a part of strategic leadership, subordinated to the tasks and the requirements of the latter. The task of tactical leadership is to master all the forms of

struggle and of organisation of the proletariat and to assure their correct utilisation in order to achieve the maximum results obtainable with the relative strength of forces available, the maximum necessary in preparing for strategic success.

What does the correct utilisation of the forms of struggle and of organisation of the proletariat mean?

It means fulfilling several necessary conditions of which the following may be considered the principal ones:

First: to bring to the forefront those forms of struggle and of organisation which are best suited to the conditions prevailing during the ebb or flow of the movement, as the case may be, and, therefore, calculated to facilitate and assure the bringing of the masses to the revolutionary positions, the bringing of millions to the revolutionary front and their assignment to various sectors of the revolutionary front.

The point here is not that the vanguard shall realise the impossibility of preserving the old order of things and the inevitability of its overthrow. The point is that the masses, the vast masses, shall understand this inevitability and display their readiness to support the vanguard. But the masses can understand this only through their own experiences. The task is to enable the vast masses to understand from their own experiences the inevitability of the overthrow of the old régime, to bring into being such methods of struggle and forms of organisation as will make it easier for the masses to learn from their own experiences the correctness of the revolutionary slogans.

The vanguard would have become detached from the working class and the working class would have lost contact with the masses, if the Party had not decided at the time to participate in the Duma and if it had not decided to concentrate its forces on work in the Duma and to carry on the struggle on the basis of this work in order to enable the masses the

more easily to see from their own experiences the futility of the Duma, the falsity of the Cadet promises, the impossibility of compromise with tsarism and the inevitability of an alliance between the peasantry and the working class. Had these experiences not been imparted to the masses during the period of the Duma, the exposure of the Cadets and the hegemony of the proletariat would have been impossible.

The danger of the "otzovist"* tactics consisted in that they threatened to isolate the vanguard from the reserve, numbering millions.

The Party would have been isolated from the working class and the working class would have lost its influence among the broad masses of the peasants and soldiers if the proletariat had followed in the footsteps of the "Left" Communists who called for insurrection in April 1917, when the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries had not yet exposed themselves as advocates of war and of imperialism, and when the masses had not yet had sufficient time to learn from their own experience how false the speeches of the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries about peace, land and freedom were. Had it not been for the experiences the masses gained during the Kerensky period, the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries would not have become isolated and the dictatorship of the proletariat would have been impossible. Therefore, the tactic of "patiently explaining" the mistakes of the petty-bourgeois parties and of open struggle in the soviets was the only correct tactic.

The danger of the tactics of the "Left" Communists was that they threatened to reduce the Party from the position of leader of the proletarian revolution, to that of a band of inane conspirators with no contacts with the masses.

"With the vanguard alone, victory is impossible," says

* From the Russian *otzvat*—to recall, the name given to a group of Bolsheviks which advocated the recall of the Social-Democratic deputies from the Duma.—*Ed.*

Lenin. "To throw the vanguard alone into the decisive battle when the whole class, when the broad masses have not yet taken up a position either of direct support of the vanguard, or at least of benevolent neutrality towards it . . . would not merely be folly but a crime. And in order that actually the whole class, that actually the broad masses of toilers and those oppressed by capital may take up such a position, propaganda and agitation alone are not sufficient. For this the masses must have their own political experience. Such is the fundamental law of all great revolutions, confirmed now with astonishing force and vividness not only in Russia but also in Germany. It has been necessary—not only for the uncultured, often illiterate, masses of Russia, but for the highly cultured, entirely literate masses of Germany—to realise through their own painful experience the absolute impotence and characterlessness, the absolute helplessness and servility before the bourgeoisie, the absolute baseness of the government of the knights of the Second International, the absolute inevitability of a dictatorship of the extreme reactionaries (Kornilov in Russia, Kapp and Co. in Germany) as the only alternative to a dictatorship of the proletariat, in order to turn them resolutely toward communism." (*"Left-Wing" Communism*, pp. 72-73.)

Second: to locate at any given moment that single link in the chain of events which, if seized upon, will enable us to keep hold of the whole chain and prepare the ground for the achievement of strategic success.

The point here is to single out from the tasks confronting the Party precisely the one that must be fulfilled next, the fulfilment of which is the central point and which will assure the successful fulfilment of the remaining urgent tasks.

The importance of this postulate may be illustrated by two examples, one of which may be taken from the remote past (the period of the formation of the Party) and the

other from the immediate present (the period of the New Economic Policy).

In the period of the formation of the Party, when the multiplicity of circles and organisations had not yet been linked together, when primitive methods and small circles were disintegrating the Party from top to bottom, when ideological confusion was a characteristic feature of our inner Party life, the master link in the chain and the principal task of all the tasks then confronting the Party proved to be the establishment of an all-Russian illegal newspaper. Why? Because under the conditions then obtaining, an harmonious Party nucleus capable of uniting these innumerable circles and organisations into a single organisation could be set up only through the medium of an all-Russian illegal newspaper. Only in this way could the conditions prerequisite for ideological and tactical unity be created and the groundwork for the formation of a real Party be laid.

During the period of transition from war to economic construction, when industry was in a state of collapse and agriculture was suffering from a shortage of city manufactures, when the bond between state industry and peasant farming became the fundamental condition for successful socialist construction—at that time the master link in the chain of processes, the fundamental task, was to develop trade. Why? Because under the conditions of the New Economic Policy, the bond between industry and peasant agriculture could not be established otherwise than through trade, because, under N.E.P., production without sale is the death of industry; because industry can be expanded only by the expansion of sales, by the development of trade, because only after strengthening our position in the sphere of trade, only after securing control of trade, only after seizing upon this link can there be any hope of linking industry with the rural market and successfully solving other

urgent problems so that the conditions necessary for building the foundations of socialist economy could be created.

"It is not enough to be a revolutionary and an adherent of socialism or of communism in general," says Lenin. "What is needed is the ability to find at any moment that particular link in the chain which must be grasped with all one's might in order to gain control of the whole chain and prepare thoroughly for the passing on to the next link. . . . At the present time . . . this link is the revival of internal trade under correct state regulation (guidance). Commerce is the 'link' in the historical chain of events, in the transitional forms of our socialist construction which we must grasp with all our might." (*Collected Works*, Vol. XXVII, p. 82, Russian edition.)

These are the main conditions which assure correct tactical leadership.

(6) REFORMISM AND REVOLUTION

What is the difference between revolutionary tactics and reformist tactics?

Some are of the opinion that Leninism is opposed to reforms, opposed to compromises and to agreements in general. That is absolutely untrue. Bolsheviki know as well as anybody else that in a certain sense "every little helps," that under certain conditions reforms, in general, and compromises and agreements, in particular, are necessary and useful.

"To carry on a war for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie," says Lenin, "which is a hundred times more difficult, prolonged and complicated than the most stubborn of ordinary wars between states; and to refuse beforehand to manœuvre, to utilise the conflict of interests (even though temporary) among one's enemies; to refuse to temporise and compromise with possible (even though transient, unstable, vacillating and conditional) allies—is not this ridicu-

lous in the extreme? Is it not as though, in the difficult ascent of an unexplored and heretofore inaccessible mountain, we were to renounce beforehand the idea that at times we might have to go in zigzags, sometimes retracing our steps, sometimes giving up the course once selected and trying various others?" (*"Left-Wing" Communism*, p. 52.)

Hence, it is obvious that it is not a question of reforms or compromises and agreements, as such, but of the use that is made of reforms and compromises.

To a reformist, reforms are everything while revolutionary work is just something to talk about, a diversion. Therefore, with reformist tactics under the existing bourgeois system, reforms inevitably serve as an instrument for strengthening that régime, an instrument that disintegrates the revolution.

To a revolutionary, on the contrary, the main thing is revolutionary work and not reforms, to him reforms are by-products of the revolution. Therefore, with revolutionary tactics under the existing bourgeois system, reforms inevitably serve as instruments that disintegrate the system, instruments that strengthen the revolution—a stronghold for the further development of the revolutionary movement.

The revolutionary will accept a reform in order to use it as a means wherewith to link legal work with illegal work, in order to use it as a screen behind which his illegal activities for the revolutionary preparation of the masses for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie may be intensified.

This is what the revolutionary utilisation of reforms and agreements in an imperialist environment means.

The reformist, on the other hand, will accept reforms as a pretext for renouncing all illegal work, to thwart the preparation of the masses for the revolution and to "rest in the shade" of reforms that have been "bestowed."

This is what reformist tactics mean.

This is the position in regard to reforms and agreements under imperialism.

The situation changes somewhat, however, after the overthrow of imperialism, under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Faced by certain conditions and certain attendant circumstances, the proletarian power may find itself constrained to abandon the straight and narrow path leading to the revolutionary reconstruction of the existing order and take the path of gradual change, the "reformist path," as Lenin says in his well-known article "On the Importance of Gold," a roundabout path, a path of reforms and concessions to the non-proletarian classes in order to disintegrate these classes, give the revolution a respite, collect its forces and prepare for a new attack. It cannot be denied that, in a sense, this is a reformist path. But there is a fundamental difference that we must bear in mind, and that is that in this case the reform emanates from the proletarian state, that it strengthens the proletarian state, that it procures for it a necessary breathing space, that its purpose is to disintegrate, not the revolution, but the non-proletarian classes.

Under such circumstances reforms are converted into their exact opposites.

The proletarian power is able to adopt such a policy because and only because the sweep of the revolution in the preceding period was sufficiently vast and allowed sufficient leeway to permit of retreat, substituting offensive tactics by tactics of temporary retreat, of detour tactics.

Thus, while formerly, under the bourgeois régime, reforms were a by-product of the revolution, now, under the dictatorship of the proletariat, the source of reforms is the revolutionary gains of the proletariat, the reserves accumulated in the hands of the proletariat which consist of these gains.

"Only Marxism defines the relation of reforms to revolu-

tion accurately and correctly," says Lenin, "and Marx could see this relation only from one angle, viz., from the conditions prevailing in the period preceding the more or less durable and more or less prolonged victory of the proletariat, at least in a single country. In such an environment the following was the basis of a correct relation: reforms are a by-product of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat. . . . After the victory of the proletariat, in even a single country, something new enters into the relation of reforms to revolution. In principle everything remains as before, but a change of form takes place which Marx himself could not have foreseen, but which can be conceived only on the basis of Marxist philosophy and policy. . . . After the victory, they (*i.e.*, the reforms—*J.S.*) (while still remaining 'by-products' on an international scale) assume in the country in which victory has been achieved the additional character of a necessary and legitimate respite in those cases when, after the maximum exertion of effort, it is evident that sufficient forces are lacking for the revolutionary fulfilment of such and such a transition. Victory creates such a 'reserve of forces' that it is possible to hold on even in the event of a forced retreat—to hold on even in the material and moral sense." (*Collected Works*, Vol. XVII, pp. 84-85, Russian edition.)

VIII. THE PARTY

IN the pre-revolutionary period, in the period of more or less peaceful development, when the parties of the Second International were the predominant force in the labor movement and parliamentary forms of struggle were regarded as the principal forms, conditions were such that the Party neither had nor could have that great and decisive importance which it acquired afterwards in the midst of open revolutionary battles. In defending the Second International against the attacks that were made upon it, Kautsky says that the parties of the Second International are instruments of peace and not of war, that for that very reason they were powerless to take any far-reaching steps during the war, during the period of revolutionary action by the proletariat. That is absolutely true. But what does it prove? It proves that the parties of the Second International are not suitable for the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, that they are not militant parties of the proletariat leading the workers to power, but an election apparatus suitable for parliamentary elections and parliamentary struggle. This, properly speaking, explains why, in the days when the opportunists of the Second International were dominant, it was not the Party but the parliamentary fraction that was the fundamental political organisation of the proletariat. It is well known that the Party at that time was really an appendage or an auxiliary of the parliamentary fraction. It is superfluous to add that under such circumstances and with such a Party at its head, it was utterly impossible to prepare the proletariat for revolution.

With the dawn of the new period, however, matters

changed radically. The new period is a period of open collisions between the classes, a period of revolutionary action by the proletariat, a period of proletarian revolution; it is the period of the immediate mustering of forces for the overthrow of imperialism, for the seizure of power by the proletariat. This period confronts the proletariat with new tasks of reorganising all Party work on new, revolutionary lines; of educating the workers in the spirit of the revolutionary struggle for power; of preparing and moving up the reserves; of establishing an alliance with the proletarians of neighbouring countries; of establishing durable contact with the liberation movement in the colonies and dependent countries, etc., etc. To imagine that these new tasks can be fulfilled by the old Social-Democratic parties, brought up as they were in the peaceful atmosphere of parliamentarism, can lead only to hopeless despair and to inevitable defeat. To have such tasks to shoulder under the leadership of the old parties is tantamount to being left completely disarmed. It goes without saying that the proletariat could not accept such a position.

Hence the necessity for a new party, a militant party, a revolutionary party, bold enough to lead the proletarians to the struggle for power, with sufficient experience to be able to orientate itself in the complicated problems that arise in a revolutionary situation, and sufficiently flexible to steer clear of any submerged rocks on the way to its goal.

Without such a party it is futile to think of overthrowing imperialism and achieving the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This new party is the party of Leninism.

What are the special features of this new party?

(1) THE PARTY AS THE VANGUARD OF THE WORKING CLASS

The Party must first of all constitute the *vanguard* of the working class. The Party must absorb all the best elements

of the working class, their experience, their revolutionary spirit and their unbounded devotion to the cause of the proletariat. But in order that it may really be the vanguard, the Party must be armed with a revolutionary theory, with a knowledge of the laws of the movement, with a knowledge of the laws of revolution. Without this it will be impotent to guide the struggle of the proletariat and to lead the proletariat. The Party cannot be a real Party if it limits itself to registering what the masses of the working class think or experience, if it drags along at the tail of the spontaneous movement, if it does not know how to overcome the inertia and the political indifference of the spontaneous movement, or if it cannot rise above the transient interests of the proletariat, if it cannot raise the masses to the level of the class interests of the proletariat. The Party must take its stand at the head of the working class, it must see ahead of the working class, lead the proletariat and not trail behind the spontaneous movement. The parties of the Second International which preach "tailism" are the exponents of bourgeois politics which condemn the proletariat to being a tool in the hands of the bourgeoisie. Only a party which adopts the point of view of the vanguard of the proletariat, which is capable of raising the masses to the level of the class interests of the proletariat, is capable of diverting the working class from the path of craft unionism and converting it into an independent political force. The Party is the political leader of the working class.

I have spoken above of the difficulties encountered in the struggle of the working class, of the complicated nature of this struggle, of strategy and tactics, of reserves and manœuvring operations, of attack and defence. These conditions are no less complicated, perhaps more so, than war operations. Who can understand these conditions, who can give correct guidance to the vast masses of the proletariat? Every army at war must have an experienced General Staff

if it is to avoid certain defeat. All the more reason therefore why the proletariat must have such a General Staff if it is to prevent itself from being routed by its mortal enemies. But where is this General Staff? Only the revolutionary party of the proletariat can serve as this General Staff. A working class without a revolutionary party is like an army without a General Staff. The Party is the Military Staff of the proletariat.

But the Party cannot be merely a *vanguard*. It must at the same time be a unit of the *class*, be part of that class, intimately bound to it with every fibre of its being. The distinction between the vanguard and the main body of the working class, between Party members and non-Party workers, will continue as long as classes exist, as long as the proletariat continues replenishing its ranks with newcomers from other classes, as long as the working class as a whole lacks the opportunity of raising itself to the level of the vanguard. But the Party would cease to be a party if this distinction were widened into a rupture: if it were to isolate itself and break away from the non-Party masses. The Party cannot lead the class if it is not connected with the non-Party masses, if there is no close union between the Party and the non-Party masses, if these masses do not accept its leadership, if the Party does not enjoy moral and political authority among the masses. Recently, two hundred thousand new workers joined our Party. The remarkable thing about this is that these workers did not *come* into the Party, but were rather *sent* there by the mass of other non-Party workers who took an active part in the acceptance of the new members and without whose approval no new member was accepted. This fact proves that the broad masses of non-Party workers regard our Party as *their* Party, as a Party near *and dear* to them, in the expansion and consolidation of which they are vitally interested and to whose leadership they willingly entrust their destinies. It

goes without saying that without these intangible moral ties connecting the Party with the non-Party masses, the Party could never become the decisive force of its class. The Party is an inseparable part of the working class.

“We are the party of a class,” says Lenin, “and therefore *almost the entire class* (and in times of war, during the period of civil war, the entire class must act under the leadership of our Party, must link itself up with our Party as closely as possible. But we would be guilty of Manilovism* and “khvostism” if we believed that at any time under capitalism nearly the whole class, or the whole class, would be able to rise to the level of the class consciousness and degree of activity of its vanguard, of its socialist party. No sensible Socialist has ever yet doubted that under capitalism even the trade union organisations (which are more primitive and more accessible to the intelligence of the undeveloped strata) are unable to embrace nearly the whole, or the whole, working class. To forget the distinction between the vanguard and the whole of the masses gravitating towards it, to forget the constant duty of the vanguard to *raise* these increasingly widening strata to this advanced level, only means deceiving oneself, shutting one’s eyes to the immensity of our tasks and narrowing them.” (*Collected Works*, Vol. VI, pp. 205-06, Russian edition.)

(2) THE PARTY AS THE ORGANISED DETACHMENT OF THE WORKING CLASS

The Party is not only the *vanguard* of the working class. If it desires really to lead the struggle of the class it must at the same time be the *organised* detachment of its class. Under the capitalist system the Party’s tasks are huge and

* From the name Manilov, the hero in Gogol’s *Dead Souls*, who typifies a person filled with good intentions, a sentimental dreamer, but one completely lacking in strength of will and capacity to do things.—*Ed.*

varied. The Party must lead the struggle of the proletariat under the exceptionally difficult circumstances of inner as well as outer development; it must lead the proletariat in its attack when the situation calls for an attack; it must withdraw the proletariat from the blows of a powerful opponent when the situation calls for retreat; it must imbue the millions of unorganised non-Party workers with the spirit of discipline and system in fighting, with the spirit of organisation and perseverance. But the Party can acquit itself of these tasks only if it itself is the embodiment of discipline and organisation, if it itself is the *organised* detachment of the proletariat. Unless these conditions are fulfilled it is idle to talk about the Party really leading the vast masses of the proletariat. The Party is the organised detachment of the working class.

The conception of the Party as an organised whole has become firmly fixed in Lenin's well-known formulation of the first point of our Party Constitution, in which the Party is regarded as the *sum total* of the organisations and the Party member as a member of one of the organisations of the Party. The Mensheviks, who had objected to this formulation as early as 1903, proposed to substitute for it a "system" of self-enrolment in the Party, a "system" of conferring the "title" Party member upon every "professor" and "high school student," upon every "sympathiser" and "striker" who gave support to the Party in one way or another, but who did not belong and had no inclination to belong to any one of the Party organisations. We need not stop to prove that had this odd "system" become firmly entrenched in our Party it would have been inundated with professors and students, it would have degenerated into a widely diffused, amorphous, disorganised "body" lost in a sea of "sympathisers," that would have obliterated the line of demarcation between the Party and the class and would have

frustrated the aim of the Party to raise the unorganised masses to the level of the vanguard. It goes without saying that under such an opportunist "system" our Party would not have been able to accomplish its mission as the organising nucleus of the working class during the course of our revolution.

"From Martov's point of view," says Lenin, "the boundary line of the Party remains absolutely unfixed inasmuch as 'every striker could declare himself a member of the Party.' What advantage is there in this diffuseness? The broadcasting of a 'title.' The harmfulness of it lies in that it introduces the *disruptive* idea of identifying the class with the Party." (*Collected Works*, Vol. VI, p. 211, Russian edition.)

But the Party is not merely the *sum total* of Party organisations. The Party at the same time represents a single system of these organisations, their formal unification into a single whole, permitting of higher and lower organs of leadership, of the submission of the minority to the majority, where decisions on questions of practice are obligatory upon all members of the Party. Unless these conditions are fulfilled the Party is unable to form a single organised whole capable of exercising systematic and organised leadership of the struggle of the working class.

"Formerly," says Lenin, "our Party was not a formally organised whole, but only the sum total of separate groups. Therefore, no other relations except that of ideological influence were possible between these groups. Now, we have become an organised Party, and this implies the creation of a power, the conversion of the authority of ideas into the authority of power, the subordination of the lower Party bodies to the higher Party bodies." (*Ibid.*, p. 291.)

The principle of the minority submitting to the majority, the principle of leading Party work from a centre, has been

a subject of repeated attacks by wavering elements who accuse us of "bureaucracy," "formalism," etc. It hardly needs to be proved that systematic work of the Party, as one whole, and the leadership of the struggle of the working class would have been impossible without the enforcement of these principles. On the organisational question, Leninism stands for the strict enforcement of these principles. Lenin terms the fight against these principles "Russian nihilism" and "gentleman's anarchism" which deserve only to be ridiculed and thrown aside.

This is what Lenin has to say about these wavering elements in his book entitled *One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward*:

"The Russian nihilist is especially addicted to this gentleman's anarchism. To him the Party organisation appears to be a monstrous 'factory,' the subordination of the part to the whole and the submission of the minority to the majority appears to him to be 'serfdom' . . . the division of labour under the leadership of a centre evokes tragi-comical lamentations about people being reduced to mere 'cogs and screws' . . . the bare mention of the Party rules on organisation calls forth a contemptuous grimace and some disdainful . . . remark to the effect that we could get along without rules. . . . It seems clear, however, that these outcries against the alleged bureaucracy are an attempt to conceal the dissatisfaction with the personnel of these centres, a fig leaf. . . . 'You are a bureaucrat because you were appointed by the Congress without my consent and against my wishes: you are a formalist because you seek support in the formal decisions of the Congress and not in my approval: you act in a crudely mechanical way, because your authority is the "mechanical" majority of the Party Congress and you do not consult my desire to be co-opted; you are an autocrat because you do not want to deliver power into the hands of the

old gang.'”* (*Collected Works*, Vol. VI, pp. 310 and 287, Russian edition.)

(3) THE PARTY AS THE HIGHEST FORM OF CLASS
ORGANISATION OF THE PROLETARIAT

The Party is the organised detachment of the working class. But the Party is not the only organisation of the working class. The proletariat has in addition a great number of other organisations which are indispensable in its correct struggle against the capitalist system—trade unions, co-operative societies, factory and shop organisations, parliamentary fractions, non-Party women’s associations, the press, cultural and educational organisations, youth leagues, military revolutionary organisations (in times of direct revolutionary action), soviets of deputies as the state form of organisation (where the proletariat is in power), etc. Most of these organisations are non-Party and only a certain part of these adhere directly to the Party, or represent its offshoots. All these organisations, under certain conditions, are absolutely necessary for the working class, as without them it is impossible to consolidate the class position of the proletariat in the diversified spheres of struggle, and without them it is impossible to steel the proletariat as the force whose mission it is to replace the bourgeois order by the socialist order. But how can unity of leadership become a reality in the face of such a multiplicity of organisations? What guarantee is there that this multiplicity of organisations will not lead to discord in leadership? It might be argued that each of these organisations carries on its work in its own field in which it specialises and cannot, therefore, interfere with the others. That of course is true. But it is likewise true that the activities of all these organisations

* The “old gang” here referred to is that of Axelrod, Martov, Potresov and others who would not submit to the decisions of the Second Congress and who accused Lenin of being a “bureaucrat.”—*J. S.*

ought to be directed into a single channel, as they serve *one* class, the class of the proletariat. The question then arises: who is to determine the line, the general direction along which the work of all these organisations is to be conducted? Where is that central organisation which is not only able, having the necessary experience, to work out such a general line, but also capable, because of its authority, of prevailing upon all these organisations to carry out this line, in order to attain unity of direction and preclude the possibility of working at cross purposes?

This organisation is the party of the proletariat.

The Party possesses all the necessary qualifications for this purpose because, in the first place, it is the common meeting ground of the best elements in the class that have direct connections with the non-Party organisations of the proletariat and very frequently lead them; because, secondly, the Party, as the meeting ground of the best members of the working class, is the best school for training leaders of the working class, capable of directing every form of organisation of their class; because, thirdly, the Party, as the best school for training leaders of the working class, is, by reason of its experience and authority, the only organisation capable of centralising the leadership of the struggle of the proletariat and in this way of transforming each and every non-Party organisation of the working class into an auxiliary body, a transmission belt linking it with the class. The Party is the highest form of class organisation of the proletariat.

This does not mean, of course, that non-Party organisations like trade unions, co-operative societies, etc., must be formally subordinated to Party leadership. It means simply that the members of the Party who belong to these organisations and doubtless exercise influence in them should do all they can to persuade these non-Party organisations to draw

nearer to the Party of the proletariat in their work and voluntarily accept its political guidance.

That is why Lenin says that "the Party is the *highest* form of class association of proletarians" whose political leadership ought to extend to every other form of organisation of the proletariat. ("*Left-Wing*" *Communism*, Chap. VI.)

That is why the opportunist theory of the "independence" and "neutrality" of the non-Party organisations, which theory is the progenitor of *independent* parliamentarians and publicists who are *isolated* from the Party, and of *narrow-minded* trade unionists and co-operative society officials who have become petty-bourgeois, is wholly incompatible with the theory and practice of Leninism.

(4) THE PARTY AS THE WEAPON OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

The Party is the highest form of organisation of the proletariat. The Party is the fundamental leading element within the class of the proletariat and within the organisation of that class. But it does not follow by any means that the Party can be regarded as an end in itself, as a self-sufficing force. The Party is not only the highest form of class association of the proletarians; it is at the same time a *weapon* in the hands of the proletariat for the achievement of the dictatorship where that has not yet been achieved; for the consolidation and extension of the dictatorship where it has already been achieved. The Party would not rank so high in importance and it could not overshadow all other forms of organisation of the proletariat if the latter were not face to face with the question of power, if the conditions of imperialism, the inevitability of wars and the presence of a crisis did not demand the concentration of all the forces of the proletariat on one point and the gathering together of all the threads of the revolutionary

movement in one spot, to overthrow the bourgeoisie and to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. The proletariat needs the Party first of all as its General Staff, which it must have for the successful seizure of power. Needless to say, the Russian proletariat could never have established its revolutionary dictatorship without a Party capable of rallying around itself the mass organisations of the proletariat and of centralising the leadership of the entire movement during the progress of the struggle.

But the proletariat needs the Party not only to achieve the dictatorship, it needs it still more to maintain, consolidate and extend its dictatorship in order to attain complete victory for socialism.

“Certainly almost every one now realises,” says Lenin, “that the Bolsheviks could not have maintained themselves in power for two and one-half years, and not even for two and one-half months, without the strictest discipline, the truly iron discipline in our Party and without the fullest and unreserved support rendered it by the whole mass of the working class, that is, by all those belonging to this class who think, who are honest, self-sacrificing, influential and capable of leading and attracting the backward masses.” (*“Left-Wing” Communism*, p. 9.)

Now what is meant by “maintaining” and “extending” the dictatorship? It means imbuing these millions of proletarians with the spirit of discipline and organisation: it means creating among the proletarian masses a bulwark against the corrosive influences of petty-bourgeois spontaneity and petty-bourgeois habits; it means that the organising work of the proletarians in re-educating and remoulding the petty-bourgeois strata must be reinforced; it means that assistance must be given to the masses of the proletarians in educating themselves so that they may become a force capable of abolishing classes and of preparing the ground for the organisation of socialist production.

But it is impossible to accomplish all this without a Party, which is strong by reason of its cohesion and discipline.

"The dictatorship of the proletariat," says Lenin, "is a persistent struggle—sanguinary and bloodless, violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative—against the forces and traditions of the old society. The force of habit of millions and of tens of millions is a terrible force. Without an iron party steeled in the struggle, without a party enjoying the confidence of all who are honest in the given class, without a party capable of keeping track of and influencing the mood of the masses, it is impossible to conduct such a struggle successfully." (*"Left-Wing" Communism*, pp. 28-29.)

The proletariat needs the Party *for* the purpose of achieving and maintaining the dictatorship. The Party is the instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

From this it follows that when classes disappear and the dictatorship of the proletariat dies out, the Party will also die out.

(5) THE PARTY AS THE EXPRESSION OF UNITY OF WILL,
WHICH IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE EXISTENCE OF
FACTIONS

The achievement and maintenance of the dictatorship of the proletariat are impossible without a party strong in its cohesion and iron discipline. But iron discipline in the Party is impossible without unity of will and without absolute and complete unity of action on the part of all members of the Party. This does not mean of course that the possibility of a conflict of opinion within the Party is thus excluded. On the contrary, iron discipline does not preclude but presupposes criticism and conflicts of opinion within the Party. Least of all does it mean that this discipline must be "blind" discipline. On the contrary, iron discipline does not preclude but presupposes conscious and

voluntary submission, for only conscious discipline can be truly iron discipline. But after a discussion has been closed, after criticism has run its course and a decision has been made, unity of will and unity of action of all Party members become indispensable conditions without which Party unity and iron discipline in the Party are inconceivable.

“In the present epoch of intensified civil war,” says Lenin, “the Communist Party can discharge its duty only if it is organised with the highest degree of centralisation, ruled by iron discipline bordering on military discipline, and if its Party centre proves to be a potent authoritative body invested with broad powers and enjoying the general confidence of the Party members.” (*Conditions of Affiliation to the Communist International.*)

This is the position in regard to discipline in the Party in the period of struggle preceding the conquest of the dictatorship.

The same thing applies, but to a greater degree, to discipline in the Party after the establishment of the dictatorship.

In this connection, Lenin said: “Whoever in the least weakens the iron discipline of the party of the proletariat (especially during its dictatorship) actually aids the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.” (*“Left-Wing” Communism*, p. 29.)

It follows that the existence of factions is incompatible with Party unity and with its iron discipline. It need hardly be emphasised that the existence of factions leads to the creation of a number of centres, and the existence of a number of centres connotes the absence of a common centre in the Party, a breach in the unity of will, the weakening and disintegration of discipline, the weakening and disintegration of the dictatorship. It is true that the parties of the Second International, which are fighting against the dictatorship of the proletariat and have no desire to lead

the proletariat to power, can permit themselves the luxury of such liberalism as freedom for factions, for they have no need whatever of iron discipline. But the parties of the Communist International, which organise their activities on the basis of the task of achieving and strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat, cannot afford to be "liberal" or to permit the formation of factions. The Party is synonymous with unity of will, which leaves no room for any factionalism or division of authority in the Party.

Hence Lenin's warning on the "danger of factionalism from the point of view of Party unity and of the realisation of unity of will in the vanguard of the proletariat as the primary prerequisite for the success of the dictatorship of the proletariat," which is embodied in a special resolution of the Tenth Congress of our Party, *On Party Unity*.

Hence Lenin's demand for the "complete extermination of all factionalism" and the "immediate dissolution of all groups, without exception, that had been formed on the basis of this, or that platform" on pain of "unconditional and immediate expulsion from the Party." (Cf. the resolution, *On Party Unity*.)

(6) THE PARTY IS STRENGTHENED BY PURGING ITSELF OF OPPORTUNIST ELEMENTS

The opportunist elements in the Party are the source of Party factionalism. The proletariat is not an isolated class. A steady stream of peasants, small tradesmen and intellectuals, who have become proletarianised by the development of capitalism, flows into the ranks of the proletariat. At the same time the upper strata of the proletariat—principally the trade union leaders and labour members of parliament—who have been fed by the bourgeoisie out of the super-profits extracted from the colonies, are undergoing a process of decay.

"This stratum of bourgeoisified workers or 'labor aristoc-

racy," says Lenin, "who have become completely petty-bourgeois in their mode of life, in the amount of their earnings, and in their point of view, serve as the main support of the Second International, and, in our day, the principal *social* (not military) *support of the bourgeoisie*. They are the real *agents of the bourgeoisie in the labour movement*, the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class, the real carriers of reformism and chauvinism." (*Imperialism, the High-Stage of Capitalism* [International Publishers], pp. 13-14.)

All these petty-bourgeois groups somehow or other penetrate into the Party into which they introduce an element of hesitancy and opportunism, of disintegration and lack of self-confidence. Factionalism and splits, disorganisation and the undermining of the Party from within are principally due to them. Fighting imperialism with such "allies" in one's rear is as bad as being caught between two fires, coming both from the front and rear. Therefore, no quarter should be given in fighting such elements, and their relentless expulsion from the Party is a condition precedent for the successful struggle against imperialism.

The theory of "overcoming" opportunist elements by ideological struggle within the Party; the theory of "living down" these elements within the confines of a single Party are rotten and dangerous theories that threaten to reduce the Party to paralysis and chronic infirmity, that threaten to abandon the Party to opportunism, that threaten to leave the proletariat without a revolutionary party, that threaten to deprive the proletariat of its main weapon in the fight against imperialism. Our Party could not have come out onto the high road, it could not have seized power and organised the dictatorship of the proletariat, it could not have emerged victorious from the civil war, if it had had within its ranks people like Martov and Dan, Potresov and Axelrod. Our Party succeeded in creating true unity

and greater cohesion in its ranks than ever before, mainly because it undertook in time to purge itself of opportunist pollution and expelled the liquidators and Mensheviks from its ranks. The proletarian parties develop and become strong by purging themselves of opportunists and reformists, social-imperialists and social-chauvinists, social-patriots and social-pacifists. The Party becomes strong by ridding itself of opportunist elements.

“With reformists and Mensheviks in our ranks,” says Lenin, “*we cannot* be victorious in the proletarian revolution *nor can* we defend it against attack. This is clearly so in principle. It is strikingly confirmed by the experiences of Russia and Hungary. . . . Russia found itself in a tight corner *many* a time, when the Soviet régime would certainly have been overthrown had the Mensheviks, reformists or petty-bourgeois democrats remained within our Party. . . . It is generally admitted that in Italy events are heading towards decisive battles of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie for the capture of state power. At such a time not only does the removal of the Mensheviks, reformists and Turatists from the Party become absolutely necessary but it may even prove useful to remove certain excellent Communists who might and who do waver in the direction of desiring to maintain ‘unity’ with the reformists—to remove these from all responsible positions. . . . On the eve of the revolution and in the midst of the desperate struggle for victory, the slightest hesitancy within the Party is apt to *ruin* everything, to disrupt the revolution and to snatch the power out of the hands of the proletariat, since that power is as yet insecure and the attacks upon it are still too violent. The retirement of wavering leaders at such a time does not weaken but strengthens the Party, the labour movement and the revolution.” (*Collected Works*, Vol. XXV, pp. 462-64, Russian edition.)

IX. STYLE IN WORK

We are not concerned here with literary style. What I have in mind is style in the work, those particular and peculiar features inherent in the practice of Leninism which give rise to the special type of the Leninist worker. Leninism is a school of theory and practice which trains a special type of worker for the Party and the state and creates a special Leninist style in work. What are the characteristic features of this style? What are its peculiar features?

There are two special features: (a) the wide Russian revolutionary range of action and (b) American efficiency. The Leninist style combines these two special features in Party and state work.

The wide Russian revolutionary range of action is an antidote against inertia, routine, conservatism, mental stagnation and slavish submission to ancestral traditions. This wide range is the vivifying force which awakens thought, pushes forward, breaks with the past and opens up perspectives. Without it no progress can be made. But the chances are that in practice it will degenerate into empty "revolutionary" Manilov phrase-mongering if it is not combined with American efficiency in work. Examples of this degeneration are only too numerous. Who does not know the disease of "revolutionary" inventiveness and "revolutionary" planning which springs from the belief in the power of decrees to arrange and reform everything? A Russian writer, I. Ehrenbourg, in his story, *The Perfect Communist Man*, has portrayed the type of "Bolshevik" afflicted with this "disease," who set himself the task of finding a formula for the ideally perfect man, but who became "submerged"

in this "work." Some gross exaggerations are spun into this yarn, but it describes the disease very well. But no one I think has so ruthlessly and bitterly ridiculed those afflicted with this disease as Lenin has done. Lenin stigmatised this unwholesome belief in inventing plans and decrees as "communist vanity."

"Communist vanity," Lenin said, "means that a man who is a member of the Communist Party, and has not yet been cleaned out of the Party imagines that he can solve all his problems by issuing Communist decrees." (*Collected Works*, Vol. XXVII, pp. 50-51, Russian edition.)

Lenin usually contrasted hollow "revolutionary" *mouthings* with plain everyday work, emphasising in this way that "revolutionary" creativeness is alien to the letter and spirit of genuine Leninism.

"Less high falutin' phrases and more simple everyday deeds," says Lenin. "Less political chatter and more attention to the simple but vital . . . facts of communist construction. . . ." (*Collected Works*, Vol. XXIV, pp. 343 and 335, Russian edition.)

American efficiency, on the other hand, is an antidote to "revolutionary" phrase-mongering and fantastic invention. American efficiency is that indomitable spirit that neither knows nor will be deterred by any obstacle, that plugs away with businesslike perseverance until every impediment has been removed, that simply must go through with a job once it has been tackled even if it be of minor importance and without which serious constructive work is out of the question. But American efficiency incurs the great risk of degenerating into narrow and unprincipled commercialism unless it is imbued with the wide Russian revolutionary range of action. Who has not heard of that disease of narrow practicality and unprincipled commercialism which has caused the degeneration of certain "Bolsheviks" and their abandonment of the cause of the revolution? We find

a reflection of this peculiar malady in a tale by B. Pilnyak, entitled *The Naked Year*, which depicts types of Russian "Bolsheviks" of strong will and practical determination, who "function" quite "energetically," without vision, without knowing "what it is all about" and who, therefore, stray from the path of revolutionary work. No one has been more incisive in his ridicule of this disease of commercialism than Lenin. He branded it as "narrow practicality," "brainless commercialism." He usually contrasted it with vital revolutionary work and the necessity of having a revolutionary perspective in all daily activities, emphasising at the same time that this unprincipled commercialism is as repugnant to genuine Leninism as flights of "revolutionary" inventiveness.

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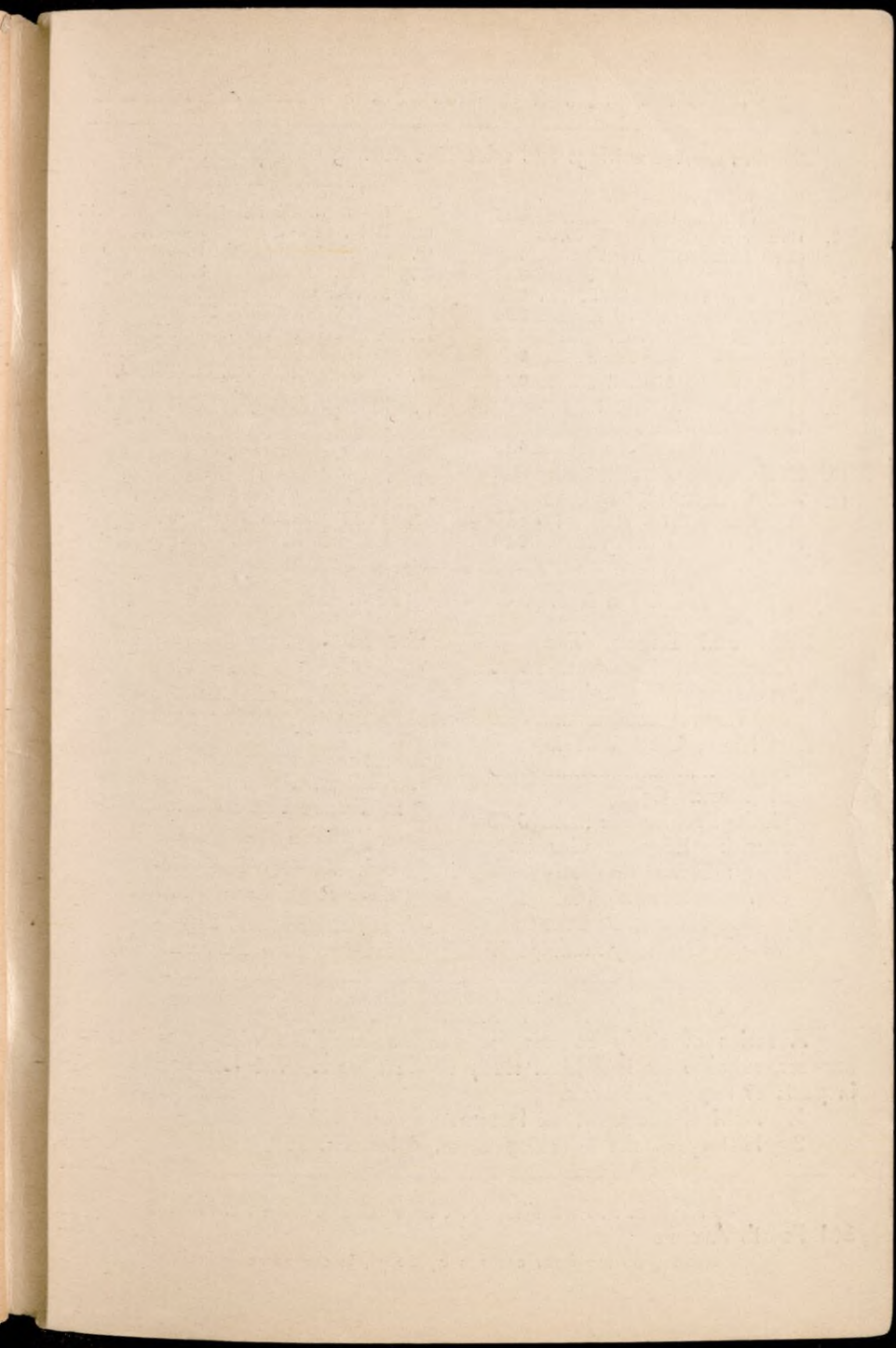
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