

READINGS IN LENINISM  
No. 1

# **WHAT IS LENINISM?**

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## NOTE

This volume is one of a series of "Readings in Leninism." Each book consists of a collection of articles and extracts – taken almost exclusively from the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin – dealing with a basic question of Leninist theory.

The key passages included in these volumes are not designed to serve as a substitute for reading the fundamental works of Marxism-Leninism in their entirety. The purpose of the series is to assemble, within the covers of a single book, pertinent excerpts dealing with a specific problem of primary importance, such as the theory of the proletarian revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, strategy and tactics of the proletarian revolution, the national and agrarian questions, etc.

Systematically compiled and arranged by V. Bystryansky and M. Mishin, this material should be extremely helpful as a guide to individual or group study of the fundamental principles of Leninism.

The present volume is the first in the series and serves to introduce the reader to the meaning of Leninism, its historical roots, its method and theoretical foundations, and its development by Stalin.



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## *Part One*

# **MARXISM IN THE EPOCH OF IMPERIALISM AND OF THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION**

## **I. DEFINITION OF LENINISM AND THE CORE OF LENINISM**

### **1. Stalin on Leninism**

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 sense 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

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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 subdivision 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 emphasized, 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



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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.<sup>1</sup>

Joseph Stalin., Introduction to *Foundations of Leninism*, pp. 7-9.

### 2. Unity of Marxism-Leninism

First of all, a few remarks concerning Marxism and Leninism. As the question is formulated one might think that Marxism is one thing and Leninism is another, that one can be a Leninist without being a Marxist. But such an idea cannot be regarded as correct. Leninism is not Leninist doctrine *minus* Marxism. Leninism is Marxism of the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolutions. In other words, Leninism includes all that Marx taught, plus Lenin's new contribution to the treasury of Marxism, which necessarily follows from all that Marx taught (the doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the peasant question, the national question, the Party, the question of the social roots of reformism, the question of the most important deviations from communism, etc.). It would be better therefore, to formulate the question in such a way as to *speak* of Marxism or of Leninism (the two being fundamentally one and the same), and not to speak of Marxism and Leninism.

Joseph Stalin, "Tasks of the Young Communist League," *Leninism*, Vol. I, pp. 255-256.

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: Trotsky, by defining Leninism as "Marxism in action" or by stating that the interrelation between Marxism and Leninism consists in the fact that "Marx is the prophet with the table of commandments while Lenin is the testamentary executor," refuses, like all the revisionists, to recognize in Lenin the great theoretician and in Marx the great political fighter. By tearing asunder, in the spirit of the bourgeois liberals, the unity of revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice, counter-revolutionary Trotskyism vulgarizes and distorts the role of Lenin and the role of Marx. By thus denying the development of Marxism by Lenin, by denying the ideological foundations of Bolshevism, Trotsky was preparing the transition to the developed struggle against the Party from the position of the vanguard of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

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### 3. Historical Destiny of the Teaching of Karl Marx

The main thing in the teaching of Marx is the elucidation of the world-wide historical role of the proletariat as the builder of a socialist society. Has the progress of events in the world confirmed this teaching since it was expounded by Marx?

It was first put forward by Marx in 1844. Already the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels, which appeared in 1848, gave a consistent, systematic exposition of this teaching, which exposition still remains the best even now. World history, since that time, is clearly divisible into three main periods: (1) From the 1848 Revolution to the Paris Commune (1871); (2) From the Paris Commune to the Russian Revolution (1905); (3) Since the Russian Revolution.

Let us cast a glance on the fate of the teaching of Marx in each of these periods.

#### I

In the beginning of the first period Marx's teaching does not by any means dominate. It is only one of very many fractions or streams in socialism. The forms of socialism which dominate are those which, in the main, are akin to our *Narodniks*;<sup>1</sup> the lack of understanding of the materialist basis of the historical movement, the inability to assign the role and significance of each class in capitalist society, the masking of the bourgeois essence of democratic reorganization by various, ostensibly socialist, phrases about "the people," "justice," "right," etc.

The 1848 Revolution struck a fatal blow at all these vociferous, multi-colored and noisy varieties of pre-Marxian socialism. In all countries the Revolution showed the various classes of society *in action*. The shooting of the workers by the republican bourgeoisie in the June Days in Paris, in 1848, finally established that the proletariat *alone* was of a socialist nature. The liberal bourgeoisie feared the independence of this class a hundred times more than any kind of reaction. Cowardly liberalism grovels before the latter. The peasantry is satisfied with the abolition of the remnants of feudalism

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<sup>1</sup> Narodniks (Populists): A term first applied to a social movement of a petty-bourgeois democratic character in the Russia of the sixties and seventies of last century. — *Ed.*

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and passes over to the side of order and only from time to time wavers between *labor democracy and bourgeois liberalism*. All doctrines of class-less socialism and class-less politics turn out to be sheer nonsense.

The Commune of Paris (1871) completes this development of bourgeois reforms; it was only the heroism of the proletariat that brought about the consolidation of the republic, *i.e.*, the form of state organization in which the class relations appear in their most naked form.

In all other European countries a more confused and less finished development leads to the same formation of a bourgeois society. By the end of the first period (1848-71) – a period of storm and revolution – pre-Marxian socialism *dies*. Independent *proletarian* parties are born: the First International (1864-72) and the German Social-Democracy.

## II

The second period (1872-1904) is distinguished from the first by its “peaceful” character, *by the absence* of revolutions. The West has finished with bourgeois revolutions. The East has not yet grown ripe for them.

The West enters into a phase of “peaceful” preparation for the epoch of future transformations. Socialist parties, proletarian in essence, are formed everywhere, parties which learn to use bourgeois parliamentarism, to establish their own daily press, their educational institutions, their trade unions and their cooperatives. The teaching of Marx gains a complete victory and *expands in breadth*. The process of selection and gathering of the forces of the proletariat and its preparation for the battles ahead proceed slowly but steadily.

The dialectics of history is such that the theoretical victory of Marxism forces its enemies to *disguise themselves* as Marxists. Liberalism, rotten to the core, tries to revive itself in the form of socialist *opportunism*. The period of preparation of the forces for great battles is interpreted by them as the renunciation of these battles. Improvements in the position of the slaves enabling them to carry on a fight against wage-slavery is explained by them in the sense that the slaves are selling their right to freedom for a penny. In a cowardly manner they preach “social peace” (*i.e.*, peace with slave-ownership), renunciation of the class struggle, etc. They have many

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adherents among socialist parliamentarians, the various officials in the labor movement and the “sympathizing” intellectuals.

### III

The opportunists hardly had time to finish their hymns of praise to “social peace” and the needlessness of storms under “democracy,” when a new source of the greatest of world storms opened in Asia. The Russian Revolution was followed by the Turkish, the Persian and the Chinese. We are now living in the very epoch of these storms and their “repercussion” on Europe. Whatever fate may befall the great Chinese republic against which various “civilized” hyenas are now sharpening their teeth, no power in the world will reestablish serfdom in Asia, or wipe out the heroic democracy of the masses of the people in Asiatic and semi-Asiatic countries.

Some people, inattentive to the conditions of preparation and development of mass struggle, were reduced to a state of despair and anarchism by the long postponements of the decisive fight against capitalism in Europe. We now see how short-sighted and pusillanimous is this anarchist despair.

The fact of Asia, with its eight hundred million people, being drawn into the struggle for the same European ideals must be a source of courage and not of despair.

The Asiatic revolutions have shown us the same lack of backbone and baseness of liberalism, the same exceptional importance of the independence of the democratic masses, and the same clear dividing line which the proletariat draws between itself and the bourgeoisie. Any one who, after the experience of Europe and Asia, speaks of class-*less* politics and class-*less* socialism, simply deserves to be put in a cage, to be exhibited side by side with some Australian kangaroo.

After Asia, Europe has also begun to stir, but in no Asiatic way. The “peaceful” period of 1872-1904 has gone completely, never to return. High cost of living and the pressure of the trusts is causing an unprecedented intensification of the economic struggle, which has roused even the British workers who are the most corrupted by liberalism. Before our eyes, a political crisis is maturing even in the “die-hard,” bourgeois-*Junker*<sup>1</sup> country, Germany. Owing to the

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<sup>1</sup> *Junker*, feudal landlord. – *Ed.*

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feverish race for armaments and the policy of imperialism, the “social peace” of modern Europe is more like a barrel of gunpowder. And the decay of *all* bourgeois parties together with the maturing of the proletariat is proceeding steadily apace.

Since the rise of Marxism, every one of the three great epochs in world history has provided it with fresh proof and has brought it new triumphs. But the coming historical epoch is holding in store for Marxism, as the teaching of the proletariat, a still greater triumph.

V. I. Lenin, “The Historical Fate of the Teaching of Karl Marx,” *Marx, Engels, Marxism*, pp. 56-59.

### **4. Struggle of the Party Against Opportunist Distortions of the Definition of Leninism**

In the pamphlet *Foundations of Leninism* the well-known definition of Leninism is given which seems to have received general acceptance. It runs as follows:

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.

Is this definition correct?

I think so. It is correct, firstly, because it correctly indicates the historical roots of Leninism, characterizing it as Marxism of the *epoch of imperialism* – as against certain critics of Lenin who incorrectly consider that Leninism originated after the imperialist war. It is correct, secondly, because it correctly notes the international character of Leninism – as against the Social-Democrats, who consider that Leninism is applicable only to Russian national conditions. It is correct, thirdly, because it correctly notes the organic connection between Leninism and the teachings of Marx, characterizing Leninism as *Marxism* of the epoch of imperialism – as against certain critics of Leninism who consider it not as a further development of Marxism, but merely as the restoration of Marxism and its application to Russian conditions.

One would think that all this does not need any special comment.

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Nevertheless, it appears that there are comrades in our Party who consider it necessary to define Leninism somewhat differently. For example, Comrade Zinoviev thinks that:

Leninism is Marxism in the epoch of imperialist war and of the world revolution *which began directly in a country where the peasantry predominates* [Zinoviev's italics. – J.S.] (Zinoviev, "Bolshevism or Trotskyism," *Pravda*, November 30, 1924).

What can be the meaning of the words underlined by Comrade Zinoviev? What does it mean to introduce the backwardness of Russia, its peasant character, into a definition of Leninism?

It means the transformation of Leninism from an international proletarian doctrine into a specifically Russian product.

It means playing into the hands of Bauer and Kautsky, who deny that Leninism is suitable to other countries, which are capitalistically more developed.

Without a doubt the peasant question is of the greatest importance in Russia; our country is a peasant country. But what significance can this fact have in a characterization of the fundamentals of Leninism? Was Leninism worked out only upon Russian soil, for Russia alone, and not upon imperialist soil, and for the imperialist countries generally?

Have Lenin's works, such as *Imperialism, State and Revolution*, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, and "*Left-Wing*" *Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, etc., significance only for Russia and not for all imperialist countries in general? Is not Leninism the generalization of the experience of the revolutionary movement of *all* countries? Are not the foundations of the theory and tactics of Leninism suitable and obligatory for the proletarian parties of all countries? Was Lenin wrong when he said that: "Bolshevism can serve as a model of tactics *for all*?" (*Collected Works*, Vol. XXIII, p. 386.) Was Lenin wrong when he spoke of the "*international significance* [emphasis mine. – J. S.] of the Soviet power and of the foundation of Bolshevik theory and tactics?" ("*Left-Wing*" *Communism*.)

Was not Lenin right when he wrote:

In Russia, the dictatorship of the proletariat must inevitably differ in certain special features from that in the

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advanced countries, by reason of the very great backwardness and petty-bourgeois character of our country. But the basic forces and the basic forms of social economy are just the same in Russia as in any capitalist country, so that *these special features cannot affect the main point.* (*Collected Works*, Russian edition, Vol. XXIV, p. 508.)

But if this is so, does it not follow therefrom that Comrade Zinoviev's definition of Leninism cannot be recognized as correct?

How can this nationally restricted definition of Leninism be reconciled with internationalism?

Joseph Stalin, "Definition of Leninism," *Problems of Leninism*, pp. 7-9.

The new Trotskyism<sup>1</sup> does not deem it necessary openly to champion the theory of permanent revolution. It "merely" records that the October Revolution has fully confirmed the idea of permanent revolution. From this it draws the following conclusion: whatever occurred after the war, during the period of the October Revolution, is important and acceptable in Leninism, and, on the contrary, whatever occurred before the war, before the October Revolution, is both wrong and unacceptable in Leninism. Hence, the Trotskyists' theory of dissecting Leninism into two parts: pre-war Leninism, the "old," "unserviceable" Leninism, with its idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, and the new, post-war, October Leninism which they expect to adapt to the requirements of Trotskyism. Trotskyism needs this theory of dissecting Leninism as a first more or less "acceptable" step necessary to facilitate its subsequent steps in the struggle against Leninism. However, Leninism is not an eclectic theory, pieced together from heterogeneous elements and admitting of possible dissection. Leninism is an integral theory which arose in 1903, which went

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: The Trotskyism of the period when Trotsky stayed in the Bolshevik Party Comrade Stalin calls new Trotskyism. The Trotskyists, who for a time had become a fraction of Communism and for a time had concealed their anti-Bolshevik views, "did not, however, renounce these views, on which account these same views made themselves felt with particular emphasis at each turn of the Party and of the Comintern" (Stalin).

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through the ordeals of three revolutions and which is now marching onward as the militant banner of the world proletariat. Lenin said:

Bolshevism, as a trend of political thought and as a political party, exists since 1903. Only the history of Bolshevism during the *whole period* of its existence can satisfactorily explain why it was able to build up and maintain, under most difficult conditions, the iron discipline necessary for the victory of the proletariat. (*“Left-Wing” Communism*, Chap. 2.)

Bolshevism and Leninism are one. They are two names for one and the same thing. Therefore, the theory of dissecting Leninism into two parts is a theory of destroying Leninism, a theory substituting Trotskyism for Leninism.

There is no need to state that the Party cannot reconcile itself to this strange theory.

*On the question of the Party allegiance.* The old Trotskyism undermined the Bolshevik Party spirit by means of its theory (and practice) of unity with the Mensheviks. However, this theory has been so thoroughly discredited that people nowadays do not even want to call it to mind. In order to undermine the Party allegiance, present-day Trotskyism thought up a new, less scandalous and almost “democratic” theory of counterposing the old cadres to the young generation in the Party. For Trotskyism, no single and integral history of our Party exists. Trotskyism divides the history of our Party into two parts of unequal value – the pre- and the post-October parts. The pre-October part of the history of our Party is, properly speaking, not a history, but a “pre-history,” an unimportant, or at any rate not a very important, preparatory period of our Party. However, the post-October part of the history of our Party is the real, genuine history. There you have the “old,” “pre-historic,” unimportant cadres of our Party. Here you have the new, real, “historical” Party. There is hardly any necessity to prove that this odd scheme of the history of the Party is a scheme that undermines the unity between the old and the new cadres of our Party, a scheme that destroys the Bolshevik Party allegiance.

Joseph Stalin, “Trotskyism or Leninism?” *The October Revolution*, pp. 91-92.



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### 5. The Core of Marxism-Leninism

The main point in the teaching of Marx is the class struggle. This has very often been said and written. But this is not true. Out of this error, here and there, springs an opportunist distortion of Marxism, a falsification of it made with the intent of rendering it acceptable to the bourgeoisie. For the theory of the class struggle was *not* created by Marx, but by the bourgeoisie *before* Marx and is, generally speaking, *acceptable* to the bourgeoisie. He who recognizes the class struggle *only* is not yet a Marxist; he may be found not to have gone beyond the boundaries of bourgeois reasoning and bourgeois politics. To limit Marxism to the teaching of the class struggle means to curtail Marxism – to distort it, to reduce it to something which is acceptable to the bourgeoisie. A Marxist is one who *extends* the acceptance of the class struggle to the acceptance of the *dictatorship of the Proletariat*. Herein lies the most profound difference between a Marxist and an ordinary petty (or even big) bourgeois. On this touchstone it is necessary to test a *real* understanding and acceptance of Marxism.

V. I. Lenin, “State and Revolution,” *Collected Works*, Vol. XXI, Book II, p. 176; also Little Lenin Library, Vol. 14, p. 30.

In the pamphlet *Foundations of Leninism*, it is stated:

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 role, 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.

Is that statement correct?

I think it is. It follows completely from the definition of Leninism. For, if Leninism is the theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution, while the basic content of the proletarian revolution is the dictatorship of the proletariat, then it is clear that

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the core of Leninism is the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the working out of this question and giving a basis and concreteness to it.

It is plain, however, that Comrade Zinoviev does not agree with this view. In his article, *In Memory of Lenin*, he writes:

As I have already said, the question of the role of the peasantry is the *fundamental question* [Emphasis mine. – J. S.] of Bolshevism, of Leninism. (*Pravda*, February 13, 1924.)

As you see, Comrade Zinoviev's statement is the direct outcome of his incorrect definition of Leninism, and it is therefore as incorrect as is his definition of Leninism.

Was Lenin correct in his thesis that the dictatorship of the proletariat is the "root content of the revolution"? (*Collected Works*, Vol. XXIII, p. 337.) Undoubtedly he was right. Is the thesis that Leninism is the theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution correct? I think it is. But what, then, follows from this? From this it follows that the fundamental question of Leninism, its starting point, its foundation is the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Is it not true that the question of imperialism, of the spasmodic character of its development, of the victory of socialism in one country, of the proletarian state, of the Soviet form of this state, of the role of the Party in the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of the lines of socialist construction – were not all these questions worked out precisely by Lenin? Is it not true that it is just these questions that constitute the basis and foundation of the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat? Is it not true that without a preliminary working out of these basic questions the working out of the peasant question from the standpoint of the dictatorship of the proletariat would be inconceivable?

Of course, Lenin was an expert on the peasant question. Of course, the peasant question, as the question dealing with the ally of the proletariat, is of the greatest significance to the proletariat, and forms a component part of the basic problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but is it not clear that if Leninism were not faced with the fundamental question of the dictatorship of the proletariat, then the subsidiary question of the ally of the proletariat, namely the peasantry, would not arise? Is it not clear that if Leninism were not faced with the practical problem of the conquest of power by the

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proletariat, then the question of an alliance with the peasantry would not arise?

Lenin would not have been the mighty ideological leader of the proletariat, which he unquestionably was; he would have been the simple “peasant philosopher” that foreign literary philistines are often fond of depicting him as, had he been content to work out the peasant question, not on the basis of the theory and tactics of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but independently and apart from this basis.

One of two things:

*Either* the peasant question is the core of Leninism, and in that case Leninism is not suitable, not obligatory for developed capitalist countries, for such as are not peasant countries.

*Or*, the core of Leninism is the dictatorship of the proletariat, and in that case Leninism is the international doctrine of the proletarians of all lands, is suitable and obligatory for all countries without exception, including those where capitalism is developed.

A choice has to be made here.

Joseph Stalin, “The Core of Leninism,” *Problems of Leninism*, pp. 10-12.

## II. THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF LENINISM

### 1. Stalin on 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 labor and capital. Imperialism denotes the omnipotence of the monopolist trust 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 cooperative organizations, 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.

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The *third contradiction* is the antagonism between the handful of ruling, “civilized” 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 centers. 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 favorable 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 birth-place 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

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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

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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 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

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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 civilization 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.<sup>1</sup>

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

There can be no 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?*

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Chap. IV, p. 44.



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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 fulfillment of this task, the destruction of the most powerful bulwark, not only of European, but also of Asiatic reaction, would place the Russian proletariat in the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, the center 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?

Joseph Stalin, "The Historical Roots of Leninism," *Foundations of Leninism*, pp. 11-17.

### **2. International Conditions Under Which Leninism Arose**

#### *A. Imperialism – the Eve of the Socialist Revolution*

At the present time, approximately since the beginning of the twentieth century, world capitalism has reached the stage of imperialism. Imperialism, or the epoch of finance capital, represents such a highly developed capitalist economy when monopolist combines of capitalists – syndicates, cartels, trusts – have assumed decisive importance, enormously concentrated banking capital has fused with industrial capital, the export of capital into foreign countries has grown to colossal dimensions, the whole globe has already been territorially partitioned among the richest countries, and the economic partitioning of the world among international trusts has begun.

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<sup>1</sup> *Collected Works*, Vol. IV, Book II, p. 112; also Little Lenin Library, Vol. 4, p. 30.

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Imperialist wars, *i.e.*, wars for world domination, for markets where banking capital can be utilized, for the stifling of small and weak nationalities, are inevitable in such a state of affairs. And it is precisely this that characterizes the first great imperialist war, the war of 1914-17.

The exceedingly high stage of development attained by world capitalism in general; the displacement of free competition by monopoly capitalism; the preparation, by the banks and capitalist combines, of an apparatus for the social regulation of the process of production and distribution of goods; the rising cost of living resulting from the growth of capitalist monopolies, and the increasing pressure exerted by such syndicates over the working class; the enormous accentuation of the difficulties of its economic and political struggle; the horrors and suffering, the ruin and brutalization bred by the imperialist war – all these put together make the present stage in capitalism an era of proletarian, socialist revolution.

This era has begun.

Only a proletarian, socialist revolution is able to lead humanity out of the blind alley created by imperialism and imperialist wars. Whatever be the difficulties of the revolution, its possible temporary reverses, or waves of counterrevolution, the final victory of the proletariat is inevitable.

In view of the objective conditions, the first thing to do in the period we are now passing through is to prepare the proletariat, immediately and on all points, for the conquest of political power, in order to be able to bring into life the political and economic measures that form the content of a socialist revolution.

V. I. Lenin, "Materials Relating to the Revision of the Party Program," *Collected Works*, Vol. XX, Book I, pp. 334-335.

*B. Imperialism – The Epoch of the Ripening of the Decisive Revolutionary Battles of the Proletariat.*

The sharpening of the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie may be observed in all the advanced capitalist countries, and the difference in the historical conditions, political regime and forms of the labor movement creates the difference in the manifestations of one and the same tendency. In America and England, where there is complete political liberty, and where more

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or less alive, revolutionary and socialist traditions are completely, or, at all events, almost lacking among the working class, this sharpening is manifested in the intensification of the movement against the trusts, in the extraordinary growth of Socialism and in the growing attention that is being paid to it by the propertied classes, and in the fact that the labor organizations, sometimes the purely economic organizations are taking up the systematic and independent proletarian political struggle. In Austria and Germany, partly also in the Scandinavian countries, the sharpening of the class struggle is expressed in the election campaigns, in the relations between the parties, in the rapprochement of the bourgeoisie of various shades against their common foe – the proletariat, in the intensification of police and judicial persecution. Two hostile camps are slowly but surely increasing their forces, are strengthening their organizations, and are separating with increasing sharpness in all fields of public life as if silently and intently preparing for the impending revolutionary battles. In the Latin countries – in Italy, especially in France – the sharpening of the class struggle is expressed in particularly stormy, sharp, and to some extent directly revolutionary outbreaks, in which the pent-up hatred of the proletariat against its oppressors bursts out with sudden violence and the “peaceful” environment of the parliamentary struggle is supplanted by scenes of real civil war.

The international revolutionary movement of the proletariat does not proceed and cannot proceed evenly and in the same forms in different countries. The thorough and all-sided utilization of all possibilities in all spheres of activity comes only as a result of the class struggle of the workers of various countries. Every country contributes its own valuable original traits to the general stream, but in every individual country the movement suffers from some kind of one-sidedness, from some theoretical or practical shortcoming in the individual socialist parties. On the whole, we clearly see that international socialism has made an enormous stride forward, we see the welding together of the armies of millions of proletarians in a whole series of concrete encounters with the enemy, we see the approach of the decisive struggle against the bourgeoisie – a struggle for which the working class is immeasurably better *prepared* than was the case at the time of the Commune, that last great rebellion of the proletarians.

And this stride forward by the whole of international socialism,

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together with the sharpening of the revolutionary democratic struggle in Asia, places the Russian Revolution in peculiar and specially difficult conditions. The Russian Revolution possesses a great international ally both in Europe and in Asia, but at the same time, and *just because of this*, it possesses not only a national, not only a Russian, but also an *international* enemy. Reaction against the intensifying struggle of the proletariat is inevitable in all the capitalist countries, and this reaction unites the bourgeois governments of the whole world against any popular movement, against any revolution, in Asia, and especially in Europe. The opportunists in our Party, like the majority of the Russian liberal intelligentsia, still dream of a bourgeois revolution in Russia that will neither “repel” nor scare the bourgeoisie, generate “extreme” reaction, nor lead to the capture of power by the revolutionary classes. Vain hopes! A philistine Utopia! Inflammable material is being piled up so rapidly in all the progressive countries of the world, the conflagration is so obviously spreading to the majority of the countries of Asia, which but yesterday were fast asleep, that the strengthening of the international bourgeois reaction and the intensification of each individual national revolution are absolutely inevitable.

The counter-revolution in Russia is not fulfilling and cannot fulfill the historic tasks of our revolution. The Russian bourgeoisie is inevitably gravitating more and more to the side of the international anti-proletarian and anti-democratic tendency. It is not on Liberal allies that the Russian proletariat must reckon. It must independently follow its own path towards the complete victory of the revolution, and base itself on the necessity of a forcible solution of the agrarian question in Russia by the peasant masses themselves. It must help these masses to overthrow the rule of the Black Hundred landlords and of the Black Hundred autocracy; it must set itself the task of establishing the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry in Russia and bear in mind that its struggle and its victories are indissolubly bound up with the international revolutionary movement. Fewer illusions concerning the liberalism of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie (in Russia and in the entire world). More attention to the growth of the international revolutionary proletariat!

V. I. Lenin, “Inflammable Material in World Politics,” *Selected Works*, Vol. IV, pp. 302-304.

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### **3. Russia, the Hearth of Leninism, the Fatherland of the Theory and Tactic of the Proletarian Revolution**

#### *A. Special Features of Imperialism in Russia*

In Russia, capitalist imperialism of the latest type has fully manifested itself in the policy of tsarism relative to Persia, Manchuria and Mongolia; in general, however, the prevailing type of Russian imperialism is military and feudal. Nowhere in the world is there, such an oppression of the majority of the country's population as there is in Russia: the Great-Russians form only 43 per cent of the population, *i.e.*, less than half; the rest have no rights as belonging to other nationalities. Out of one hundred and seventy million of the population of Russia, *about one hundred million* are oppressed and without rights. The tsarist government wages war for the seizure of Galicia, and the final throttling of the freedom of the Ukrainians, for the seizure of Armenia, Constantinople, etc. Tsarism sees in this war a means to distract attention from the growing discontent within the country and to suppress the growing revolutionary movement. For every two Great-Russians in present-day Russia, there are between two and three "aliens" without rights. In waging this war tsarism strives to increase the number of nations oppressed by Russia, to perpetuate their oppression and subsequently to undermine the struggle for freedom of the Great-Russians themselves. The opportunity of oppressing and robbing foreign peoples perpetuates economic stagnation, since it often substitutes semi-feudal exploitation of the "aliens" as a source of income for the development of productive forces. It is for this reason that, as far as Russia is concerned, the war is doubly reactionary and hostile to liberation.

V. I. Lenin, "Socialism and War," *Collected Works*, Vol.. XVIII, pp. 225-226; also Little Lenin Library, Vol. 3, pp. 15-16.

#### *B. Special Features of the Class Struggle in Russia and Inevitability of Revolution*

In Russia the peasants were "freed" by the landlords themselves, by the landlord government of an absolutist Tsar and his officials. And these "liberators" did their business in *such* a way that the peasants emerged "to liberty" stripped to the bone, emerged

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from serfdom to the landlords, to bondage to the very same landlords and their underlings.

The noble landlords “liberated” the Russian peasants in such wise that *more than one-fifth* of the peasant land was lopped off for the benefit of the landlords. For their own peasant lands drenched by their sweat and blood the peasants were compelled to pay a compensation, *i.e.*, a *tribute* to yesterday’s slave holders. Hundreds of millions of rubles of this tribute to the feudal lords were paid by the peasants who became more and more ruined. The landlords not only despoiled the peasants of their land, not only assigned to the peasants the worst, sometimes wholly unfit land but again and again caught them in their traps, *i.e.*, they staked out the land in such fashion that here the peasants were left without pasturage, there without meadows, here without woodlands, there without watering places. In the *majority* of provinces of Russia proper, the peasants even after the abolition of serfdom remained in the same state of everlasting bondage to the landlords as before. Even after their liberation the peasants remained the “lowest” estate, tax cattle, black sheep whom the authorities set up by the landlords jibed at, out of whom they wrung taxes, whom they whipped with birch-rods, whom they manhandled and affronted.

In no other country in the world did the peasantry after its “liberation” experience such ruination, such poverty, such humiliation and insult as in Russia.

But the fall of serfdom shook up the whole nation, roused it from its age-old sleep, taught it to seek a way out itself, itself to wage the struggle for complete freedom.

After the fall of serfdom in Russia the cities developed, mills and factories grew and railways were built with increasing rapidity. Capitalist Russia came to take the place of feudal Russia. In the place of the fixed, downtrodden feudal peasantry, grown fast to its village, believing in the priests, fearing “the authorities,” there grew up a new generation of peasants who had spent some time at trades away from home, who had been to the cities, who had learned something from the bitter experience of a roving life or of wage labor. In the big cities, in the mills and factories, the number of workers was steadily increasing. Gradually associations of workers for joint struggle against the capitalists and the government began to take shape. By waging this struggle the Russian working class helped the millions of peasants raise themselves, straighten out their

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backs, cast off the habits of feudal slaves.

In 1861 the peasants were only capable of “riots.” In the course of decades after 1861 the Russian revolutionaries, who heroically strove to rouse the people to struggle, remained alone and perished under the blows of the monarchy. By 1905 the Russian working class had strengthened and grown to manhood during the long years of strike struggle, during the long years of propaganda, agitational and organizational work which the Social-Democratic Party was conducting. And it led the whole nation, led the millions of the peasantry, *to revolution*.

The tsarist monarchy cracked under the Revolution of 1905. This revolution for the first time in Russia created, out of a multitude of *muzhiks* hard pressed by the cursed memory of serfdom, a people beginning to understand its rights, beginning to feel its strength. The Revolution of 1905 for the first time showed the tsarist government, the Russian landlords, the Russian bourgeoisie, that millions and tens of millions are becoming *citizens*, are becoming fighters, will no longer allow themselves to be rough-handled as though they were beasts of burden, rabble. Nor has the real liberation of the masses from oppression and arbitrary rule ever been attained anywhere in the world in any other way than by independent, heroic, class-conscious struggle of these masses themselves.

The Revolution of 1905 only cracked but did not destroy the monarchy. It is now taking vengeance upon the people. The landlord Duma oppresses and crushes under foot with still greater force. Discontent and indignation are again on the increase everywhere. The first step will be followed by the second. After the beginning of the struggle there will be a continuation. After the Revolution of 1905 a new, a second revolution is coming.

V. I. Lenin, “The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Fall of Serfdom” (written 1911), *Collected Works*, Russian edition, Vol. XV.

#### **4. The Rise of Bolshevism on the Foundation of Marxism; the International Significance of the Political Experience of Bolshevism.**

On the one hand, Bolshevism arose in 1903 on the very firm foundation of Marxian theory. And the correctness of this – and only this – revolutionary theory has been proved not only by the

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experience of all countries during the entire nineteenth century but particularly by the experience of the wanderings and vacillations, the mistakes and disappointments of revolutionary thought in Russia. For almost half a century – approximately between the forties and nineties of last century – advanced thinkers in Russia, under the oppression of an unprecedented, savage and reactionary tsarism, sought eagerly for the correct revolutionary theory, following each and every “last word” in Europe and America in this sphere with astonishing diligence and thoroughness. Russia achieved Marxism, as the only correct revolutionary theory, virtually through *suffering* a half-century of unprecedented torments and sacrifice, of unprecedented revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, painstaking search and study, testing in practice, disappointments, checking, and comparison with European experience. Thanks to the emigration enforced by tsarism, revolutionary Russia, in the second half of the nineteenth century, possessed such a wealth of international connections, and such excellent information about world forms and theories of the revolutionary movement as no other country in the world possessed.

On the other hand, having arisen on this granite theoretical foundation, Bolshevism passed through fifteen years (1903- 1917) of practical history which, in wealth of experience, has had no equal anywhere else in the world. For no other country during these fifteen years had anything even approximating this revolutionary experience, this rapid and varied succession of different forms of the movement – legal and illegal, peaceful and stormy, open and underground, small circles and mass movements, parliamentary and terrorist. In no other country was there concentrated during so short a period of time such a wealth of forms, shades and methods of struggle involving *all* classes of modern society, and, moreover, of a struggle which, owing to the backwardness of the country and the heavy yoke of tsarism, was maturing with exceptional rapidity and assimilating most eagerly and successfully the corresponding “last word” of American and European political experience.

V. I. Lenin, “*Left-Wing*” *Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, Chap. II, pp. 11-12.



### III. LENINISM AS A NEW STAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARXISM; THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF LENINISM BY STALIN

#### 1. Stalin on Lenin's Contribution to Marxism

I think that Lenin “added” no “new principles” to Marxism nor did Lenin abolish any of the “old” principles of Marxism. Lenin always was and remained a loyal and consistent pupil of Marx and Engels, and wholly and entirely based himself on the principles of Marxism. But Lenin did not merely carry out the doctrines of Marx and Engels. He developed these doctrines further. What does that mean? It means that he developed the doctrines of Marx and Engels in accordance with the new conditions of development, with the new phase of capitalism, with imperialism. This means that in developing further the doctrines of Marx in the new conditions of the class struggle, Lenin contributed to the general treasury of Marxism something new as compared with what was created by Marx and Engels and with what they could create in the pre-imperialist period of capitalism. Moreover, Lenin's contribution to Marxism is based wholly and entirely on the principles laid down by Marx and Engels. In that sense we speak of Leninism as Marxism of the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolutions. Here, for example, are a number of questions in the sphere of which Lenin contributed something new in developing further the doctrines of Marx:

First: the question of monopolistic capitalism – of imperialism as the new phase of capitalism. In *Capital* Marx and Engels analyzed the basis of capitalism. But Marx and Engels lived in the pre-monopolistic period of capitalism, in the period of the smooth evolution of capitalism and its “peaceful” expansion throughout the whole world. This old phase of capitalism came to a close towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, when Marx and Engels had already passed away. Clearly Marx and Engels could only guess at the new conditions of the development of capitalism which arose out of the new phase of capitalism which succeeded the old phase. In the imperialistic, monopolistic phase of development the smooth evolution of capitalism gave way to spasmodic, cataclysmic development, the unevenness of development and the contradictions of capitalism emerged with particular force; the struggle for markets and spheres

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for the investment of capital conducted amidst conditions of extreme unevenness of development made periodical imperialist wars for a periodical redistribution of the world and of spheres of influence inevitable. The service Lenin rendered, and, consequently, his new contribution, was that on the basis of the main postulates enunciated in *Capital* he made a fundamental Marxian analysis of imperialism as the final phase of capitalism, he exposed its ulcers and the conditions of its inevitable doom. On the basis of this analysis arose Lenin's well-known postulate that the conditions of imperialism made possible the victory of socialism in separate capitalist countries.

Second: The question of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The fundamental idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the political domination of the proletariat and as a method of overthrowing the reign of capital by violence was created by Marx and Engels. Lenin's new contribution in this field was that (a) utilizing the experience of the Paris Commune and the Russian Revolution, he discovered the Soviet form of government as the state form of the dictatorship of the proletariat; (b) he deciphered the formula of the dictatorship of the proletariat from the point of view of the problem of the allies of the proletariat, and defined the dictatorship of the proletariat as a special form of class alliance between the proletariat, which is the leader, and the exploited masses of the non-proletarian classes (the peasantry, etc.) who are led; (c) he particularly emphasized the fact that the dictatorship of the proletariat is a higher type of democracy in class society, *i.e.*, *proletarian* democracy, which expresses the interest of the majority (the exploited) as against capitalist democracy which expresses the interests of the minority (the exploiters.)

Third: the question of the forms and methods of the successful building up of socialism in the period of dictatorship of the proletariat, in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism in a country encircled by capitalist states. Marx and Engels regarded the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a more or less prolonged period replete with revolutionary conflicts and civil wars in the course of which the proletariat in power would take the economic, political, cultural and organizational measures necessary for the purpose of establishing a new socialist society, a society without classes and without a state, in place of the old capitalist society. Lenin wholly and entirely based himself on these

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fundamental postulates of Marx and Engels. Lenin's new contribution in this field was: (a) he proved that it was possible to construct complete socialist society in a land of the dictatorship of the proletariat encircled by imperialist states provided the country is not crushed by the military intervention of the surrounding capitalist states; (b) he outlined the concrete path of economic policy (the "New Economic Policy") by which the proletariat, being in command of the economic key positions (industry, land, transport, the banks, etc.), links up socialized industry with agriculture ("linking up industry with peasant agriculture") and thus leads the whole of national economy towards socialism; (c) he outlined the concrete channels by which the bulk of the peasantry is gradually brought into the line of socialist construction through the medium of the cooperative societies, which, in the hands of the proletarian dictatorship, represent a powerful instrument for the transformation of petty-peasant economy and for the reeducation of the main masses of the peasantry in the spirit of socialism.

Fourth: the question of the hegemony of the proletariat in revolution, in all popular revolutions – in the revolution against tsarism as well as in the revolution against capitalism. Marx and Engels presented the main outlines of the idea of the hegemony of the proletariat. Lenin's new contribution in this field was that he further developed and expanded these outlines into a symmetrical system of the hegemony of the proletariat, into a symmetrical system of proletarian leadership of the masses of the toilers in town and country not only in the fight for the overthrow of tsarism and capitalism, but also in the work of building up socialism under the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is well known that, thanks to Lenin and his Party, the idea of the hegemony of the proletariat was skillfully applied in Russia. This, in passing, explains why the revolution in Russia brought the proletariat to power. In previous revolutions it usually happened that the workers did all the fighting at the barricades, shed their blood and overthrew the old order, but power passed into the hands of the bourgeoisie, which oppressed and exploited the workers. That was the case in England and in France. That was the case in Germany. In Russia, however, things took a different turn. In Russia, the workers did not merely represent the shock troops of the revolution. While serving as the shock troops of the revolution, the Russian proletariat at the same time strove for hegemony, for the political leadership of all the

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exploited masses of town and country, rallying them around itself, detaching them from the bourgeoisie and politically isolating the bourgeoisie. Being the leader of the exploited masses, the Russian proletariat all the time waged a fight to seize power in its own hands and utilize it in its own interests against the bourgeoisie and against capitalism. This explains why every powerful outbreak of the revolution in Russia, as in October 1905, and in February 1917, gave rise to Soviets of Workers' Deputies as the embryo of the new apparatus of power – the function of which would be to crush the bourgeoisie – as against the bourgeois parliament, the old apparatus of power – the function of which was to crush the proletariat. On two occasions the bourgeoisie in Russia tried to restore the bourgeois parliament and put an end to the Soviets: In August 1917, at the time of the “Preliminary Parliament” prior to the capture of power by the Bolsheviks, and in January 1918, at the time of the “Constituent Assembly” after power had been seized by the proletariat. On both occasions these efforts failed. Why? Because the bourgeoisie was already politically isolated. The vast masses of the toilers regarded the proletariat as the sole leader of the revolution and the soviets had already been tried and tested by the masses as their own workers' government. For the proletariat to have replaced these soviets by a bourgeois parliament would have been tantamount to committing suicide. It is not surprising, therefore, that bourgeois parliamentarism did not take root in Russia. That is why the revolution in Russia led to the establishment of the rule of the proletariat. These were the results of the application of the Leninist system of the hegemony of the proletariat in revolution.

Fifth: the national and colonial question. In analyzing the events in Ireland, India, China and the Central European countries like Poland and Hungary, in their time Marx and Engels developed the basic, initial ideas of the national and colonial question. In his works Lenin based himself on these ideas. Lenin's new contribution in this field was: (a) that he gathered these ideas into one symmetrical system of views on national and colonial revolutions in the epoch of imperialism; (b) that he connected the national and colonial question with the question of overthrowing imperialism, and (c) that he declared the national and colonial question to be a component part of the general question of international proletarian revolution.

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Finally: the question of the Party of the proletariat. Marx and Engels gave the main outlines of the idea of the Party as being the vanguard of the proletariat, without which (the Party) the proletariat could not achieve its emancipation, could not capture power or reconstruct capitalist society. Lenin's new contribution to this theory was that he developed these outlines further and applied them to the new conditions of the proletarian struggle in the period of imperialism and showed: (a) that the Party is a higher form of the class organization of the proletariat as compared with the other forms of proletarian organization (labor unions, cooperative societies, state organization) and, moreover, its function was to generalize and direct the work of these organizations; (b) that the dictatorship of the proletariat may be realized only through the Party as its directing force; (c) that the dictatorship of the proletariat can be complete only if it is led by a single party, the Communist Party, which does not and must not share leadership with any other party; and (d) that without iron discipline in the Party, the tasks of the dictatorship of the proletariat to crush the exploiters and to transform class society into socialist society cannot be fulfilled.

This, in the main, is the new contribution which Lenin made in his works; he developed and made more concrete the doctrines of Marx in a manner applicable to the new conditions of the proletarian struggle in the period of imperialism.

That is why we say that Leninism is Marxism of the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolutions.

From this it is clear that Leninism cannot be separated from Marxism, still less can it be contrasted with Marxism.

The question submitted by the delegation goes on to ask:

“Would it be correct to say that Lenin believed in ‘constructive revolution’ whereas Marx was more inclined to await the culmination of the development of economic forces?” I think it would be absolutely incorrect to say that. I think that every popular revolution, if it is really a popular revolution, is a constructive revolution; for it breaks up the old system and creates a new one. Of course, there is nothing constructive in such revolutions (if we can call them that) as take place, let us say, in Albania in the form of toy “rebellions” of one tribe against another. But Marxists never regarded such toy “rebellions” as revolutions. Apparently, it is not such “rebellions” that we are discussing, but mass popular revolutions, the rising of oppressed classes against oppressing

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classes. Such a revolution cannot but be constructive. Marx and Lenin stood for such a revolution, and only for such a revolution. It must be added, of course, that such a revolution cannot arise under all conditions; it can unfold itself only under certain favorable economic and political conditions.

Joseph Stalin, "Interview with the First American Labor Delegation in Russia," *Leninism*, Vol. II, pp. 43-48.

### **2. The Development of Marxism by Lenin on the Basis of the New Historical Experience**

Lenin's greatness as successor of Marx and Engels consists precisely in the fact that he was never a slave to the letter in Marxism. In his research work he followed the precept of Marx who had repeatedly said that Marxism is not a dogma but a guide to action. Lenin knew this and, differentiating sharply between the letter and the essence of Marxism, never considered Marxism a dogma but tried to apply Marxism as the principal method in the new conditions of capitalist development. Lenin's greatness consists precisely in the fact that he openly and honestly, without hesitation, raised the question of the necessity of a new formula, of the possibility of victory of the proletarian revolution in separate countries, unafraid that the opportunists of the whole world would cling to the old formula, while striving to conceal their opportunist doings by using the names of Marx and Engels.

On the other hand, it would be strange to demand of Marx and Engels, no matter how brilliant these thinkers were, that 50-60 years before monopolistic capitalism developed they should have foreseen with precision all the possibilities of the class struggle of the proletariat that have made their appearance in the period of monopolistic imperialist capitalism.

And this is not the first instance where Lenin, taking Marx's method as his point of departure, continues the cause of Marx and Engels without clinging to the letter of Marxism. I have in mind a second, analogous instance, *viz.*, the instance of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is well known that on this question Marx expressed the thought that the dictatorship of the proletariat as the demolition of the old state apparatus and the creation of a new apparatus, of a new proletarian state, is a necessary stage of the development to socialism in the countries on the continent,

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permitting of an exception for Great Britain and America where, according to Marx's statement, militarism and bureaucracy were poorly developed or not developed at all and where therefore another path was possible, the "peaceful" path of transition to socialism. This was absolutely correct in the seventies.

(Ryazanov: Even then it was not correct.)

I think that in the seventies when militarism was not as greatly developed in Great Britain and America as it subsequently was this thesis was absolutely correct. You might convince yourselves of the correctness of this thesis by reference to a certain chapter of Lenin's booklet entitled "On the Food Tax" where Lenin considers it possible for socialism to have developed in Great Britain in the seventies by way of an agreement between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in a country where the proletariat constitutes a majority, where the bourgeoisie was accustomed to make compromises, where militarism was weak, where the bureaucracy was weak. But this thesis, while being correct for the seventies of last century, became incorrect after the nineteenth century, in the period of imperialism, when Great Britain has become no less bureaucratic and no less if not more militaristic than any country on the continent. In this connection Lenin says in his pamphlet, *State and Revolution*, that Marx's restriction to the continent loses its base, now that new conditions have come into being which vitiate the exception that had been allowed in the case of Great Britain.

Lenin's greatness consists precisely in the fact that he did not permit himself to be held captive by the letter, that he knew how to grasp the essence of Marxism and, using it as his starting point, to develop the theses of Marx and Engels further.

Joseph Stalin, "Concerning the Social-Democratic Deviation in Our Party," *On the Opposition*, 1926, pp. 338-340, Russian edition.

### **3. Stalin – Lenin's Great Comrade-in-Arms and Continuer of His Teachings**

To Stalin, who is devoting his whole strength, energy and knowledge to the cause of the working class.

Dear Friend and Comrade-in-Arms:

The Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of the Leninist Party send their heartfelt greetings to you, the best

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Leninist, the oldest member of the Central Committee and its Politburo.

Of the fifty years of your life, thirty odd years of energetic Bolshevik activity are inseparably bound up with the heroic struggle of our Party and the victories of Leninism.

Ever since the first days of your work as a professional revolutionary who under the guidance of Lenin had built the first nuclei of the Bolshevik organization, you have proven yourself to be a true disciple, the best disciple of Lenin. Of all the direct disciples and comrades-in-arms of Lenin, you have turned out to be the most steadfast and a Leninist consistent to the end. Not once during the whole duration of your activity did you deviate from Lenin either in your theoretical positions concerning questions of principle or anywhere in your practical work.

The stern years of underground life, the cruel persecutions of tsarism, prison and exile, have hardened your will of steel and your revolutionary steadfastness.

During the difficult years of defeats and in the years of upsurge as well, you always remained firm and unfaltering, always together with Lenin; under his leadership you carried out a consistent Bolshevik line, with all decisiveness you came out against opportunism, intellectuals' phrase-mongering, dejection, vacillation and open renegacy.

During the triumphant days of the great October you, in contrast with other disciples of Lenin, proved to be the first, the nearest and truest of his assistants, having been the most prominent organizer of the October victory.

During the difficult days of Brest, when the fate of the Revolution was being decided, you together with Lenin firmly defended the Bolshevik strategy against the opportunists who split the Party, who sapped Bolshevik unity under the flag of petty-bourgeois Leftism.

In the years of the civil war the Party sent you to organize victory at the most decisive fronts. Your name is connected with the most famous victories of our Red Army.

Death has wrested from our midst our greatest leader and teacher, Comrade Lenin, precisely during the most difficult years of the restoration of national economy. The Party experienced arduous days. Trotskyism, inimical to Leninism, attacked the Party, making attempts to control the Party leadership and divert it from the



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Leninist path. Even during the first skirmish with the enemies of Leninism, after Lenin's death, the Central Committee, in the struggle for Leninist Party unity, rallied around you as the truest and best tested successor of Lenin's cause.

The Party achieved a splendid victory over Trotskyism and over the new Zinoviev-Kamenev opposition which had falsely covered itself with the flag of Leninism while in fact it was the direct agency of counter-revolutionary Trotskyism.

Just as in 1923 you had boldly unmasked the anti-Party, Menshevik essence of Trotskyism, so likewise in 1928 you revealed the anti-Party, anti-proletarian, kulak essence of the Right deviation.

Precisely for this reason the Central Committee of the Party was able to rally around itself the millions of the masses, was able successfully to defeat the Right deviation and to carry out in deeds, in practice, the general Leninist line.

The Bolshevik Party has led the country through the great difficulties of the restoration and reconstruction period to the path of grand and sweeping socialist construction. The whirlwind tempo at which the industrialization of the country and the socialist reconstruction of agriculture are developing strikingly confirms the Leninist theory of the possibility of building socialism in our country, a theory which you successfully defended in the struggle against petty-bourgeois Trotskyism.

The great successes attained by the Party in socialist construction are inseparably connected with your name, with your stubborn, irreconcilable struggle for the general line of the Party.

Your name is inseparably connected with the tempo, unheard-of in the history of mankind, at which the country is being industrialized, with the decided transition of the countryside to the path of collective and large-scale socialist economy, with the bold attack upon the kulak, with the development of socialist competition and self-criticism. You more than any one else have combined a profound theoretical knowledge of Leninism with the ability boldly to bring it into life at the various stages of the revolutionary struggle.

This has helped the Party successfully and with the least expenditure of energy and loss of time to cope with the very difficult historical tasks, this has helped the Party to preserve real Leninist unity in its ranks.

You fought for Party unity like a real Leninist, not at the price

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of concessions to opportunism, but by bold, irreconcilable struggle against every manifestation of opportunism.

This is the very reason why the pitiful attempts of all the enemies of the Party to place you in opposition to the Central Committee suffered shipwreck.

The enemies of Leninism have had more than one occasion to convince themselves that the Central Committee and Stalin are one inseparable Leninist whole.

This day will rally the million-headed Party still more closely around the Central Committee, will rally the many millions of the proletariat and of the toilers around the Leninist general line of the Party for which you fought and continue to fight and for which you give away all your strength, energy and knowledge.

The millions of the proletariat can rest assured that the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party which has in its ranks a leader like Stalin will lead the country to the complete construction of socialism and to the victory of the proletarian revolution throughout the whole world.

Long Live the Leninist Bolshevik Party!

Long Live Comrade Stalin, the Iron Soldier of the Revolution!

THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND  
CENTRAL CONTROL COMMISSION OF THE  
C.P.S.U.

Greetings of the Central Committee and of the Central Control Commission of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on the Fiftieth Birthday of Stalin, 1929.

To the Leader of the Class Struggle:

Dear Comrade Stalin:

The Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International sends you its warmest Bolshevik greetings on the fiftieth anniversary of your birth.

The Presidium of the E.C.C.I. considers it its duty to draw the attention of the whole Communist International to the exceptional importance of your leading participation in the world communist movement.

The Presidium of the E.C.C.I. welcomes in you the best tested representative of the old Bolshevik guard, the leader of the Leninist Party and the leader of the Communist International. At all critical and turning points of the revolution you firmly stood upon your

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militant Leninist post. The Communist International especially values the fact that after the death of Lenin you were the truest and staunchest exponent of the Leninist doctrine and of the glorious traditions of Bolshevism. In the most difficult and responsible days you helped the C.P.S.U. and the Comintern correctly and successfully to apply the dialectical method of the Leninist class strategy and tactics.

At the threshold of a new revolutionary upsurge your leadership is invaluable in determining the tasks of the international proletariat, in the further socialist offensive in the U.S.S.R. and in preparing the offensive of the proletariat of the West and of the oppressed peoples of the colonies against the decisive positions of imperialism.

With your active participation the Comintern delivered a crushing blow to the “Left” and Right opportunists who had retreated before the difficulties of the struggle. The Presidium of the E.C.C.I. puts on record the historic services you rendered in exposing the Trotskyist legend concerning the impossibility of building socialism in the U.S.S.R. and their slander concerning the national narrow-mindedness of the C.P.S.U. The international proletariat has been convinced by facts of the victorious construction of socialism in the U.S.S.R. which has become the most powerful lever of the world proletarian revolution. Your irreconcilable struggle against the policy of capitulation of the avowedly Right opportunists was a most necessary precondition of these successes. The labor enthusiasm and revolutionary initiative of the toiling masses which have assured the tremendous achievements of the proletarian dictatorship have found in you a kindling inspirer.

The Presidium of the E.C.C.I. also notes that under your direct and leading participation the Sixth Congress of the Comintern forged the invincible weapon of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat – the program of world communism.

In sending you our best wishes we express our firm conviction that the approaching victory of the world proletariat will inseparably be linked with your tried Leninist leadership.

THE PRESIDUM OF THE E.C.C.I.

Greetings of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International on the Fiftieth Birthday of Stalin, 1929.

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The theory of Marxism-Leninism is being concretized and developed by Stalin, the comrade-in-arms and disciple of Lenin, the best continuer of his cause.

Stalin developed the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of the *proletarian dictatorship*, worked out the question of the forms of the class struggle of the proletariat at the various stages of socialist construction, of the ways of destroying the capitalist elements and classes in general. Stalin concretized the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of the transitional period from capitalism to communism. Stalin developed the doctrine of Lenin *concerning the possibility of building socialism in our country*. On this basis Stalin developed the general plan of the offensive of socialism on the entire front, concretized the methods, forms and ways of building classless, socialist society.

Stalin developed the Leninist doctrine of *industrialization* as a condition of the victory of socialism in our country. Stalin made a most valuable contribution to Marxist-Leninist theory by working out the question of the concrete ways of the *socialist remolding of the peasantry* under the leadership of the proletariat, the question of the production bond,<sup>1</sup> of the conditions and methods of *collectivizing agriculture* and liquidating the kulaks as a class on the basis of mass collectivization.

Stalin developed the Marxist-Leninist theory in the *national and colonial question* as part of the general question of the international revolution.

Stalin developed the doctrine of Lenin *concerning the Party and its role in the system of the proletarian dictatorship*; he brilliantly worked out the *strategy and tactics* of the proletarian

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<sup>1</sup> From the introduction of the New Economic Policy in 1921 to the beginning of the first Five-Year Plan period, the principal form of intercourse between town and country was the bond (*smychka*) based on trade, when in exchange for agricultural produce the industries supplied the peasants with goods mainly for the satisfaction of their personal needs (cloth, boots, kerosene, sugar, etc.).

With the beginning of the first Five-Year Plan the main form of intercourse between town and country became the *bond based on production*, i.e., the working class directs its efforts in production towards serving the production requirements of the countryside, which it supplies with agricultural machinery, tractors, fertilizers, etc. — Ed.

## HISTORICAL ROOTS OF LENINISM

Party. Stalin developed the Leninist analysis of the social and ideological roots of *opportunism*, having disclosed the peculiar features of its manifestations at the various stages of the class struggle.

On the basis of Lenin's doctrine of imperialism Stalin made an accurate analysis of the *struggle of the two systems* in the conditions of the general crisis of capitalism and the growing international proletarian revolution.

With Leninist firmness and irreconcilability Stalin guides the struggle on two fronts against every manifestation of opportunism within the Party or the Communist International, against Trotskyism, which later became counter-revolutionary, and against Right opportunism, the product of the counter-revolutionary kulak resistance to the victorious proletariat. As a theoretician and leader of the Party and the Communist International, Stalin, by his entire activity, affords a splendid example of the union of revolutionary theory and practice, and enriches *materialist dialectics*, the revolutionary method of Marxism-Leninism. *Stalin's name is on a par with the names of the great theoreticians and leaders of the world proletariat, Marx, Engels and Lenin.*

Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, *Karl Marx, The Fiftieth Anniversary of his Death*, 1933.

## Part Two

### METHOD AND THEORY

#### I. FOUNDATIONS AND ESSENCE OF THE METHOD OF LENINISM

##### 1. The Method of Leninism Is Irreconcilably Hostile to the Theory and Method of the Second International

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 capitalist development, 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,

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practical politics, parliamentary diplomacy and parliamentary scheming. For the sake of appearances, of course, “revolutionary” resolutions and slogans were passed only to be pigeon-holed.

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 armory 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 armory 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 inadequately armed or even completely weaponless in future revolutionary battles.

The honor 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.

Joseph Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism*, Chap. II, pp. 18-19.

### **2. Principal Traits of the Method of Leninism and the Exposure of the Dogmas of the Second International**

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

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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 *reorganized* 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 favorable 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 favorite 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



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struggle smashed this obsolete dogma?

*Second dogma:* The proletariat cannot retain power if it does not possess adequate, educated administrative cadres ready for and capable of organizing 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, replied Lenin. But why not do it this way: first seize power, create favorable 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 Engels' 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 forms of the class struggle of the proletariat. Excellent, reply the Leninists. But, in the first place, Engels did not criticize any and every general strike. He criticized 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 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 organization of the extra-parliamentary struggle of the proletariat, that under the capitalist system the essential questions of the labor 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 struggle 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 parlia-

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mentary 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 mobilizing and organizing 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 the “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 questions 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 realize 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<sup>1</sup> at which they threatened the imperialists with the thunders of insurrection if they decided to commence war, 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

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<sup>1</sup> The extraordinary Congress, held at Basle, Switzerland, on November 24 and 25, 1912, was called as a protest against the Balkan War and the menace of a general European war. The Manifesto issued by the Congress, strongly emphasizing the imperialist character of the coming war, is printed in the Appendix of Vol. XVIII of Lenin’s *Collected Works*. – Ed.

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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 is advocating a characteristically petty-bourgeois, philistine policy by pretending... that *putting forward a slogan* alters the position. The entire history of bourgeois democracy refutes this illusion; the bourgeois democrats have always advanced, and still advance, all sorts of attractive “slogans” in order to deceive the people. The point is *to test* their sincerity, to compare their words with their *deeds*, not to be satisfied with idealistic charlatan *phrases*, but to get down to class reality. (*The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky*, Chap. VII.)

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 fulfills *in practice* its obligations towards its *class* and towards the toiling *masses*. To admit a mistake openly, to disclose its reasons, to analyze 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*. (“*Left-Wing*” *Communism*, Chap. VII.)

Some say that the exposure of its own mistakes and self-

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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 Back*, 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. (Lenin, “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back,” *Selected Works*, Vol. II, p. 410.)

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

The contents of Lenin’s method were already, in substance, 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.

Joseph Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism*, Chap. II, pp. 20-25.

### **3. Unity of Theory and Practice as the Decisive Feature of the Revolutionary Method of Leninism**

The socialist intelligentsia can expect to perform fruitful work only when it abandons illusions and begins to seek support in the actual and not the desired development of Russia, in the actual and not the possible social and economic relationships. Moreover, its *theoretical* work should be directed towards *the concrete study of*

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*all forms of economic antagonisms in Russia, the study of all their connections and the sequence of development; it must expose these antagonisms wherever they have been concealed by political history, by the peculiarities of legal systems and by established theoretical prejudices. It must present a complete picture of our conditions as a definite system of relationships in production and show that the exploitation and expropriation of the toilers are inevitable under this system, and point to the way out of this system that has been indicated by economic development.*

This theory, based on a detailed study of Russian history and conditions, must meet the requirements of the proletariat – and if it satisfies the requirements of science, then the awakening, protesting thoughts of the proletariat will inevitably guide this thought in the channels of Social-Democracy. The more the working out of this theory advances, the more rapidly will Social-Democracy grow, because the most cunning guardians of the present order will be impotent to prevent the awakening of the thoughts of the proletariat, for this very order necessarily and inevitably leads to the intensified expropriation of the producers, to the continuous growth of the proletariat and of its reserve army of unemployed – simultaneously with the increase in social wealth, with the enormous growth of productive forces and the socialization of labor by capitalism. Although a great deal has yet to be done to work out this theory, the Socialists will certainly fulfill this task, for this is assured by the extent to which materialism, the only really scientific method which demands that every program shall be a precise formulation of an actual process, is spread among them; it is assured by the success which Social-Democracy, which has adopted these ideas, has achieved – a success which has so stirred our liberals and democrats that, as a certain Marxist has put it, their journals have ceased to be dull.

By emphasizing the necessity, the importance and the immensity of the theoretical work Social-Democrats must carry on, I do not in the least wish to suggest that this work must take precedence over *practical work*;<sup>1</sup> still less do I suggest that the latter be postponed

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1 On the contrary, the practical work of propaganda and agitation must always take precedence because: (1) theoretical work only provides the replies to the problems which practical work raises, and (2) for reasons over which they have no control, Social-Democrats are too often com-

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until the former is finished. Only those who admire the “subjective method in sociology” and the followers of utopian socialism could arrive at such a conclusion. Of course, if the task of Socialists is presumed to be to seek “other (than the actual) paths of development” for the country, then, naturally, practical work will become possible only when some genius of a philosopher will have discovered these “other paths”; on the other hand, the discovery and indication of these paths will mark the close of theoretical work, and the work of those who are to direct the “fatherland” along the “newly discovered” “other paths” will commence. The position is altogether different when the task of the Socialists is understood to mean that they must be the ideological leaders of the proletariat in its genuine struggle against real enemies, who stand on the real path of present social and economic development. In these circumstances theoretical and practical work merge into a single task, which the veteran German Social-Democrat Liebknecht aptly described as: *Studieren, propagandieren, organisieren*.<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible to be an ideological leader without performing the above-mentioned theoretical work, just as it is impossible to be one without directing this work to meet the requirements of the cause, without propagating the deductions drawn from this theory among the workers and helping to organize them.

Presenting the task in this way will guard Social-Democracy against the defects from which groups of Socialists frequently suffer, *viz.*, dogmatism and sectarianism.

There can be no dogmatism where the supreme and sole criterion of a doctrine is – whether or not it corresponds to the actual process of social and economic development; there can be no sectarianism when the task undertaken is to assist to organize the proletariat, when, therefore, the role of the “intelligentsia” is reduced to the task of making special leaders from among the intellectuals unnecessary.

V. I. Lenin, “What ‘The Friends of the People’ Are and How They Fight Against the Social-Democrats,” *Selected Works*, Vol. I, pp. 450-452.

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pelled to confine themselves to theoretical work not to attach the highest value to every moment they can give to practical work whenever the opportunity for this occurs.

1 To study, to propagandize, to organize. – *Ed.*

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....What then do we need in order to learn Communism? What must we select out of the sum total of knowledge in order to acquire the knowledge of Communism? Here we are threatened by a whole series of dangers which arise every time the task of learning Communism is presented incorrectly or when it was understood too one-sidedly.

Naturally, the first thing that enters one's mind is that learning Communism means to assimilate the sum of knowledge that is contained in Communist text-books, pamphlets, and larger works. But such a definition of the study of Communism would be too crude and inadequate. If studying Communism merely meant the assimilation of what is expounded in Communist works, books and pamphlets, we could very easily get Communist bookworms and brag-garts. But this would only cause us a considerable amount of harm, for these people, having read and acquired what is written in Communist books and pamphlets, would be incapable of combining all this knowledge, and would not be able to act as Communism really demands.

One of the greatest evils and misfortunes left to us by the old capitalist society is the complete isolation of books from practical life; for we had books in which everything was depicted in the most rosy hues, but in the majority of cases these books embodied most repulsive hypocritical lies which gave us a false picture of Communist society. Therefore, the mere assimilation of what is written in books about Communism would be in the highest degree wrong. In our speeches and articles nowadays we find no mere repetition of what was formerly written about Communism, because the descriptions are connected with our everyday work in all its aspects. Without work, without struggle, a book knowledge of Communism gained from Communist pamphlets and books is worth nothing, for it would continue the old gap between theory and practice, the old gap which constituted the most repulsive feature of the old bourgeois society.

It would be still more dangerous if we were to confine ourselves to the mere assimilation of Communist slogans. Had we not realized this danger in time and had we not directed all our efforts towards removing it, the half-million or million young men and women, who, after such a study of Communism, would call themselves Communists, would only bring great harm to the cause of Communism.

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V. I. Lenin, "Speech at the Third All-Russian Congress of the Russian Young Communist League," *Collected Works*, Vol. XXV; also *Lenin Speaks to the Youth*, pp. 6-7.

### 4. Testing a Policy Not by Slogans But by Actions

#### *A. Testing the Party and Leaders by Their Deeds and not by Their Declarations*

Slutski<sup>1</sup> asserts that Lenin (the Bolsheviks) did not pursue a line in the direction of a rupture, of a split with the opportunists of German Social-Democracy, with the opportunists of the Second International of the pre-war period. You wish to enter into discussion against this Trotskyist thesis of Slutski's? But what is there to discuss in that? Is it not plain that Slutski is simply slandering Lenin, slandering the Bolsheviks? Slander must be branded, not transformed into a subject for discussion.

Every Bolshevik, if he is truly a Bolshevik, knows that long before the war, approximately in 1903-04, when the Bolshevik group acquired organizational form in Russia and when the Lefts in German Social-Democracy first made themselves felt, Lenin took his course for a rupture, for a split with the opportunists here in the Russian Social-Democratic Party, and over there, in the Second International, particularly in German Social-Democracy....

Slutski asserts that so far a sufficient quantity of official documents has not been found to prove Lenin's (the Bolsheviks') determined and relentless struggle against centrism. He employs this bureaucratic thesis as an irrefutable argument in favor of the postulate that Lenin (the Bolsheviks) underestimated the danger of centrism in the Second International. And you set about arguing against this nonsense, against this rascally pettifogging. But what is there, properly speaking, to discuss? Is it not plain, without discussion, that by his talk about documents Slutski is trying to cover up the wretchedness and falsity of his so-called position?

Slutski regards the Party documents now available as insufficient. Why? On what grounds? Are the documents, known to every one, regarding the Second International, as well as the internal Party

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1 The author of the article in *Proletarskaya Revolyutsia (Proletarian Revolution)* to which Stalin replied in a letter to the editors of the magazine. This is an excerpt from Stalin's letter. — Ed.



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struggle in Russian Social-Democracy, not sufficient to demonstrate plainly the revolutionary irreconcilability of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in their struggle against the opportunists and the centrists? Is Slutski at all acquainted with these documents? What other documents does he need?

Let us suppose that in addition to the documents already known a mass of other documents will be found, in the shape of, for example, resolutions of the Bolsheviks again urging the necessity for wiping out centrism. Does that mean that the mere presence of paper documents is sufficient to demonstrate the real revolutionary character and real relentlessness of the Bolsheviks toward centrism? Who, besides hopeless bureaucrats, can rely on paper documents alone? Who, besides archive rats, does not understand that the Party and its leaders must be tested first of all by their *deeds* and not only by their declarations? History knows not a few Socialists who readily signed any revolutionary resolution in order to escape their annoying critics. But that does not mean that they *carried these resolutions into effect*. History knows further not a few Socialists who, foaming at the mouth, called upon the workers' parties of *other countries* to perform the most revolutionary actions imaginable. But that does not mean that they did not in their own party, or in their own country, *shrink* from fighting their *own* opportunists, their *own bourgeoisie*. Is not that why Lenin taught us to test revolutionary parties, tendencies and leaders, not by their declarations and resolutions, but by their *deeds*?

Is it not plain that if Slutski really wished to test the irreconcilability of Lenin's and the Bolsheviks' attitude toward centrism, he should have taken as the foundation of his article, not separate documents and two or three personal letters, but their *deeds*, their *history*, their *acts*? Did we not have opportunists, centrists in our Russian Social-Democracy? Did not the Bolsheviks wage a determined and relentless struggle against all these tendencies? Were not these tendencies bound up in ideas and organization with the opportunists and centrists in the West? Did not the Bolsheviks rout the opportunists and centrists as no other Left-Wing group routed them anywhere else in the world? After all that, how can any one say that Lenin and the Bolsheviks underestimated the danger of centrism? Why did Slutski ignore these facts which have decisive significance in characterizing the Bolsheviks? Why did he not make use of the more reliable method of Lenin and the Bolsheviks and test them by

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their deeds, by their acts? Why did he prefer the less reliable method of rummaging among casually collected papers? Because the more reliable method of testing the Bolsheviks by their deeds would in a flash have turned Slutski's position upside down.

Because the more reliable method of testing the Bolsheviks by their deeds would have shown that the Bolsheviks are the *only* revolutionary organization in the world which has utterly destroyed its opportunists and centrists and driven them out of its Party.

Because the real deeds and the real history of the Bolsheviks would have shown that Slutski's teachers, the Trotskyists, were the *principal and fundamental* group which planted centrism in Russia and for this purpose created a special organization as the hotbed of centrism, *viz.*, the August *bloc*.

Because the testing of the Bolsheviks by their deeds would have exposed Slutski once and for all as a falsifier of the history of our Party, as one who is trying to cover up the centrism of pre-war Trotskyism by the slanderous accusations against Lenin and the Bolsheviks of underestimating the danger of centrism.

That, comrade editors, is how matters stand with Slutski and his article.

You see, the editors made a mistake in opening a discussion with a falsifier of the history of our Party.

Joseph Stalin, "Some Questions Concerning the History of Bolshevism," *Leninism*, Vol. II, pp. 447-456.

### *B. Method of the Second International: In Words – Revolutionary, in Practice – Defense of the Bourgeoisie*

In reality, the formal adherence of the opportunists to labor parties does not by any means remove the fact that, objectively, they are a political detachment of the bourgeoisie, that they are transmitters of its influence, its agents in the labor movement. When the opportunist Südekum,<sup>1</sup> of Herostratus<sup>2</sup> fame, strikingly demonstrated this social, class truth, many good people gasped with amazement. The French Socialists and Plekhanov pointed the finger of

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1 Prominent German Social-Democrat, during the World War an open chauvinist. – *Ed.*

2 Herostratus burned the temple of Artemis in Ephesus, 356 B.C., in order to perpetuate his name. – *Ed.*

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scorn at Südekum (although had Vandervelde, Sembat<sup>1</sup> or Plekhanov looked into a mirror they would have seen nobody but *Südekum*, with just a few different national traits). The members of the German Central Committee (*Vorstand*) who now praise Kautsky and are praised by Kautsky, hastened to declare, cautiously, modestly and politely (without naming Südekum), that they “did not agree” with Südekum’s line.

This is ridiculous, because in reality, in the practical politics of the German Social-Democratic Party, Südekum alone proved at the crucial moment to be stronger than a hundred Haases<sup>2</sup> and Kautskys (just as the *Nasha Zarya* alone is stronger than all the tendencies in the Brussels *bloc* which are afraid to split from it).

Why? Because behind Südekum there stand the bourgeoisie, the government and the General Staff of a Great Power. They support Südekum’s policy in a thousand ways, whereas the policy of his opponents is frustrated by all means, including prison and the firing squad. Südekum’s voice is broadcast by the bourgeois press in millions of copies of newspapers (so are the voices of Vandervelde, Sembat, Plekhanov), whereas the voices of his opponents *cannot* be heard in the openly published press because of the military censorship!

All agree that opportunism is not an accidental thing, not a sin, not a slip, not the treachery of individual persons, but the social product of a whole historical epoch. Not everybody, however, ponders over the full significance of this truth. Opportunism has been reared by legalism. The labor parties of the period between 1889 and 1914 had to utilize bourgeois legality. When the crisis came, they should have adopted illegal methods of work (but this could not be done without the greatest exertion of effort and determination, combined with a number of military ruses). A *single* Südekum was sufficient to prevent the adoption of illegal methods, because he had the whole of the “old world,” speaking in an historico-philosophical sense, behind him, because he, Südekum, has always

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1 Emile Vandervelde, reformist leader of the Belgian Socialist Party and of the Second International; Marcel Sembat, leader of the French Socialist Party, joined cabinet of “national defense” during the World War. — *Ed.*

2 Hugo Haase, a German Social-Democratic leader, held a vacillating position with regard to the World War. — *Ed.*

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betrayed and will always betray to the bourgeoisie all the military plans of its class enemy, speaking in the practical political sense.

It is a fact that the whole of the German Social-Democratic Party (and the same is true of the French and *other parties*) does *only that* which pleases Südekum, or which can be tolerated by Südekum. *Nothing else* can be done legally. Everything *honest*, everything really socialistic that is done in the German Social-Democratic Party, is done in opposition to its center, is done by *avoiding* its Central Committee and central organ, is done by *violating* organizational discipline, is done in a *factional* manner in the name of anonymous, new centers of a new party, as was the case, for instance, with the manifesto issued by the German Lefts and published in the *Berliner Tagwacht* on May 31 of this year. As a matter of fact a *new* party is growing up, gaining strength, and being organized, a real workers' party, a real revolutionary Social-Democratic Party, other than the old, rotten, national-liberal party of Legien, Südekum, Kautsky, Haase, Scheidemann and Co.<sup>1</sup>

It was, therefore, a profound historic truth that the opportunist "Monitor" blurted out when he said in the conservative *Preussische Jahrbücher* that it would be bad for the opportunists (*read: the bourgeoisie*) if present-day Social-Democracy moved *further to the Right* – because the workers would then desert it. The opportunists (and the bourgeoisie) need the Party as it is at present, a party *com-*

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1 What happened prior to the historic vote of August 4 is extremely characteristic. The official party has cast the cloak of bureaucratic hypocrisy over this event, saying that the majority had decided and that all had voted unanimously *for* the war. Strobel, in the magazine *Die Internationale*, however, unmasked this hypocrisy and told the truth. It appears that there were *two* groups in the Social-Democratic parliamentary faction, that each one came with its *ultimatum*, *i.e.*, with a factional decision, *i.e.*, with a decision meaning a split. One group, that of the opportunists, about thirty strong, decided to vote *for* and to do so under *all circumstances*; the other, a Left one, of fifteen men, decided – less resolutely – to vote *against*. When the "center" or the "Marsh" failed to take up a firm position, voted with the opportunist, the Lefts found themselves crushingly defeated and – they submitted! The talk about the "unity" of German Social-Democracy is sheer hypocrisy, which actually covers up the inevitable submission of the Lefts to the ultimatums of the opportunists.

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*bining* the Right and the Left wings and officially represented by Kautsky, who will reconcile everything in the world by means of smooth, “thoroughly Marxian” phrases, Socialism and revolution in words, for the people, for the masses, for the workers: Südekumism in practice, *i.e.*, joining the bourgeoisie in every serious crisis. We say: *every* crisis, because not only in time of war, but in any serious political strike, “feudal” Germany as well as “free and parliamentary” England or France will *immediately* introduce martial law under one name or another. No one of sound mind and in full possession of his senses can have any doubt about this.

V. I. Lenin, “The Collapse of the Second International,” *Selected Works*, Vol. V; *Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 310-312; also Little Lenin Library, Vol. 2, pp. 43-45.

### *C. The Exposure and Extermination of Every Manifestation of a Breach Between Word and Deed in the Ranks of the Comintern*

Neither of the resolutions of the Longuetists<sup>1</sup> are of any value. Or rather, they are of great value for one special purpose: as an illustration of perhaps the most dangerous evil for the workers’ movement in Western Europe at the present moment. This evil consists of the fact that the old leaders, seeing the irresistible inclination of the masses toward Bolshevism and the Soviet power, seek (*and often find!*) an escape in *verbal* recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Soviet power, while actually remaining either enemies of the dictatorship of the proletariat or persons unable or not desiring to understand its significance and carry it out in life.

How enormous, how immeasurably great is the danger from such an evil was made especially clear by the downfall of the first Soviet Republic in Hungary (this first republic which perished will be followed by a victorious second). A series of articles in *Die Rote Fahne* of Vienna, the central organ of the Austrian Communist Party, disclosed one of the main reasons for this downfall, *viz.*, the treachery of the “Socialists,” who in words went over to the side of

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1 The Centrists of the French Socialist Party, a group headed by Charles Longuet. During the early period of the Communist International, when the article of Lenin was written, the Longuetists were in favor of leaving the Second International, without breaking with it in actual fact. — *Ed.*

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Bela Kun and declared themselves to be Communists, but who in deeds did not put into practice the policies which are in conformity with the dictatorship of the proletariat, were wavering and pusillanimous, continually running to the bourgeoisie, and at times directly sabotaged and betrayed the proletarian revolution. The all-powerful imperialist robbers (*i.e.*, the bourgeois governments of England, France, etc.), surrounding the Hungarian Soviet Republic, knew, of course, how to make use of these vacillations *within* the government of the Hungarian Soviet power and brutally strangled it by the hands of the Rumanian hangmen.

There is no doubt that part of the Hungarian Socialists *sincerely* went over to Bela Kun's side and *sincerely* declared themselves to be Communists. But this does not change the crux of the matter in the least. A man who "sincerely" declares himself a Communist, but who in actual practice, instead of adopting a mercilessly firm, steadfastly determined, unreservedly bold and heroic policy (only such a policy is in conformity with recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat), is vacillating and pusillanimous – such a man by his lack of character, his vacillations, his indecisiveness, commits the same treachery as an actual traitor. Personally the difference between a traitor through weakness and a traitor by design and calculation is very great; politically there is *no* such difference, for politics decides the actual fate of millions of people, and this fate is not altered according to whether millions of workers and poor peasants are betrayed by traitors through weakness or traitors through self-interest.

As to what portion of the Longuetists who signed the resolutions which we have under consideration are persons of the first or of the second category mentioned, or of any third category, is impossible to ascertain at present, and it would be futile to attempt to decide such a question. What is important is that these Longuetists, *as a political trend*, are carrying on now precisely the same policy as that of the Hungarian "Socialists" and "Social-Democrats" who caused the downfall of the Soviet power in Hungary. The Longuetists are carrying on precisely this policy, for in words they declare themselves supporters of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Soviet power, while in practice they continue to conduct themselves as of old, continue both to defend in their resolutions and to put into effect in actual life the old policy of petty concessions to social chauvinism, opportunism, and bourgeois democracy,

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of vacillation, indecision, evasion, subterfuge, hushing up matters, etc. All these petty concessions, all this vacillation, indecision, evasion, subterfuge and hushing up, in their sum total, inevitably result in *treason* to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Dictatorship is a big word, a harsh, bloody word, which means a merciless struggle, a life-and-death struggle between two classes, two worlds, two world-historic epochs.

Such words cannot be trifled with.

To put on the order of the day the realization of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and at the same time to be “afraid of offending” Albert Thomas, Messrs. Bracke, Sembat and other knights of the most base French social-chauvinism, the heroes of the traitorous paper *l'Humanité*,<sup>1</sup> *La Bataille*, and so on – this means to practice treason on the working class, whether through light-mindedness, lack of consciousness, lack of character, or other causes, but in any case it means to practice treason on the working class.

Divergence of word and deed destroyed the Second International. The Third International is not yet a year old, but it has already become the fashion, the center of attraction for politicians who go where the masses go. The Third International is already being threatened by a divergence of word and deed. Regardless of everything, everywhere we must unmask this danger, must tear out by the roots any manifestation of this evil.

The resolutions of the Longuetists (as also the resolutions of the last congress of the German Independents,<sup>2</sup> the German Longuetists) transform the “dictatorship of the proletariat” into just such an ikon as the resolutions of the Second International were for the leaders and bureaucrats of the trade unions, for the parliamentarians, for the functionaries of the cooperatives. To an ikon one must pray, before an ikon one may cross oneself, before an ikon one must bow down, but an ikon in no way affects practical life, practical

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1 The French Socialist Party occupied a social-chauvinist position during the World War, and *l'Humanité*, its official organ, followed the lead of the Party. Since the post-war split in the Socialist Party and the formation of the Communist Party, *l'Humanité* has served as the central organ of the latter organization, and has become a leading mass revolutionary paper. – *Ed.*

2 Members of the Independent Social-Democratic Party, formed in April, 1917 and dissolved in October, 1922. – *Ed.*

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politics.

No, gentlemen, we shall not permit the transformation of the slogan “dictatorship of the proletariat” into an ikon, we shall not be reconciled to the fact that the Third International should suffer a divergence of word and deed.

If you are for the dictatorship of the proletariat, then do not carry on such an evasive, vacillating, conciliatory policy in relation to social chauvinism as you are carrying on, and which is expressed in the very first lines of your first resolution: The war, please note, “has torn asunder” (*a déchirée*) the Second International, has torn it away from its task of “Socialist education” (*éducation socialiste*), while “certain of its sections (*certaines de ses fractions*)” “have weakened themselves” by sharing power with the bourgeoisie, and so on and so forth.

This is not the language of people consciously and sincerely adhering to the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is rather the language either of people who take one step forward and two backwards, or of politicians. If you wish to speak in such language, or rather, as long as you speak in such language, as long as your policy is such, remain in the Second International; your place is there. Or let the workers, who by their mass pressure have been thrusting you into the Third International, leave you in the Second International, and themselves, *without you*, come over to the Third International. To those workers – of the French Socialist Party, of the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, and of the Independent Labor Party of England, we shall say: Welcome to our ranks!

If you recognize the dictatorship of the proletariat, and if, at the same time, you speak about the war of 1914-18, then you must speak differently: this war was a war between the robbers of Anglo-French-Russian imperialism and the robbers of German-Austrian imperialism for the partition of plunder, colonies, “spheres” of financial influence. Preaching the “defense of the fatherland” in such a war was treason to Socialism. If this truth is not made absolutely clear, if this treason is not eradicated from the heads, the hearts, and the politics of the workers, it will be *impossible* to save ourselves from the miseries of capitalism, *impossible* to save ourselves from new wars, which are *inevitable* as long as capitalism endures.

You do not wish to, you cannot speak such language, cannot carry on *such* propaganda! You wish to “spare” yourselves or your



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friends who only yesterday preached “defense of the fatherland” in Germany under Wilhelm or under Noske, in England and in France under the power of the bourgeoisie! Then *spare* the Third International! Make it happy by your absence!

V. I. Lenin, “Notes of a Publicist,” *Collected Works*, Russian edition, Vol. XXV.

### **5. Reorganization of All Party Work to Train and Prepare the Masses for the Revolutionary Struggle**

The Third, Communist, International was formed precisely for the purpose of preventing “socialists” from getting away with the *verbal* recognition of revolution, an example of which is provided by Ramsay MacDonald in his article.<sup>1</sup> The verbal recognition of revolution, which in fact concealed a thoroughly opportunist, reformist, nationalist and petty-bourgeois policy, was the fundamental sin of the Second International, and against this evil we are waging a war of life and death.

When it is said: The Second International died after suffering shameful bankruptcy – one must be able to understand what this means. It means that opportunism, reformism, petty-bourgeois socialism, became bankrupt and died. For the Second International has rendered historical service, it has won achievements (for ever), which the class-conscious worker will never renounce, namely: the creation of mass labor organizations – cooperative societies, trade unions and political organizations, the utilization of bourgeois parliamentarism as well as all the institutions of bourgeois democracy generally, etc.

In order utterly to defeat the opportunism which caused the shameful death of the Second International, in order to render effective aid to the revolution, the approach of which *even* Ramsay MacDonald is obliged to admit; it is necessary:

*First*, to carry on all propaganda and agitation from the point of view of revolution as opposed to reforms, systematically to explain this difference to the masses theoretically and practically at every step of parliamentary, trade union, cooperative work. Under no circumstances to refrain (except in special cases as an exception) from

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<sup>1</sup> Appearing in *L'Humanité*, at that time organ of the French Socialist Party, on April 14, 1919. – *Ed.*

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utilizing parliamentarism and all the “liberties” of bourgeois democracy; not to reject reforms, but regard them *only* as a *by-product* of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat. Not a single party affiliated to the “Berne” International<sup>1</sup> meets these requirements. Not a single one of them betrays even an inkling of how *all* propaganda and agitation should be conducted while explaining the difference between reform and revolution, how both the party and the masses must be *undeviatingly* trained for *revolution*.

*Secondly*, legal work must be combined with *illegal* work. The Bolsheviks always taught this, and did so with particular insistence during the war of 1914-1918. The heroes of despicable opportunism ridiculed this and smugly extolled the “law,” “democracy,” “liberty” of the west European countries, republics, etc. Now, however, only out-and-out swindlers who deceive the workers with phrases can deny that the Bolsheviks have been proved to be right. There is not a single country in the world, even the most advanced and “freest” of the bourgeois republics, in which bourgeois terror does not reign, where freedom to carry on agitation for the socialist revolution, carry on propaganda and organizational work precisely in this direction, are not prohibited. The party, which, under the rule of the bourgeoisie, has not admitted to this day this, and which does not carry on systematic, all-sided, *illegal* work in spite of the laws of the bourgeoisie and of the bourgeois parliaments, is a party of traitors and scoundrels, which deceives the people by the verbal recognition of revolution. The place for such parties is in the yellow “Berne” International. They will find no place in the Communist International.

*Thirdly*, unswerving and ruthless war must be waged for the purpose of completely expelling from the labor movement those opportunist leaders who earned their reputations both before the war

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<sup>1</sup> In July 1915, the Italian and Swiss Socialist Parties convened a preliminary conference at Berne, Switzerland, to discuss the basis of representation for a proposed international socialist conference, later held at Zimmerwald. Against the protest of a Bolshevik Representative, who insisted that only Left, revolutionary social-democrats be invited, the Berne conference, dominated by the Italian and Swiss Socialist Parties and the Mensheviks, ruled that the forthcoming assembly at Zimmerwald must be more widely representative – i.e., of centrist and near-centrist opinion. – *Ed.*

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and particularly during the war, in the sphere of politics as well as, and particularly, in the trade unions and the cooperative societies. The theory of “neutrality”<sup>1</sup> is a false and despicable evasion which helped the bourgeoisie to capture the masses in 1914-1918. The parties which stand for revolution in words, but which in deeds fail to carry on undeviating work to spread the influence of precisely the revolutionary, and only of the revolutionary party in every sort of mass labor organizations are parties of traitors.

*Fourthly*, there can be no toleration for the condemnation of imperialism in words while in deeds no revolutionary struggle is waged for the liberation of the colonies (and dependent nations) from *one's own* imperialist bourgeoisie. This is hypocrisy. This is the policy of the agents of the bourgeoisie in the labor movement (the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class). Those English, French, Dutch, Belgian, etc., parties which are hostile to imperialism in words, and in deeds fail to wage a revolutionary struggle within “their own” colonies for the *overthrow* of “their own” bourgeoisie, who do not systematically assist the *revolutionary* work which has already commenced everywhere in the colonies, who do not send arms and literature to the revolutionary parties in the colonies, are parties of scoundrels and traitors.

*Fifthly*, the following phenomenon, which is typical of the parties of the “Berne” International, is the height of hypocrisy, *viz.*, the verbal recognition of revolution and the flaunting of high-flown phrases before the workers about recognizing revolution, but in deeds, the adoption of a purely reformist attitude towards those beginnings, shoots, manifestations of the growth of revolution such as mass actions that break bourgeois laws, which extend beyond the bounds of all legality, as for example, mass strikes, street demonstrations, protests by soldiers, meetings among the troops, the distribution of leaflets in barracks, camps, etc.

If any hero of the “Berne” International were asked whether his party is carrying on such systematic work he, to conceal the absence of such work, would answer either in evasive phrases about: the lack of organizations and an apparatus for carrying on such work, the incapability of the party to carry on such work; or by declamations against “*putsch*-ism,” “anarchism,” etc. And it is precisely this

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<sup>1</sup> The theory that the trade unions and cooperative societies must be neutral in politics. – *Ed.*

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that comprises the treachery of the "Berne" International to the working class, its actual desertion to the camp of the bourgeoisie.

All the scoundrelly leaders of the "Berne" International fervently vow their "sympathy" for revolution in general, and for the Russian revolution in particular. But only hypocrites and simpletons can fail to understand that the particularly rapid successes of the revolution in Russia *are due* to the many years of work conducted by the revolutionary party in the direction indicated, when for years a systematic illegal apparatus was built up for the purpose of leading demonstrations and strikes, for work among the troops, when methods were studied in detail, illegal literature was issued which summed up experience and trained the whole party to the idea of the necessity of revolution, when mass leaders were trained for such events, etc., etc.

V. I. Lenin, "Ramsay MacDonald on the Third International," *Lenin on Britain*, pp. 236-238.

In England the Communists should uninterruptedly, unflinchingly and undeviatingly utilize the parliamentary struggle and all the perturbations of the Irish, colonial and world imperialist policy of the British government and all other spheres and sides of social life and work in all of them in a new way, in a Communist way, in the spirit not of the Second but of the Third International. I have neither the time nor the space here to describe the methods of "Russian," "Bolshevik" participation in parliamentary elections and in the parliamentary struggle, but I can assure the foreign Communists that this was not anything like the usual West-European parliamentary campaign. From this the conclusion is usually drawn: "Well, that was in Russia, but in our country parliamentarism is something different." This conclusion is wrong. The very purpose of the existence of Communists in the world, adherents of the Third International in all countries, is to *change* all along the line, in all spheres of life, the old Socialist, trade unionist, syndicalist parliamentary work into *new* Communist work. In Russia, too, we had a great deal of opportunist and purely bourgeois, money-making and capitalist swindling during elections. The Communists in Western Europe and America must learn to create a new, unusual, non-opportunist, non-careerist parliamentarism; the Communist Parties must issue their slogans, real proletarians with the help of the unorganized and very poorest people should scatter and distribute leaflets, canvass the workers'

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houses and the cottages of the rural proletarians and peasants in the remote villages (fortunately there are not nearly so many remote villages in Europe as there are in Russia, and in England there are very few), they should go into the most common inns, penetrate into the unions, societies and casual meetings where the common people gather and talk to the people, not in scientific (and not very parliamentary) language, not in the least to strive to “get seats” in parliament, but everywhere to rouse the thoughts of the masses and draw them into the struggle, to take the bourgeoisie at their word, to utilize the apparatus they have set up, the elections they have called for, the appeal to the country that they have made and to tell the people what Bolshevism is in a way that has not been possible (under bourgeois rule) outside of election times (not counting, of course, times of big strikes, when in Russia a *similar* apparatus for widespread popular agitation worked even more intensively). It is very difficult to do this in Western Europe and America – very, very difficult – but it can and must be done, because generally speaking the tasks of communism cannot be fulfilled without effort, and every effort must be made to fulfill the *practical* tasks, ever more varied, ever more connected with all branches of social life, *winning* branch after branch from the *bourgeoisie*.

In England, also, it is necessary to organize in a new way (not in a Socialist manner but in a Communist manner, not in a reformist manner but in a revolutionary manner) the work of propaganda, agitation and organization among the armed forces and among the oppressed and disfranchised nationalities in “one’s own” state (Ireland, the colonies). Because in all these spheres of social life, in the epoch of imperialism generally, and particularly now, after the war which tortured nationalities and quickly opened their eyes to the truth (*viz.*, tens of millions killed and maimed only for the purpose of deciding whether the British or German pirates shall plunder the largest number of countries – all these spheres of social life are becoming particularly filled with inflammable material and create numerous causes of conflict, crises and the intensification of the class struggle. We do not know and we cannot know which spark – out of the innumerable sparks that are flying around in all countries as a result of the economic and political world crisis – will kindle the conflagration, in the sense of specially rousing the masses, and we must, therefore, with the aid of our new, Communist principles, set to work to “stir up” all, even the oldest, mustiest and seemingly

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hopeless spheres, for otherwise we shall not be able to cope with our tasks, we will not be all-sided, we will not be able to master all weapons and we will not be prepared either for victory over the bourgeoisie (which arranged all sides of social life, and has now disarranged all sides of social life in a bourgeois way) nor for the forthcoming Communist reorganization of the whole of social life after the victory.

V. I. Lenin, "*Left-Wing*" *Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, Chap. X.

The development of the German and Italian Communist parties after the Third Congress of the Comintern proves that the error committed by the Lefts at that congress has been recognized by them and little by little, slowly but surely, is being rectified. The decisions of the Third Congress of the Communist International are being loyally carried out. The transformation of the European parliamentary party of the old type, which is reformist in fact and only slightly touched up in revolutionary colors, into a new *type* of party, into a really revolutionary, really Communist party, is an extremely difficult task. The example of France, perhaps, brings this most clearly to light. To change the *type* of party work in everyday life, to transform the daily routine, to succeed in getting the Party to become the vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat while not getting away from the masses but coming closer and closer to them, raising them to revolutionary consciousness and revolutionary struggle, is the most difficult but most important task. If the European Communists for the purpose of effecting that fundamental, internal and profound transformation of the whole structure and all the work of their parties do not avail themselves of the (probably very brief) interval between the periods of particular intensification of revolutionary battles – which many capitalist countries in Europe and America experienced in 1921 and at the beginning of 1922, they will be committing the greatest crime. Fortunately, there is no reason to entertain such fears. The noiseless, unobtrusive, unhurried but profound work of creating real Communist parties in Europe and America, real revolutionary vanguards of the proletariat; has begun and is proceeding apace.

V. I. Lenin, "Notes of a Publicist," *Collected Works*, Russian edition, Vol. XXVII.

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### **6. Self-Criticism and Training of the Proletarian Party, and How It Must Be Taught to Profit by Its Own Mistakes**

*Needless to say, self-criticism is absolutely necessary for every live and vigorous Party.*

*Nothing is more despicable than self-complacent optimism.*

*....It would merely be a recognition of shortcomings equivalent, in the cause of the revolution, to more than half correcting them.*

– LENIN.

#### *A. Self-Criticism – The Bolshevik Method of Training the Party Cadres and the Working Class*

The slogan of self-criticism is nothing transient or ephemeral. Self-criticism is a special method, the Bolshevik method of training the Party cadres and the working class in general in the spirit of revolutionary development. Marx already spoke of self-criticism as a method of consolidating the proletarian revolution. As far as self-criticism in our Party is concerned, its inception of self-criticism harks back to the time when Bolshevism first appeared in our country, to the very first days of its conception as a special revolutionary current in the labor movement. It is well known that Lenin as early as the spring of 1904, when Bolshevism was not yet an independent political party but worked together with the Mensheviks within a single Social-Democratic party – it is well known that Lenin already then called upon the Party to practice “self-criticism and mercilessly expose its own defects.” This is what Lenin wrote at that time in his pamphlet *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*:

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 to use them for their own ends. The Russian Social-Democrats 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. As for our opponents, let them first attempt to give a picture of the *true* state of affairs in their own parties that might even distantly

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resemble the one that is revealed by the minutes of our Second Congress!

Therefore those comrades who think that self-criticism is a transient phenomenon, a fashion which must shortly become outmoded like every other fashion are absolutely wrong. As a matter of fact self-criticism is an imprescriptible and constantly functioning weapon in the arsenal of Bolshevism, inextricably intertwined with the very nature of Bolshevism, with its revolutionary spirit.

It is sometimes said that self-criticism is a good thing for a party which has not yet come to power and which has “nothing to lose,” but that self-criticism is dangerous and harmful for a party which has already come to power, which is surrounded by hostile forces and against which the enemy can use the weak points revealed. This is wrong. This is absolutely wrong. On the contrary, precisely because Bolshevism has come to power, precisely because the Bolsheviks may get swelled heads thanks to the successes of our construction, precisely because the Bolsheviks may not notice their weak points and thereby make things easier for their enemies – precisely for these reasons self-criticism is needed particularly now, especially after the seizure of power. It is the aim of self-criticism to detect and correct our mistakes, our weak points – is it not plain that self-criticism under the dictatorship of the proletariat can only make it easier for the Bolsheviks to struggle against the enemies of the working class? Lenin took into account these special factors in the situation after the Bolsheviks had seized power when he wrote in his booklet “*Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder*,” in May, 1920:

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 fulfills *in practice* its obligations towards its *class* and towards the toiling *masses*. To admit a mistake openly, to disclose its reasons, to analyze 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*. (“*Left Wing Communism*,” Chap. VII.)

Lenin was absolutely right when he said at the Eleventh Congress of the Party in March, 1922:



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The proletariat is not afraid to admit that some things it has done in the revolution turned out magnificently while others did not eventuate at all. All revolutionary parties which have perished so far perished because they got swelled heads and were unable to see wherein strength lay, *they were afraid to speak of their weak points*. [Emphasis mine. – J. S.].

We however shall not perish because we are not afraid to speak of our weak points and shall learn how to overcome our weak points.

Only one conclusion is possible: without self-criticism there is no correct training of the Party, of the class, of the masses; without a correct training of the Party, of the class, of the masses there is no Bolshevism.

Why does such special, vital importance attach to the slogan of self-criticism precisely now, precisely at the present historical moment, precisely in 1928? Because the sharpening of the class relationships, both internally and externally, has now been revealed more clearly than a year or two years ago. Because the fact that the class enemies of the Soviet government, who make use of our weak points and our mistakes against the working class of our country, engage in undermining operations, has now been disclosed more clearly than a year or two years ago. Because the lessons of the Shakhty case<sup>1</sup> and the “grain collection maneuvers” of the capitalist elements of the countryside plus our mistakes in planning cannot and ought not to leave us unaffected. We must *as quickly as possible free ourselves* from our mistakes and weak points which were uncovered in the Shakhty case and the grain collection difficulties, if we want to consolidate the revolution and meet the enemy fully armed. We must *as quickly as possible disclose* our mistakes and weak points which have *not yet been disclosed* but which undoubtedly exist, if we do not want to be caught unawares by all sorts of “unexpected” and “accidental” occurrences to the delight of the enemies of the working class. To go slow now means to make things easier for our enemies, to accentuate our weak points and mistakes. But it is impossible to do all this without developing self-criticism,

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<sup>1</sup> The trial of engineers and others accused of sabotage in the Donetz mines, 1928.

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without intensifying self-criticism, without drawing the millions of the working class and of the peasantry into the work of bringing out and eliminating our weak points, our mistakes.

The April Plenum of the C.C. and of the C.C.C. was therefore quite right when it said in its resolution on the Shakhty case that

*Really carrying out* the slogan of the Fifteenth Congress concerning self-criticism must be the *main condition* for guaranteeing the successful carrying out of all the measures outlined.

But in order to develop self-criticism it is first of all necessary to overcome a whole series of obstacles which confront the Party. This includes the cultural backwardness of the masses, the deficiency in the cultural forces of the proletarian vanguard, our inertia, our “communist boastfulness” and the like. However, one of the most serious obstacles, if not the most serious obstacle, is the *bureaucracy* in our apparatuses. The point in question is the presence of bureaucratic elements in our Party, state, trade union, cooperative and every other kind of organization. The point in question is the bureaucratic elements who live by our weak spots and mistakes, stand in trepidation before the criticism of the masses, the control of the masses, and who hamper us in the developing of self-criticism, who hamper us in ridding ourselves of our weak points, of our mistakes. Bureaucracy in our organizations is not only red tape and office routine. Bureaucracy is the manifestation of bourgeois influence on our organizations. Lenin was right when he said:

We must needs understand that the struggle against bureaucracy is an *absolutely necessary* struggle and that it is as complex as the struggle against petty-bourgeois spontaneity. In our form of state bureaucracy has become a scab of such importance that our Party program speaks of it and does so for the reason that *it* [bureaucracy – *Ed.*] *is connected with this petty-bourgeois spontaneity and its atomization* [Emphasis mine. – *J. S.*]

So much the more persistently ought we to struggle against the bureaucracy of our organizations, if we really wish to develop self-criticism and rid ourselves of the scabs of our construction.

So much the more persistently ought we to raise the millions of workers and peasants to criticize *from below*, to control *from below*,

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as the main antidote to bureaucracy.

Lenin was absolutely right when he said:

“If we want to fight bureaucracy we must draw the lower ranks into this task”... for “in what other way can bureaucracy be stopped if not *by drawing in the workers and peasants?*” [Emphasis mine. – J. S.]

But in order to “draw in” the millions, it is necessary to develop proletarian democracy in all mass organizations of the working class, primarily within the Party itself. If this condition is not met, self-criticism is a cipher, a blank, a mere phrase.

We don’t want *every kind* of self-criticism. We need such self-criticism as raises the cultural level of the working class, as develops its militant spirit, strengthens its belief in victory, multiplies its forces and helps it to become the real master of the country.

Some say that if there is self-criticism there is no need for *labor discipline*; one may drop work and indulge in twaddle – a little about everything. This is not self-criticism but a mockery of the working class. We don’t want self-criticism for the purpose of destroying labor discipline but to strengthen it, so that labor discipline may become *conscious*, capable of withstanding petty-bourgeois laxness.

Others say that if there is self-criticism *leadership* is no longer required, the helm may be abandoned and everything left to “the natural course of events.” This is not self-criticism but a disgrace. We don’t want self-criticism to weaken the leadership but to *strengthen* it, to convert it from leadership on paper enjoying little authority into vital leadership enjoying real authority.

There is yet another kind of “self-criticism” which leads to the *destruction* of party life, to the *dethronement* of the Soviet government, to the *weakening* of our construction, to the *disintegration* of the economic cadres, to the *disarming* of the working class, to chatter about *degeneration*. Such indeed is the “self-criticism” to which the Trotskyist opposition called us yesterday.

Needless to say, the Party has nothing in common with such “self-criticism.” Needless to say, the Party will fight against such “self-criticism” with all its forces, with all its means.

We must strictly differentiate between this anti-Bolshevik “self-criticism” which is *alien* to us and *our* Bolshevik *self-criticism*, the purpose of which is to *implant* the Party spirit, to *entrench* the Sovi-

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et government, to *improve* our construction, to *strengthen* our economic cadres, to *arm* the working class.

Joseph Stalin, "Against the Vulgarization of the Slogan of Self-Criticism," *Pravda*, No. 146, June 26, 1928.

### *B. Marx and Engels on the Importance of Self-Criticism*

Bourgeois revolutions, like those of the eighteenth century, storm more swiftly from success to success; their dramatic effects outdo each other; men and things seem set in sparkling brilliants; ecstasy is the everyday spirit; but they are short lived; soon they have attained their zenith, and a long depression lays hold society before it learns soberly to assimilate the results of its storm and stress period. Proletarian revolutions, on the other hand, like those of the nineteenth century, criticize themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to recommence it afresh, deride with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses and paltrinesses of their first attempts, seem to throw down their adversary only in order that he may draw new strength from the earth and rise again more gigantic before them, recoil ever and anon from the indefinite prodigiousness of their aims, until the situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible....

Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, pp. 16-17.

....We here neither underestimate the difficulties with which the Party has to contend in Germany nor the significance of the successes which have been achieved, nevertheless, and the hitherto quite exemplary attitude of the Party masses. It goes without saying that any victory gained in Germany delights us just as much as one gained elsewhere, and even more so because indeed the German Party from the very beginning has relied in its development upon our theoretical propositions. But for this very reason it must be our special concern to see that in practice the attitude of the German Party, and especially the public utterances of the Party leadership, remain in harmony with the general theory. Our criticism, to be sure, is unpleasant to many; but to the Party and Party leadership it must certainly be an advantage exceeding all uncritical compliments if it has a few people abroad who, uninfluenced by confusing local

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conditions and details of the struggle, from time to time measure events and utterances by the theoretical propositions which are valid for all modern proletarian movements and who reflect the impression created outside Germany by their action.

Letter of Karl Marx to August Bebel, Nov. 14, 1879.

### *C. Lenin on Self-Criticism*

The more one reflects on the meaning of the so-called Democratic Conference,<sup>1</sup> and the more attentively one observes it with detachment – and it is said that detachment enables one to see more clearly – the more firmly convinced one becomes that our Party has committed a mistake by participating in it. We should have boycotted it. One may ask: of what use is it to analyze such a question? The past cannot be remedied. Such an objection against criticizing the tactics of yesterday, however, would be clearly untenable. We have always condemned, and as Marxists we are obliged to condemn, the tactics of those who live “from day to day.” Momentary successes are insufficient for us. Plans calculated for a minute or a day are in general inadequate for us. We must constantly test ourselves, *studying* the aim of political events in their entirety, in their casual connection, in their results. By analyzing the errors of yesterday, we learn to avoid errors to-day and to-morrow.

....Thus it is possible to present the three situations, of August 1905, September 1917, and June 1907,<sup>2</sup> in order more clearly to demonstrate the objective foundations of the boycott tactics, their connection with the interrelation of classes. The deception of the oppressed classes by the oppressors is always present, but the meaning of this deception is different at different historical moments. Tactics cannot be based on the bare fact that the oppressors deceive

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<sup>1</sup> The Democratic Conference, held September 27 to October 5, 1917, was convoked by the Provisional Government, headed by Kerensky, with the purpose of obtaining greater support for the government and strengthening its position. – *Ed.*

<sup>2</sup> The Duma proposed by Minister of Interior Bulygin in 1905, based upon limited suffrage and having only consultative powers, was boycotted by the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks participated in the Third Duma, June 1907. The situation of September 1917 is that of the Democratic Conference. – *Ed.*

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the people; tactics must be determined, after analyzing *in its entirety* the interrelation of classes and the development of both extra-parliamentary and parliamentary struggle.

The tactics of participating in the pre-parliament<sup>1</sup> are *incorrect*. They do not correspond to the objective interrelation of classes, to the objective conditions of the moment.

We should have boycotted the Democratic Conference; we all erred by not having done so; by erring we did not intend to deceive. We shall correct the mistake only when we shall wish to take up more sincerely the revolutionary struggle of the masses, when we shall think earnestly of the objective foundations of tactics.

....For the fighting Party of the advanced class there is nothing dreadful in mistakes. However, if we persisted in a mistake, in false pride which refused to admit and correct a mistake, it would be dreadful.

V. I. Lenin, "From a Publicist's Diary," *Collected Works*, Vol. XXI, Book 1, pp. 249-254.

....Those Communists ought to be recognized as lost who would imagine that it is possible to finish so world-historic an "undertaking" as the completion of the foundation of socialist economy (especially in a country of small peasants) without mistakes, without retreats, without repeatedly remaking what was left incomplete and was done wrong. Those Communists who do not permit themselves to fall captive to illusions or become depressed, who preserve the strength and flexibility of their constitution for a repeated "start from the beginning" on approaching a most difficult task... did not perish and more likely than not, will not perish.

V. I. Lenin, "Notes of a Publicist," *Collected Works*, Russian edition, Vol. XXVII.

### *D. The Prompt Disclosure of Mistakes Is a Most Important Principle of Bolshevik Leadership*

This does not mean, comrades, that we have no shortcomings in the Party. No, there are shortcomings, even serious shortcomings.

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<sup>1</sup> Chosen by the Democratic Conference as a consultative body until the Constituent Assembly, the convocation of which was being delayed. – *Ed.*

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Permit me to say a few words on these shortcomings.

Let us take for instance the leadership of the economic and other organizations by the Party organizations. Can it be said that all is well here? No, not all. It is not a rare thing with us to decide questions not only locally but also at the center in a family circle, so to speak, as if they were a household affair. Let us say Ivan Ivanovich, a member of the leading upper circles of such and such an organization, committed a gross mistake and bungled a job. But Ivan Fyodorovich does not want to criticize him, does not want to bring out his mistake, correct his mistake. He does not want to because he does not want "to make enemies." A mistake was made, a job was bungled – what of it! Who of us does not make mistakes? To-day I shield him, Ivan Fyodorovich, to-morrow he shields me, Ivan Ivanovich. For what guarantee is there that I, too, will not make a mistake? Decorously and orderly. Peace and good will. Does a disregarded mistake spoil our great cause? Nothing of the kind! We'll manage somehow to come out on top. This, comrade, is the usual reasoning of some of our responsible workers. But what does this mean? If we Bolsheviki, who criticize the whole world, who in the words of Marx, storm the heavens, if we for the mental calm of this or that comrade renounce self-criticism, is it not clear that nothing has come of this but the failure of our great cause? (Voice: "That's right!") Marx said that the proletarian revolution differs from every other revolution in that, among other things, it persistently criticizes itself, and in criticizing itself it entrenches itself. This is a very important precept of Marx. If we, the representatives of the proletarian revolution, will close our eyes to our shortcomings, will decide questions in a family circle, keeping quiet about each other's mistakes, driving the disease into the inside of our Party organism, who is going to correct these mistakes, these shortcomings? Is it not clear that we shall cease to be proletarian revolutionaries and shall be likely to perish, if we do not drive out of our midst this philistine trait, this family circle method of settling important questions of our construction? Is it not clear that by renouncing honest and straightforward self-criticism, by renouncing the honest and open rectification of our mistakes, we bar our own road of progress, of improving our cause, of new successes in our cause? For our development does not proceed in a smooth, indiscriminating upsoar. No, comrades, we have classes, we have contradictions within our country, we have a past, we have a present and a future, we have contradictions

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between them and we cannot make progress by sailing smoothly over the waves of life. Our progress is the result of struggle, of the development of contradictions, of overcoming these contradictions, of bringing out and solving these contradictions. As long as there are classes we shall never be able to have a situation when it may be said: Well, thank the lord, now everything is allright. This will never be so with us, comrades. With us something in life is always dying out. But that which is dying out does not want simply to die out, but fights for its existence, defends its outlived cause. With us something new in life is always being born. But that which is being born is not simply being born but squeaks, screams, defends its right to exist (Voice: "That's right!"). The struggle between the old and the new, between that which dies out and that which is being born is the foundation of our development. By failing to note and to bring out openly and honestly as befits Bolsheviks the shortcomings and mistakes in our work, we bar the road to our progress. But then we do want to progress. And precisely for the reason that we do want to progress we must make honest and revolutionary criticism one of our most important tasks. Without this there is no progress. Without this there is no development. But precisely along this line everything with us is still on crutches.

Moreover, some successes suffice to cause the shortcomings to be forgotten, to cause people to calm down and get swelled heads. Two or three major successes and already we have a walkover. Add two or three more successes and we get swelled heads and think we will knock them into a cocked hat. But the mistakes remain, the shortcomings still exist, and the scabs are driven into the interior of our Party apparatus.

Joseph Stalin, Political Report at the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1927, *Stenographic Report*, pp. 70-71.

### *E. The Exposure of the Right Opportunist Distortions of Self-Criticism*

June 8, 1929.

To-day we received the theses of Comrade Slepkov on self-criticism. These theses were discussed, it transpires, in your circle. The members of the circle told me that these theses were launched as a document intended not as a criticism of the line of the Central



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Committee but as a substantiation of this line. It would be wrong to deny to Party members the right to criticize the line of the C.C. Moreover, I concede that the members of your circle have the right within their close circle even to set up their own special theses in opposition to the position of the C.C. It is evident however that the theses of Comrade Slepkov do not pursue the aim of criticizing the line of the C.C. or of setting up something new in opposition to it, but the task of explaining and substantiating the position of the C.C. Herein lies the explanation for the fact that the theses of Comrade Slepkov were to some extent popular in Moscow Party circles.

Nonetheless, or precisely for this reason I consider it my duty to declare that the theses of Comrade Slepkov (a) do not coincide with the position of the C.C. on the question of the slogan of self-criticism, (b) they "correct," "supplement" and naturally deteriorate it for the benefit of the bureaucratic elements in our institutions and organizations.

(1) In the first place the line of the theses of Comrade Slepkov is wrong. The theses of Comrade Slepkov remind one of the theses on the slogan of self-criticism only externally. As a matter of fact they are theses on the dangers of the slogan of self-criticism. Needless to say, every revolutionary slogan has secreted within itself certain possibilities of distorting it in practice. Such possibilities are applicable of course also to the slogan of self-criticism. But to set forth these possibilities as the gist of the question, as the basis of the theses on self-criticism, means to turn everything upside down, to undermine the revolutionary significance of self-criticism, to help the bureaucrats who try to refrain from self-criticism in view of the "dangers" connected with it. I do not doubt that the bureaucratic elements of our Party and Soviet organizations will read the theses of Comrade Slepkov not without some feeling of satisfaction.

Does such a line have anything in common with the line of the C.C.? On the question of self-criticism, with the resolution of the April Plenum of the C.C. and the C.C.C. on the Shakhty case, with the June manifesto of the C.C. on the question of self-criticism?

I think not.

(2) The theses of Comrade Slepkov are also wrong in their internal content. The bureaucracy of our organizations is one of the most important factors that make self-criticism unavoidable and is at the same time one of the most important object's of self-criticism. Can one make progress without fighting the bureaucracy of the Par-

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ty and Soviet apparatus? No, that is impossible. Is it possible to organize the control of the masses, to raise the initiative and self-activity of the masses, to draw the millions into socialist construction without waging a decisive struggle against the bureaucratism of our organizations? No, that is impossible. Can bureaucracy be undermined, weakened, dethroned without carrying out the slogan of self-criticism? No, that is impossible. In the theses devoted to the slogan of self-criticism, can one dispense with an elucidation of the question of bureaucracy as an unfavorable factor of our socialist construction and as one of the most important objects of self-criticism? Plainly not. In such event, how is it to be explained that Comrade Slepkov in his theses contrived to pass this vital question in silence? How can one forget in theses on self-criticism intended to substantiate the position of the C.C. about the most important function of self-criticism, about the struggle against bureaucracy? And yet it is a fact that in the theses of Comrade Slepkov there is not a single word (literally not a single word) about the bureaucracy of our organizations, about the bureaucratic elements within these organizations, about the bureaucratic distortions in the work of our Party and Soviet apparatus.

Can this more than light-minded attitude to the very important question of the struggle against bureaucracy be brought in harmony with the position of the C.C. on the question of self-criticism, with such Party documents as the resolutions of the April Plenum of the C.C. and the C.C.C. on the Shakhty case or the June manifesto of the C.C. on self-criticism?

I do not think so.

With Communist greetings,

J. STALIN.

Stalin's Letter to the Members of the Party Structure Circle at the Communist Academy, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, April 1929, No. 90/1177.

## II. THEORY

### 1. The Role of Theory in the Class Struggle of the Proletariat

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 “fulfillment,” 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 labor 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 labor 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?* p. 28.)

Lenin, better than any one else, understood the great importance of theory, particularly for a party like ours, in view of the role 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 role of our Party, he thought it necessary, as far back as 1902, to point out, that “*the role of vanguard can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by an advanced theory.*” (*Ibid.*)

Now that Lenin’s prediction about the role of our Party has come true, it hardly needs to be proved that this thesis acquires spe-

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cial 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 generalizing 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*.<sup>1</sup>

It is well known that Plekhanov, who loved to chaff Lenin for his “lack of concern” for matters of philosophy, did not even dare to make a serious attempt to undertake such a task.

Joseph Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism*, Chap. III, pp. 26-27.

....Those who are in the least acquainted with the actual state of our movement cannot but see that the spread of Marxism was accomplished by a certain lowering of theoretical standards. Quite a number of people with very little, and even totally lacking in, theoretical training, joined the movement for the sake of its practical significance and its practical successes. We can judge, therefore, how tactless *Rabocheye Dyelo*<sup>2</sup> is when, with an air of invincibility, it quotes the statements of Marx that: “A single step of the real movement is worth a dozen programs.” To repeat these words in the epoch of theoretical chaos is like wishing mourners at a funeral “many happy returns of the day.” Moreover, these words of Marx are taken from his letter on the Gotha Program, in which he *sharply condemns* the eclecticism in the formulation of principles: “If you must combine,” Marx wrote to the Party leaders, “then enter into agreements to satisfy the practical aims of the movement, but do not *haggle* over principles, do not make ‘concessions’ in theory.” This was Marx’s idea, and yet there are people among us who strive – in his name! – to belittle the significance of theory.

Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when

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<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XIII. – Ed.

<sup>2</sup> Published by the League of Russian Social-Democrats. – Ed.

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the fashionable preaching of opportunism is combined with absorption in the narrowest forms of practical activity. The importance of theory for Russian Social-Democrats is still greater for three reasons, which are often forgotten:

The first is that our Party is only in the process of formation, its features are only just becoming outlined, and it has not yet completely settled its reckoning with other tendencies in revolutionary thought which threaten to divert the movement from the proper path. Indeed, in very recent times we have observed (as Axelrod long ago warned the Economists would happen) a revival of non-Social-Democratic revolutionary tendencies. Under such circumstances, what at first sight appears to be an “unimportant” mistake may give rise to most deplorable consequences, and only the short-sighted would consider factional disputes and strict distinction of shades to be inopportune and superfluous. The fate of Russian Social-Democracy for many, many years to come may be determined by the strengthening of one or the other “shade.”

The second reason is that the Social-Democratic movement is essentially an international movement. This does not mean merely that we must combat national chauvinism. It means also that a movement that is starting in a young country can be successful only on the condition that it assimilates the experience of other countries. In order to assimilate this experience, it is not sufficient merely to be acquainted with it, or simply to transcribe the latest resolutions. A critical attitude is required towards this experience, and ability to subject it to independent tests. Only those who realize how much the modern labor movement has grown in strength will understand what a reserve of theoretical forces and political (as well as revolutionary) experience is required to fulfill this task.

The third reason is that the national tasks of Russian Social-Democracy are such as have never confronted any other socialist party in the world. Further on we shall deal with the political and organizational duties which the task of emancipating the whole people from the yoke of autocracy imposes upon us. At the moment, we wish to state that the *role of vanguard can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by an advanced theory*. To understand what this means concretely, let the reader call to mind the predecessors of Russian Social-Democracy like Herzen, Belinsky, Chernyshevsky<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Great Russian publicists and social writers of the 19th century. – *Ed.*

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and the brilliant band of revolutionaries of the 'seventies; let him ponder over the world significance which Russian literature is now acquiring; let him ... Oh! But that is enough!

V. I. Lenin, "What Is To Be Done?" *Collected Works*, Vol. IV, Book 2, pp. 109-111; also Little Lenin Library, Vol. 4, pp. 27-29.

....Engels recognizes *not two* forms of the great struggle Social-Democracy is conducting (political and economic), as is the fashion among us, *but three, adding to the first two also the theoretical struggle*. His recommendations to the German labor movement, which had become practically and politically strong, are so instructive from the point of view of present-day controversies, that we hope the reader will forgive us for quoting a long passage from his Introduction to the *Peasant War in Germany*, which long ago became a literary rarity.

The German workers have two important advantages compared with the rest of Europe. First, they belong to the most theoretical people of Europe; they have retained that sense of theory which the so-called "educated" people of Germany have totally lost. Without German philosophy, particularly that of Hegel, German scientific Socialism (*the only scientific socialism extant*) would never have come into existence. Without a sense of theory, scientific socialism would have never become blood and tissue of the workers. What an enormous advantage this is, may be seen on the one hand from the indifference of the English labor movement towards all theory, which is one of the reasons why it moves so slowly, in spite of the splendid organization of the individual unions; on the other hand, from the mischief and confusion created by Proudhonism in its original form among the French and Belgians, and in its caricature form, as presented by Bakunin, among the Spaniards and Italians.

The second advantage is that, chronologically speaking, the Germans were the last to appear in the labor movement. In the same manner as German theoretical socialism will never forget that it rests on the shoulders of Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen, three men who, in spite of their fantastic notions and utopianism, have their place

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among the most eminent thinkers of all time, and whose genius anticipated innumerable truths the correctness of which can now be proved in a scientific way, so the practical German labor movement must never forget that it has developed on the shoulders of the English and French movements, that it had utilized their experience, acquired at a heavy price, and that for this reason it was in a position to avoid their mistakes which in their time were unavoidable. Without the English trade unions and the French political workers' struggles preceding the German labor movement, without the mighty impulse given by the Paris Commune, where would we now be?

It must be said to the credit of the German workers that they have utilized the advantages of their situation with rare understanding. For the first time in the history of the labor movement the struggle is being so conducted that its three sides, the theoretical, the political and the practical economic (opposition to the capitalists) form one harmonious and well-planned entity. In this concentric attack, as it were, lies the strength and invincibility of the German movement.

It is due to this advantageous situation on the one hand, to the insular peculiarities of the British, and to the cruel suppression of the French movements on the other, that for the present moment the German workers form the vanguard of the proletarian struggle. How long events will allow them to occupy this post of honor cannot be foreseen. But as long as they are placed in it, let us hope that they will discharge their duties in the proper manner. To this end it will be necessary to redouble our energies in every sphere of struggle and agitation. It is the specific duty of the leaders to gain an ever clearer understanding of the theoretical problems, to free themselves more and more from the influence of traditional phrases inherited from the old conception of the world, and constantly to keep in mind that socialism, having become a science, demands the same treatment as every other science – it must be studied. The task of the leaders will be to bring understanding, thus acquired and clarified, to the working masses, to spread it with increased enthusiasms, to close the ranks of the party

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organizations and of the labor unions with ever greater energy....

If the German workers proceed in this way, they will not march exactly at the head of the movement – it is not in the interests of the movement that the workers of any one country should march at the head of all – but they will occupy an honorable place on the battle line, and they will stand armed for battle when other unexpected grave trials or momentous events will demand heightened courage, heightened determination and the will to act.<sup>1</sup>

Engels' words proved prophetic. Within a few years, the German workers were subjected to severe trials in the form of the anti-Socialist law; but they were fully armed to meet the situation, and succeeded in emerging from it victoriously.

The Russian proletariat will have to undergo trials immeasurably more severe; it will have to take up the fight against a monster, compared with which the anti-Socialist law in a constitutional country is but a pigmy. History has now confronted us with an immediate task which is *more revolutionary than all the immediate tasks* that confront the proletariat of any other country. The fulfillment of this task, the destruction of the most powerful bulwark, not only of European, but also (it may now be said) of Asiatic reaction would place the Russian proletariat in the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat. We shall have the right to count upon acquiring the honorable title already earned by our predecessors, the revolutionaries of the 'seventies, if we succeed in inspiring our movement – which is a thousand times wider and deeper – with the same devoted determination and vigor.

V. I. Lenin, *ibid.*, pp. 111-112; pp. 29-30.

### **2. Marxism Is Not a Dogma, But a Guide to Action**

At the present time international Social-Democracy is experiencing a vacillation of the mind. Hitherto the doctrines of Marx and Engels were considered a sound foundation for revolutionary theory – to-day voices make themselves heard everywhere speaking of the inadequacy of these doctrines and their obsolescence. Whoever calls himself a social democrat and intends to come out with a Social-

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany*, pp. 27-30. – *Ed.*



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Democratic organ must with exactitude define his attitude to the question which by far does not agitate the German social-democrats alone.

We stand squarely on the theory of Marx: it for the first time converted socialism from a utopia into a science, laid down a firm foundation for this science and marked the path to follow, developing this science further and working it out in all its divisions. It revealed the essence of modern capitalist economy by explaining the way in which the hiring of workers, the purchase of labor power, conceals the enslavement of the millions of propertyless people to a small group of capitalists, the owners of the land, the factories, the mines, etc. It showed how the whole development of modern capitalism tends to the big producer squeezing out the small producer, creates conditions which make the socialist organizations of society both possible and necessary. It has taught us to see the *class struggle* beneath the mantle of inveterate usages, political intrigues, subtle laws, tangled doctrines, the struggle between the possessing class of every description against the mass of the propertyless, against the *proletariat* which stands at the head of all the propertyless. It elucidated the real task of the revolutionary Socialist party: not drafting plans for the reorganization of society, not preaching to the capitalists and their hangers-on improving the position of the working class, not hatching plots, but *organizing the class struggle of the proletariat and leading this struggle, the ultimate aim of which is the conquest of political power by the proletariat and the organization of socialist society.*

And we ask now: what new matter after all has been introduced into this theory by its loud-spoken “renovators” who in our day made so much noise, who grouped around the German socialist Bernstein?<sup>1</sup> *Nothing whatever*: they have not advanced by one step the science which it is our legacy from Marx and Engels to develop; they have not taught the proletariat any new methods of struggle; they have only retraced their steps, plagiarizing scraps of out-of-date theories and preaching to the proletariat not the theory of struggle but the theory of concessions, concessions with reference to the most malicious enemies of the proletariat – to the governments and the bourgeois parties which do not tire of ferreting out

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<sup>1</sup> Eduard Bernstein (1850-1933) in his book *Evolutionary Socialism*, 1889, attempted to effect a revision of revolutionary Marxism. – Ed.

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new means of incitement against the socialists. Plekhanov, one of the founders and leaders of the Russian Social Democracy was absolutely right when he subjected to merciless criticism the latest “criticism” of Bernstein whose views have now been spurned also by the representatives of the German workers (at the Hanover Congress).

We know that a heap of accusations will be showered upon us for these words: they will shriek that we want to transform the socialist party into an order of the “Orthodox” which will persecute “heretics” for transgressing “dogmas,” for every independent opinion, etc. We know all these stylish, trenchant phrases. Only they are totally devoid of truth and sense. There can be no strong Socialist Party if there is no revolutionary theory which unites all socialists, from which they draw all their convictions, which they apply to their methods of struggle and means of activity; to defend such a theory which you consider true to the best of your reasoning power against unfounded attacks and against attempts to deteriorate it does not at all mean to be an enemy of *all* criticism. We do not at all regard the theory of Marx as something final and untouchable; we are convinced, on the contrary, that it only laid the cornerstone of the science which socialists *ought* to promote in every direction if they do not want to trail behind life. We think that for the Russian socialists an *independent* elaboration of the theory of Marx is particularly necessary, since that theory gives only general guiding principles, the *detailed* application of which differs between Great Britain and France, differs between France and Germany, differs between Germany and Russia. We shall therefore willingly set aside space in our newspaper for articles on theoretical questions and invite all comrades to an open discussion of controversial points....

V. I. Lenin, “Our Program,” 1899, *Collected Works*, Russian edition, Vol. II.

Our teaching – said Engels, referring to himself and his famous friend – is not a dogma, but a guide to action. This classical proposition emphasizes with remarkable force and expressiveness that aspect of Marxism which is continually left out of view. And in leaving it out of view, we turn Marxism into something one-sided, crippled and dead, we take from it its living soul, we undermine its fundamental theoretical basis – dialectics, the teaching of historical development as being all-sided and full of contradictions; we cut its

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connection with the definite tasks of the epoch, which may change with every new turn in history.

And in our time, just among those who are interested in the destinies of Marxism in Russia, very frequently people are to be met with who leave out of view precisely this side of it. And yet it is clear to all that Russia in recent years has passed through such abrupt changes as, with unusual rapidity and unusual sharpness, have altered the situation, the social and political situation that determines the conditions of action in an immediate and direct manner, and consequently, the problems of action too. I am not speaking, of course, of general and fundamental problems, which do not change with turns in history, so long as the main correlation of the classes remains unchanged. It is quite obvious that this general direction of the economic (and not only economic) evolution of Russia, as well as the basic correlation between the various classes of Russian society has not changed during, say, the last six years.

But the problems of immediate and direct action have changed during this time very sharply, just as the concrete social political situation has changed, and consequently, also in Marxism as a live doctrine, different aspects of it had to come to the front.

V. I. Lenin, "On Some Peculiarities of the Historical Development of Marxism," 1911, *Marx, Engels, Marxism*, p. 85.

### **3. Criticism of the Theory of Spontaneity**

#### *A. Spontaneity and Class Consciousness in the Labor Movement*

We have said that our movement, much wider and deeper than the movement of the 'seventies, must be inspired with the same devoted determination and energy that inspired the movement at that time. Indeed, no one, we think, has up till now doubted that the strength of the modern movement lies in the awakening of the masses (principally, the industrial proletariat), and that its weakness lies in the lack of consciousness and initiative among the revolutionary leaders.

However, a most astonishing discovery has been made recently, which threatens to overthrow all the views that have hitherto prevailed on this question. This discovery was made by *Rabocheye Dyelo*, which in its controversy with *Iskra* and *Zarya*, did not confine itself to making objections on separate points, but tried to ascribe "general disagreements" to a more profound cause – to the

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“disagreement concerning the estimation of the *relative* importance of the spontaneous and consciously ‘methodical’ element.” *Rabocheye Dyelo’s* indictment reads: “*Belittling the importance of the objective, or spontaneous, element of development.*” To this we say: If the controversy with *Iskra* and *Zarya* resulted in absolutely nothing more than causing *Rabocheye Dyelo* to think over these “general disagreements,” that single result would give us considerable satisfaction, so important is this thesis, and so clearly does it illuminate the quintessence of the present-day theoretical and political differences that exist among Russian Social- Democrats.

That is why the question of the relation between consciousness and spontaneity is of such enormous general interest, and that is why this question must be dealt with in great detail.

In the previous chapter we pointed out how *universally* absorbed the educated youth of Russia were in the theories of Marxism in the middle of the ’nineties. The strikes that followed the famous St. Petersburg industrial war of 1896 also assumed a similar wholesale character. The fact that these strikes spread over the whole of Russia clearly showed how deep the reviving popular movement was, and if we must speak of the “spontaneous element” then, of course, we must admit that this strike movement certainly bore a spontaneous character. But there is a difference between spontaneity and spontaneity. Strikes occurred in Russia in the ’seventies, and in the ’sixties (and also in the first half of the nineteenth century) and these strikes were accompanied by the “spontaneous” destruction of machinery, etc. Compared with these “riots” the strikes of the ’nineties might even be described as “conscious,” to such an extent do they mark the progress which the labor movement had made since that period. This shows that the “spontaneous element,” in essence, represents nothing more nor less than consciousness in an *embryonic* form. Even the primitive revolts expressed the awakening of consciousness to a certain extent: the workers abandoned their age-long faith in the permanence of the system which oppressed them. They began – I shall not say to understand, but to sense the necessity for collective resistance, and emphatically abandoned their slavish submission to their superiors. But all this was more in the nature of outbursts of desperation and vengeance than of *struggle*. The strikes of the ’nineties revealed far greater flashes of consciousness; definite demands were put forward, the time to strike was carefully chosen, known cases and examples in other

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places were discussed, etc. While the revolts were simply uprisings of the oppressed, the systematic strikes represented the class struggle in embryo, but only in embryo. Taken by themselves, these strikes were simply trade union struggles but not yet Social-Democratic struggles. They testified to the awakening antagonisms between workers and employers, but the workers were not and could not be conscious of the irreconcilable antagonism of their interests to the whole of the modern political and social system, *i.e.*, it was not yet Social-Democratic consciousness. In this sense, the strikes of the 'nineties, in spite of the enormous progress they represented as compared with the "riots," represented a purely spontaneous movement.

We said that *there could not yet be* Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. This consciousness could only be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness, *i.e.*, it may itself realize the necessity for combining in unions, for fighting against the employers and for striving to compel the government to pass necessary labor legislation, etc.<sup>1</sup> The theory of Socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories that were elaborated by the educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals. According to their social status, the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia. Similarly, in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of Social-Democracy arose quite independently of the spontaneous growth of the labor movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of ideas among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia. At the time of which we are speaking, *i.e.*, the middle of the 'nineties, this doctrine not only represented the completely formulated program of the Emancipation of Labor Group, but had already won the adhesion of the majority of the revolutionary youth in Russia.

Hence, simultaneously, we had both the spontaneous awakening

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<sup>1</sup> Trade unionism does not exclude "politics" altogether, as some imagine. Trade unions have always conducted political agitation and struggle (but not Social-Democratic ones). We shall deal with the difference between trade union politics and Social-Democratic politics in the next chapter.

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of the masses of the workers – the awakening to conscious life and struggle, and the revolutionary youth, armed with the Social-Democratic theories, striving to reach the workers. In this connection it is particularly important to state the oft-forgotten (and comparatively little-known) fact that the early Social-Democrats of that period, *zealously carried on economic* agitation (being guided in this by the really useful instructions contained in the pamphlet *Agitation*<sup>1</sup> that was still in manuscript) but they did not regard this as their sole task. On the contrary, *from the very outset*, they brought up the general historical tasks of Russian Social-Democracy, and particularly the task of overthrowing the autocracy. For example, the St. Petersburg group of Social-Democrats, which formed the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, towards the end of 1895, prepared the first number of the journal known as *Rabocheye Dyelo*. This number was completely ready for the press when it was seized by the gendarmes who, on the night of December 8, 1895, raided the house of one of the members of the group, Anatole Alekseyevich Vaneyev, and so the original *Rabocheye Dyelo* was not fated to see the light. The leading article in this number (which perhaps in thirty years' time some *Russkaya Starina*<sup>2</sup> will discover in the archives of the Department of Police) described the historic tasks of the working class in Russia, of which the achievement of political liberty is regarded as the most important. This number also contained an article entitled "What Are Our Cabinet Ministers Thinking Of?" which dealt with the breaking up of the elementary education committees by the police. In addition, there was some correspondence, from St. Petersburg, as well as from other parts of Russia (for example, a letter on the assault on the workers in the Yaroslav province). This, if we are not mistaken, "first attempt" of the Russian Social-Democrats of the 'nineties was not a narrow, local, and certainly not an "economic" newspaper but one that aimed to unite the strike movement with the revolutionary movement against the autocracy and to win all the victims of oppression and political and reactionary obscurantism over to the side of Social-Democracy. No one in the slightest degree ac-

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<sup>1</sup> In. this pamphlet the Economists advanced their erroneous "stages theory" – first only economic action, then proceed to political action – to justify their tactics. – *Ed.*

<sup>2</sup> *Russian Antiquity*. – *Ed.*

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quainted with the state of the movement at that period could doubt that such a paper would have been fully approved of by the workers of the capital and the revolutionary intelligentsia and would have had a wide circulation. The failure of the enterprise merely showed that the Social-Democrats of that time were unable to meet the immediate requirements of the time owing to their lack of revolutionary experience and practical training. The same thing must be said with regard to the St. Petersburg *Rabochy Listok* [*Workers' Bulletin*] and particularly with regard to the *Rabochaya Gazeta* and Manifesto of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party which was established in the spring of 1898. Of course, we would not dream of blaming the Social-Democrats of that time for this preparedness. But in order to obtain the benefit of the experience of that movement, and to learn practical lessons from it, we must thoroughly understand the causes and significance of this or that shortcoming. For that reason it is extremely important to establish the fact that part (perhaps even a majority) of the Social-Democrats operating in the period of 1895-1898, quite justly considered it possible even then, at the very beginning of the "spontaneous movement," to come forward with a most extensive program and fighting tactics.<sup>1</sup> The lack of training of the majority of the revolutionaries being quite a natural phenomenon, could not have aroused any particular fears. Since the tasks were properly defined, since the energy existed for repeated attempts to fulfill these tasks, the

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<sup>1</sup> "*Iskra*, which adopts a hostile attitude towards the activities of the Social-Democrats of the end of the 'nineties, ignores the fact that at that time the conditions were unfavorable for any other kind of work except fighting for petty demands," declare the Economists in their *Letter to Russian Social-Democratic Organs*. (*Iskra*, No. 12.) The fact quoted above shows that the statement about "unfavorable conditions" is *diametrically opposed to the truth*. Not only at the end, but even in the middle of the 'nineties, all the conditions existed *for other* work, besides fighting for petty demands, all the conditions – except the sufficient training of the leaders. Instead of frankly admitting our, the ideologists', the leaders', lack of sufficient training – the Economists try to throw the blame entirely upon "the absence of conditions," upon the influence of material environment which determined the road from which it will be impossible for any ideologist to divert the movement. What is this but slavish cringing before spontaneity, but the fact that the "ideologists" are enamored of their own shortcomings?

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temporary failures were not such a great misfortune. Revolutionary experience and organizational skill are things that can be acquired provided the desire is there to acquire these qualities, provided the shortcomings are recognized – which in revolutionary activity is more than half-way towards removing them!

It was a great misfortune, however, when this consciousness began to grow dim (it was very lively among the workers of the group mentioned), when people appeared – and even Social- Democratic organs – who were prepared to regard shortcomings as virtues, who tried even to put a *theoretical* basis to *slavish cringing before spontaneity*. It is time to summarize this tendency, the substance of which is incorrectly and too narrowly described as “Economism.”

V. I. Lenin, “What Is To Be Done?” *Collected Works*, Vol. IV, Book 2, pp. 113-117; also Little Lenin Library, Vol. 4, pp. 31-35.

### *B. Spontaneity of the Movement Leads to Its Subordination to Bourgeois Ideology*

Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology being developed by the masses of the workers in the process of their movement<sup>1</sup> then *the only choice is*: either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for humanity has not created “a third”

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<sup>1</sup> This does not mean, of course, that the workers have no part in creating such an ideology. But they take part not as workers, but as socialist theoreticians, like Proudhon and Weitling; in other words, they take part only to the extent that they are able, more or less, to acquire the knowledge of their age and advance that knowledge. And in order that working men *may be able to do this more often*, efforts must be made to raise the level of the consciousness of the workers generally; care must be taken that the workers do not confine themselves to the artificially restricted limits of “*literature for workers*” but that they study *general literature* to an increasing degree. It would even be more true to say “were not confined,” instead of “not confine themselves,” because the workers themselves wish to read and do read all that is written for the intelligentsia and it is only a few (bad) intellectuals who believe that it is sufficient “for the workers” to tell them a few things about factory conditions, and to repeat over and over again what has long been known.



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ideology, and moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms, there can never be a non-class or above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle socialist ideology *in any way*, to *deviate from it in the slightest degree* means strengthening bourgeois ideology. There is a lot of talk about spontaneity, but the *spontaneous* development of the labor movement leads to its becoming subordinated to bourgeois ideology, leads to its developing *according to the program* of the *Credo*, for the spontaneous labor movement is pure and simple trade unionism, is *Nur-Gewerkschaftlerei*, and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers to the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of Social-Democracy, is to *combat spontaneity*, to *divert* the labor movement from its spontaneous, trade unionist striving to go under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social-Democracy. The phrases employed by the authors of the "Economic" letter in *Iskra*, No. 12, about the efforts of the most inspired ideologists not being able to divert the labor movement from the path that is determined by the interaction of the material elements and the material environment *are tantamount to the abandonment of socialism*, and if only the authors of this letter fearlessly thought out what they say to its logical conclusion, as every one who enters into the arena of literary and public activity should do, they would have nothing else to do but "fold their useless arms over their empty breasts" and... leave the field of action to the Struves and Prokopoviches who are dragging the labor movement "along the line of least resistance," *i.e.*, along the line of bourgeois trade unionism, or to the Zubatovs who are dragging it along the line of clerical and gendarme "ideology."

Recall the example of Germany. What was the historical service Lassalle rendered to the German labor movement? It was that he *diverted* that movement from the path of progressive trade unionism and cooperation, along which it had been traveling spontaneously (*with the benign assistance of Schulze-Delitzsch and those like him*). To fulfill a task like that it was necessary to do something altogether different from indulging in talk about belittling the spontaneous element, about the tactics-process and about the interaction between elements and environment, etc. *A desperate struggle against spontaneity had to be carried on*, and only after such a struggle, extending over many years, was it possible to convert the working population of Berlin from a bulwark of the Progressive Party into one of the finest strongholds of Social-Democracy. This fight is not fin-

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ished even now (as those who learn the history of the German movement from Prokopovich, and its philosophy from Struve, believe). Even now the German working class is, so to speak, broken up into a number of ideologies. A section of the workers is organized in Catholic and monarchist labor unions; another section is organized in the Hirsch-Duncker unions, founded by the bourgeois worshippers of English trade unions, while a third section is organized in Social-Democratic trade unions. The latter is immeasurably more numerous than the rest, but Social-Democracy was able to achieve this superiority and will be able to maintain it only by unswervingly fighting against all other ideologies.

But why, the reader will ask, does the spontaneous movement, the movement along the line of least resistance, lead to the domination of bourgeois ideology? For the simple reason that bourgeois ideology is far older in origin than Social-Democratic ideology; because it is more fully developed and because it possesses *immeasurably* more opportunities for becoming widespread.<sup>1</sup> And the younger the socialist movement is in any given country, the more vigorously must it fight again against all attempts to entrench non-socialist ideology, and the more strongly must it warn the workers against those bad counsellors who shout against “exaggerating the conscious elements,” etc. The authors of the economic letter, in unison with *Rabocheye Dyelo*, disclaim against the intolerance that is characteristic of the infancy of the movement. To this we reply: Yes, our movement is indeed in its infancy, and in order that it may grow up the quicker, it must become infected with intolerance against all those who retard its growth by subservience to spontanei-

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<sup>1</sup> It is often said: the working class *spontaneously* gravitates towards socialism. This is perfectly true in the sense that socialist theory defines the causes of the misery of the working class more profoundly and more correctly than any other theory, and for that reason the workers are able to appreciate it so easily, *provided*, however, that this theory does not step aside for spontaneity and *provided* it subordinates spontaneity to itself. Usually this is taken for granted, but *Rabocheye Dyelo* forgets or distorts this obvious thing. The working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism, nevertheless, the more widespread (and continuously revived in the most diverse forms) bourgeois ideology imposes itself spontaneously upon the working class more than any other.

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ty. Nothing is so ridiculous and harmful as pretending that we are “old hands” who have long ago experienced all the decisive episodes of the struggle!

V.I. Lenin, *ibid.*, pp. 122-125; pp. 40-43.

### *C. Criticism of the Theory of Spontaneity or the Role 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 labor movement, the theory that actually denies to the vanguard of the working class, to the party of the working class, its leading role.

The theory of deference to spontaneity is decidedly opposed to the revolutionary character of the labor movement; it is opposed to the movement following the line of struggle against the foundations of capitalism and is in favor 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 favor 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 role of the class conscious element in the movement, the ideology of “dragging at the tail,” of “*khvostism*”<sup>1</sup> – 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 “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 labor movement to the hegemony of the liberal bourgeoisie.

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<sup>1</sup> From the Russian, *khvost*, meaning tail. – Ed.

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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 pigeonholed 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 role 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,

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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.

Joseph Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism*, Chap. in, pp. 28-30.

### **4. Stalin on the Significance of the Marxist-Leninist Theory and the Struggle for the Victory of Socialist Construction**

But although we can be proud of the *practical* successes achieved in the building of socialism, the same cannot be said in regard to the success of our *theoretical* work in the sphere of economics in general, and of agriculture in particular. Moreover, we must acknowledge that theoretical thought does not keep pace with our practical success, that there is a certain gap between our practical success and the development of theoretical ideas. But it is necessary that our theoretical work not only keep pace with practical work, but be ahead of it and supply our practical workers with weapons in their fight for the victory of Socialism.

I shall not deal at any length here with the importance of theory, you are well aware of its importance. You know that a theory, when it is a genuine theory, gives practical workers the power of orientation, clarity of perspective, faith in their work, confidence in the victory of our cause. All this is, and must be, of enormous importance for the cause of our Socialist reconstruction. It is unfortunate that precisely in this sphere, the sphere of the theoretical working out of problems concerning our economy, we are beginning to limp. How can we otherwise explain the fact that on questions of our economy various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois theories are still current in our social-political life? How can we explain these theories and this theorizing have not yet been rejected as they should be? How can we explain why a number of fundamental assertions of Marxist-Leninist political economy representing the most effective antidote to bourgeois and petty-bourgeois theories are beginning to be forgotten, are not popularized in our press, and for some reason are not placed in the foreground? It is so difficult to grasp that without an irreconcilable struggle against bourgeois theories, on the basis of Marxist-Leninist theory, the complete victory

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over the class enemy cannot be won?

The new methods of actual practice are calling into being new methods of dealing with the economic problems of the transition period. The questions of the New Economic Policy, of classes, of the *tempo* of construction, of the *smychka* with the peasantry, of Party policy, are being raised in a new form. If we are not to lag behind actual practice, we must immediately proceed to tackle all these problems from the standpoint of the new situation. Otherwise it is impossible to overcome the bourgeois theories which are confusing the minds of our practical workers. Otherwise these theories, which possess the tenacity of prejudices, cannot be exterminated. It is only by combating the bourgeois prejudices in the field of theory that the position of Marxism-Leninism can be consolidated.

Joseph Stalin, "Questions of Agrarian Policy in the Soviet Union," *Leninism*, Vol. II, pp. 253-254.