

**THE THEORY AND
PRACTICE OF
LENINISM**

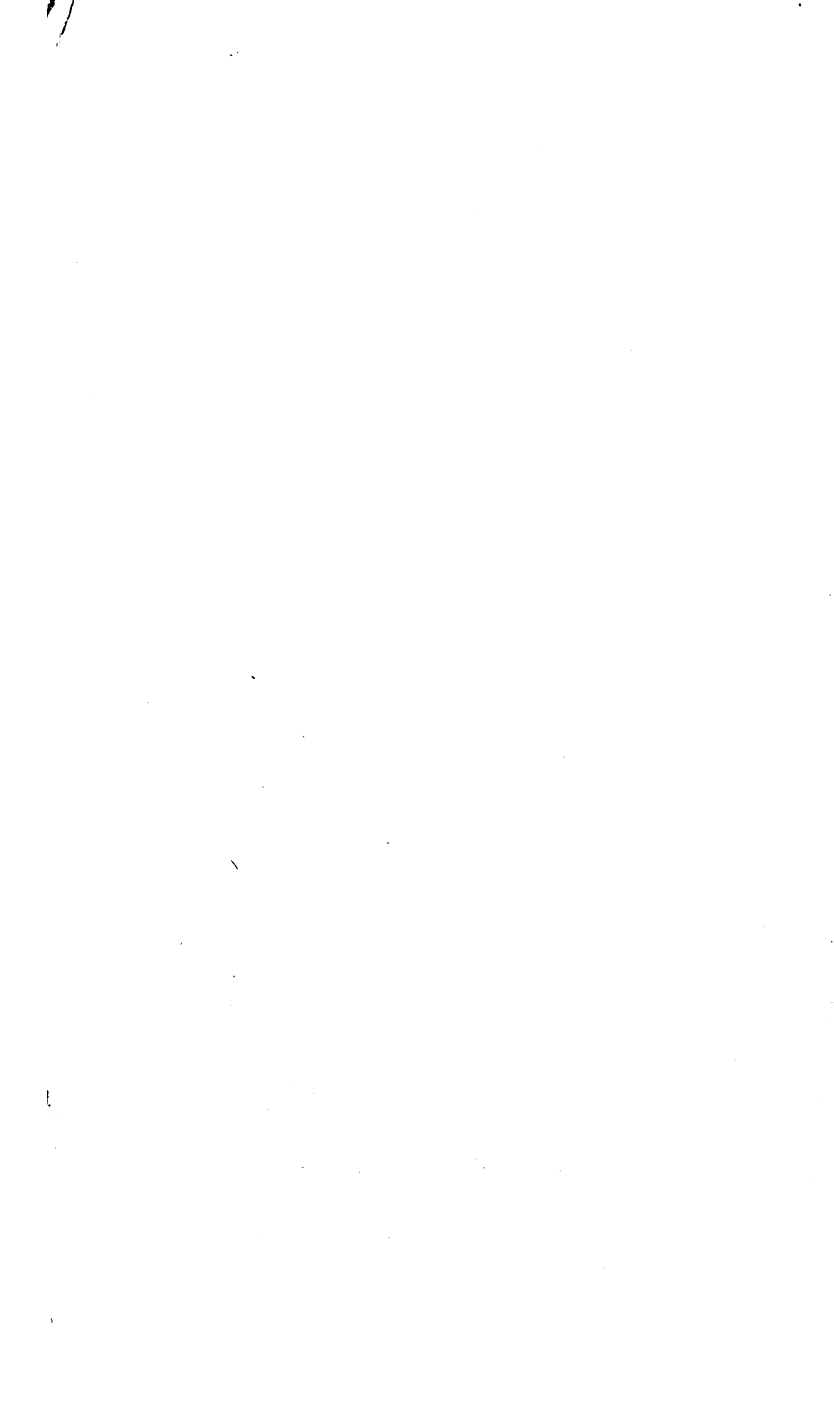


The Theory and Practice of Leninism



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PREFACE

The basis of every Communist Party to-day is Leninism. The pseudo-Marxists and reformists in the Second International speak of Bolshevism, i.e., Leninism, as a purely post-war, and above all, exclusively Russian phenomenon. They associate the name of Lenin with Blanqui, and distort the aims of the Communist Party by representing these as wanton anarchism, totally unrelated to the organised movement of the majority of the international proletariat. This little booklet shatters these distortions once and for all.

In the following pages the readers will find a clear perspective of the role of Leninism, its organisation, Party strategy and tactics, in short, a practical guide to the treatment of the fundamental problems before every revolutionary party, viz., war, dictatorship of the proletariat, the peasantry, colonies and nationality.

It will be seen here that Leninism is the application of Marxism in the period of imperialism, expressed not in "red" phrases, but in the activity of a party. Without a party, Marxism or Leninism becomes academic and barren. Every

Leninist, *i.e.*, every Communist, must, therefore, be a party man in the best sense of the word. *There are no Leninists outside the Communist Party.*

The author, Comrade Stalin, an old Bolshevik revolutionary Marxist fighter and party man, is well qualified to deal with Leninism and its *theory*, but, above all, its *practice*. This edition is translated from the volume issued by our brother party in France.

T.B.



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CHAPTER I.

LENINISM, THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARXISM.

THE foundations of Leninism : it is a very big subject. To treat it thoroughly a whole volume, or several, would be needed. So my discussion cannot be adequate. At best, it will be only a brief outline of the foundations of Leninism. Nevertheless, it may perhaps be of some use.

To explain the foundations of Leninism is not, moreover, to explain the foundations of the philosophy of Lenin. Lenin is a Marxist, and it is Marxism that is most certainly the foundation of his philosophy. But it does not follow that the exposition of Leninism ought to begin by an exposition of the foundations of Marxism. To expound Leninism means to expound what there is distinctive in the works of Lenin, what new thing Lenin brought to Marxism, what is particularly connected with his name. It is only in this sense that I shall speak here of the foundations of Leninism.

What is Leninism ?

According to some, it is the application of Marxism to the peculiar conditions of Russia. This definition contains some truth, but only a part. Lenin has indeed applied Marxism to the Russian situation, and applied it uncommonly well. But if Leninism were only the application of Marxism to the peculiar situation of Russia, it would have a purely national, and solely Russian, character.

Now Leninism is not merely a Russian phenomenon, but an international one. That is why this definition is too narrow.

Others declare that Leninism is the resurrection of the revolutionary elements of the Marxism of 1850, which, supposedly, in the following years has become moderate and has lost its revolutionary character. Setting aside this stupid division of the doctrines of Marx into two parts, revolutionary and moderate, it is necessary to recognise that this definition, in spite of all its inadequacy, contains a part of the truth. The part of the truth is that Lenin has indeed revived the revolutionary content of Marxism, suffocated by the opportunists of the Second International. But there is here only a particle of the truth. The whole truth is that Leninism has not merely revived Marxism, but has made also a step forward in developing it under the new conditions of capitalism, and of the class-struggle of the proletariat.

What, then, is Leninism?

Leninism is the Marxism of the epoch of Imperialism and the proletarian revolution, it is the theory and tactic of the proletarian revolution in general, and particularly the theory and tactic of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Marx and Engels lived in a pre-revolutionary epoch when Imperialism was still in an embryonic condition, when the proletarians were only preparing themselves for the revolution, when the proletarian revolution was not yet a direct, practical necessity. Lenin, the disciple of Marx and Engels, has lived in an epoch of expansion of Imperialism and

development of the proletarian revolution, in an epoch when this revolution, triumphant in one country, destroyed the bourgeois democracy there and opened the era of proletarian democracy, the era of Soviets.

That is why Leninism is the development of Marxism.

One usually emphasises, and rightly, the exceptionally combative and revolutionary character of Leninism. But this peculiarity of Leninism arises from two reasons: first of all, because Leninism has sprung from the proletarian revolution, the imprint of which it could not fail to retain; secondly, because it has grown and strengthened itself in the struggle against the opportunism of the Second International, a struggle which is and remains the essential condition for the success of the struggle against capitalism. It should not be forgotten that between Marx and Engels on the one side, and Lenin on the other, there extends a whole period of unlimited domination by the opportunism of the Second International.

This opportunism has to be fought, and this is one of the most important tasks of Leninism.

CHAPTER II.

THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF LENINISM.

LENINISM has grown and established itself in the conditions of Imperialism, when the contradictions of capitalism have reached the most acute stage, when the proletarian revolution has become an immediate practical question, when the period of preparation of the working class for the revolution has ended and given place to the period of direct onslaught against capitalism.

Lenin has called Imperialism "perishing, decaying capitalism." Why? Because Imperialism carries the contradictions of capitalism to their extreme limits, after which the revolution begins. Among these contradictions there are three of particular importance.

The first is the contradiction between labour and capital. Imperialism is the omnipotence of the monopolist trusts and syndicates, of the banks and of the financial oligarchy, in the industrial countries. In order to fight against this omnipotence, the customary methods of the working class—trade unions and co-operatives, parties and the parliamentary struggle—were quite insufficient. Either to put itself at the mercy of capital, to vegetate and degenerate more and more, or to adopt a new weapon and engage in direct conflict: such was the alternative that Imperialism put before the innumerable army of the proletariat. Thus Imperialism leads the working class to the revolution.

The second contradiction is the antagonism of the various financial groups and Imperialist powers in their struggle for the sources of raw materials, for foreign territory. Imperialism is the export of capital to the sources of raw materials, the stubborn struggle for exclusive possession of these sources, the struggle of new financial groups and powers seeking their "place in the sun," against the old ones which do not wish to let go their prey. This struggle between capitalists includes inevitably the element of Imperialist wars, wars for the annexation of foreign territory. Now, this state of things itself leads to the weakening of the Imperialists by each other, the weakening of the position of capitalism in general; it accelerates the proletarian revolution and practically compels this revolution.

The third contradiction is the contradiction between a few powerful "civilised" nations, and the small, weak nations and colonial peoples. Imperialism means the most shameless exploitation and at the most inhuman oppression of hundreds of millions of men in the colonies and dependent countries. To draw the biggest profits from these countries: such is the end of this exploitation and oppression. But in order to exploit these countries Imperialism is obliged to construct railways, factories and workshops, to create commercial and industrial centres. The appearance of a class of proletarians, the formation of a class of native intellectuals, the awakening of national consciousness, the strengthening of the liberation movement: such are the inevitable results of this "policy"; results evident in the strengthening of the revolutionary movement in the colonies and subject countries. Now this movement has a very

great importance for the proletariat, for it undermines the position of capitalism by transforming the colonies and subject countries, the reserves of Imperialism, into the reserves of the proletarian revolution.

Such are the principal contradictions of capitalism which have led to the ineptitude of the old "flourishing" capitalism. The last great Imperialist war grouped all these contradictions into a single sheaf and threw them into the pan of the scales, so facilitating and accelerating the revolutionary battles of the proletariat.

In other words, Imperialism has made the revolution a practical necessity; further, it has created favourable conditions for the attack on the citadels of capitalism.

Such is the international situation which gave birth to Leninism.

This is all very fine, you may say, but how does Russia come into this; Russia which was not and could not be the classic land of Imperialism? How is Lenin concerned in it, he who worked pre-eminently in Russia and for Russia? Why has Russia been the home of Leninism, this land where the theory and practice of the proletarian revolution sprang into being?

Because Russia was in some fashion the focussing point of all these contradictions of Imperialism.

Because Russia more than any other country was pregnant with the revolution and was alone in a position to solve these contradictions by the path of revolution.

In fact, Tsarist Russia was the home of oppression under every form, capitalist, colonial and mili-

tarist, of oppression in the most barbarous form. The omnipotence of capital was allied there with the despotism of Tsarism, the aggressiveness of nationalism with the most ferocious oppression of non-Russian peoples, the economic exploitation of whole regions of Turkey, Persia, and China, with the military conquest of these regions by Tsarism. Lenin was quite right in saying that Tsarism was "feudal-militarist Imperialism!" Tsarism was the quintessence of the most negative sides of Imperialism.

Again, Tsarist Russia was an immense reserve force for European Imperialism, not only because it freely gave entrance to foreign capital (which held such important branches of Russian economy as fuel and metallurgy), but also because it could furnish millions of soldiers to the Imperialists of the West. Thus, during the war, twelve million Russian soldiers shed their blood on the Imperialist front to safeguard the limitless profits of the Anglo-French capitalists.

Furthermore, Tsarism was not only the watchdog of Imperialism in Eastern Europe, but its agency as well for the collection of tremendous interest on loans floated in Paris, London, Berlin and Brussels.

Finally, Tsarism was the faithful ally of Western Imperialism in the matter of the partition of Turkey, Persia and China. Was not the Imperialist war carried on by Russia allied with the Entente powers, was not Russia the principal agent in the war?

That is why the interests of Tsarism and of the Imperialism of the West were those of Imperialism in general. Could the Imperialism of the West

resign itself to the loss of this powerful support in the East, this source of forces and wealth, such as was the old bourgeois Russia, without trying every means, including war against the Russian Revolution, to defend and maintain Tsarism? Obviously not!

It follows that if you wanted to strike at Tsarism, it would be necessary also to strike at Imperialism; if you really intended to uproot Tsarism it would be necessary, after having overthrown it, to overthrow Imperialism as well. Thus, then, the Revolution against Tsarism was to lead to the overthrow of capitalism. The Russian Communists could not act in any other manner, their way alone allowed them to hope for changes in the international situation, capable of guaranteeing Russia against the restoration of the bourgeois regime.

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

Russia and Lenin were in a situation similar to that in which Germany, and Marx and Engels, were placed in 1850. Like Russia at the beginning of the 20th century, Germany was pregnant with the bourgeois revolution. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx wrote: "*The Communists turn their attention chiefly to Germany, because Germany is on the eve of a bourgeois revolution, and because this revolution will be carried out under the most advanced conditions of European civilisation, and with a much more developed proletariat than that of England in the seventeenth and France in the eighteenth centuries; the German*

bourgeois revolution, consequently can only be the immediate prelude to a proletarian revolution."

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

In the same way, Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century was on the eve of the bourgeois revolution. But European civilisation was more advanced, the Russian proletariat more developed, and everything led one to believe that this revolution would be the ferment and the prologue of the proletarian revolution. Already in 1902, when the Russian revolution was still only in the embryonic stage, Lenin, in *What is to be Done?* wrote :

"History imposes upon the Russian Marxists an immediate task, the most revolutionary of those which devolve upon the proletariat of the various countries. The accomplishment of this task, that is to say, the destruction of the most powerful bulwarks of European and Asiatic reaction, would make the Russian proletariat the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat."

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

The course of the revolution has, as we know, completely fulfilled this prediction of Lenin's.

Is it astonishing, after all this, that a country which has accomplished such a revolution and has such a proletariat at command should have been the fatherland of the theory and practice of the proletarian revolution?

Is it astonishing that Lenin, the leader of this proletariat, should become the creator of this theory and this tactic, and the leader of the international proletariat?

CHAPTER III.

THE METHOD.

I SAID above that between Marx and Engels on the one hand, and Lenin on the other, there extended a whole period in which the opportunism of the Second International was supreme. To be more precise, I will add that it was not so much a question of the formal, but only of the real, domination of opportunism. Formally, the Second International was led by such orthodox Marxists as Kautsky. In reality, its fundamental work was done along the line of opportunism. Petty bourgeois by 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"! In short, the "orthodox" were bound indissolubly through the opportunists, to the policy of the bourgeoisie.

It was a period of relatively peaceful capitalist development, a pre-war period, so to speak, when the contradictions of Imperialism were not yet exposed to their full extent, when economic strikes and trade unions developed more or less "normally," when the Socialist Parties carried off overwhelming electoral and parliamentary successes, when the legal forms of struggle were exalted to the heavens, and when it was hoped to "kill" capitalism through legalism: in a word, a period when the parties of the Second International were becoming gross and stodgy, no longer purposing

revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, or the revolutionary education of the masses.

Instead of a unified revolutionary theory—contradictory propositions, fragments of theory unrelated to the actual revolutionary struggle of the masses, abstract and out-of-date dogmas. Formally one always referred oneself to the theory of Marx, but only in order to rob it of its revolutionary spirit.

Instead of a revolutionary policy—formless philistinism, paltry policies, parliamentary coalitions. At one time or another, revolutionary resolutions and slogans, buried as soon as adopted.

Instead of teaching the Party the true revolutionary tactic, from the study of its own mistakes, studied evasion of thorny questions. When by chance they were touched upon, it was to mutilate them and end the discussion with an elastic resolution.

Such was the aspect, the method of work and the armoury of the Second International.

However, we entered upon a new period, the period of Imperialist wars and of revolutionary fights of the proletariat. The old methods of struggle proved themselves quite inadequate in face of the omnipotence of finance-capital.

It was necessary to review the whole work and method of the Second International, to drive out its philistinism, its paltry narrowness, the policy of coalitions, social-chauvinism, social-pacifism. It was necessary to make an inventory of the armoury of the Second International, to reject all

that was rusty and out-of-date, to forge new weapons. Without this preliminary work, it was impossible to engage in war against capitalism. Without this work, the proletariat ran the risk of finding itself inadequately armed or even completely weaponless in future revolutionary battles.

It is upon Leninism that there devolved this general revision, this cleansing of the Augean stables of the Second International.

It was in this situation that the method of Leninism was born and bred.

To what does this method lead?

First of all, to the *testing* of the dogmas of the Second International in the crucible of the revolutionary struggle of the masses, in the crucible of experience; that is to say, to the restoration of the unity of theory and practice, for it is only in this way that there can be formed a truly revolutionary proletarian party, armed with a revolutionary theory.

Secondly, to the examination of the policy of the parties of the Second International, not according to their slogans, and resolutions, but according to their deeds, for it is only in this way that one can win the confidence of the proletarian masses.

Thirdly, to the *re-organisation* of all the work of the Party, to its revolutionary transformation, to the education and preparation of the masses for the revolutionary struggle, for only in this way can the masses be prepared for the proletarian revolution.

In the fourth place, to the *self-criticism* of the proletarian parties, to their education by experience of their own mistakes, for only thus can there be formed the cadres and true leaders of the Party.

Such are the bases and essence of the method of Leninism.

How was this method put into practice?

The opportunists of the Second International have a series of dogmas on which their whole attitude hinged. We will consider some of them.

First dogma: the proletariat cannot and ought not to seize power if it is not a majority in the country. The opportunists bring forward no proof of this proposition, for this thesis cannot be justified either theoretically or practically. Let us admit it for a moment, Lenin replies. But, if a situation (war, agrarian crisis) is produced in which the proletariat, a minority of the population, is able to group around itself the immense majority of the working masses, why should it not seize power then? Why should it not profit by the favourable internal and international situation to pierce the front of capitalism and hasten the catastrophe. Did not Marx say, about 1850, that the proletarian revolution in Germany would be in a splendid position if it could be supported by a "new edition, so to speak, of the peasant war"? Now, at that period, the number of proletarians in Germany was relatively less than in the Russia of 1917.

Has not the experience of the Russian revolution shown that their dogma, so dear to the men of the

Second International, is devoid of all vital significance for the proletariat? Isn't it obvious that the experience of the revolutionary struggle of the masses undermines more and more this out-of-date dogma?

Second dogma: the proletariat cannot keep power if it does not possess adequate cadres of intellectuals and technicians capable of organising the administration of the country: it is necessary to begin by forming these cadres within capitalism and only afterwards to take possession of power.

Well, let us agree, replies Lenin; but why shouldn't we seize power at once, and create favourable conditions for the development of the proletariat, to raise the cultural level of the working masses and quickly to form cadres of organisers and administrators recruited from amongst the workers? Hasn't Russian experience shown that these working class cadres will be formed better and more rapidly under proletarian power than under the power of capital? Isn't it obvious that the experience of the revolutionary struggle of the masses triumphantly refutes this dogma of the opportunists?

Third dogma: the method of the political general strike is inadmissible for the proletariat, because it is theoretically inconsistent (see Engels' criticism) and dangerous in practice (it may disturb the course of the economic life of the country, empty the coffers of the trade unions); it cannot take the place of the parliamentary struggle, which is the principal form of the class struggle of the proletariat. Excellent, reply the Leninists. But, in the first place, Engels criticised only a certain

kind of general strike, namely, the *economic* general strike which the anarchists recommend *in place* of the political struggle of the proletariat; why then go to Engels for condemnation of the political general strike? In the second place, what proves that the parliamentary struggle is the principal form of the struggle of the working class? Doesn't the history of the revolutionary movement show that the parliamentary struggle is only a school, only a fulcrum for the organisation of the extra-parliamentary struggle of the proletariat, that the essential questions of the labour movement within the capitalist order are settled by force, by open struggle, the general strike, the insurrection of the proletarian masses? In the third place, where can one discover that we wish to replace parliamentary struggle 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 the parliamentary ones? Fourthly, hasn't the revolution in Russia shown that the political general strike is the greatest school of the proletarian revolution, as well as a unique means of mobilising and organising the proletarian masses on the eve of the attack on the citadels of capitalism? Why then, these lamentations over the disorganisation of economic life, and the empty chests of the trade unions? Isn't it obvious that the experience of the revolutionary struggle disproves this dogma of the opportunists, too?

This is why Lenin said that the "revolutionary theory is not a dogma," ~~that it is~~ "definitely formulated only in direct contact with the practice of the actual revolutionary movement of the masses"

(*Left-wing Communism*), for it ought to serve practice, "answer the questions set by practice." (*The Friends of the People*), be verified by the results of practice.

As regards the political mottoes and resolutions of the parties of the Second International, it is enough to recall the famous watchword, "War against war," in order to realise the falsehood and baseness of the policy of these parties which veil their anti-revolutionary work behind revolutionary slogans and resolutions. Who doesn't remember the Congress of Basle where the Second International threatened the Imperialists with the thunders of insurrection if they dared to undertake a war, and proclaimed the watchword—"War against war"? But a little time after, at the very beginning of the war, the resolution of Basle was thrown into the wastepaper basket and the workers were exhorted to kill each other for the greater glory of the capitalist fatherland. Isn't it clear that revolutionary watchwords and resolutions are not worth a farthing if they are not translated into deeds? It is enough to compare the Leninist policy of transforming the Imperialist war into civil war with the traitorous policy of the Second International during the war, to understand the vileness of opportunism, the grandeur of Leninism. Let me quote to you at this point a passage from *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, in which Lenin severely lashes Kautsky for his attempt to judge parties not by their works, but by their watchwords and resolutions :

"Kautsky follows a typical petit-bourgeois policy; he imagines that the fact of putting forward

a watchword alters something of the matter. The whole history of the bourgeois democracy reduces this illusion to naught; to deceive the people, the bourgeois democrats have always, and always will, put forward any slogan whatever. The question is to test their sincerity, to compare their actions with their words, not to be content with the phraseology of idealism and quackery, but to seek the actual class content of their watchwords.

I do not speak of the fear of self-criticism which is the characteristic of the parties of the Second International, nor of their fixed determination to hide their mistakes, to evade thorny problems, to make it believed that all is for the best in their organisation, and so to suffocate healthy thought and hinder the revolutionary education of their members: this behaviour was subjected to withering ridicule by Lenin who wrote in *Left-wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder* :

“The attitude of a political party towards its mistakes is one of the surest and most important tests of its seriousness, of its ability to discharge its duties towards its class and the labouring masses. To recognise a mistake openly, to find out its causes, to analyse the situation which occasioned it, to examine carefully the means of repairing it—this is the mark of a serious party, this is what, in the case of a party, is called doing one’s duty, educating the class and so the masses.

Some say that self-criticism is dangerous for a party, that by exposing its own mistakes it gives its enemy weapons to use against it. Lenin thought that this objection was quite without seriousness or foundation. This is what he wrote on

the matter in 1904, in his brochure *One Step Forward*, at a time when the Party was still weak and insignificant :

“They (the opponents of the Marxists) are overjoyed at the sight of our discussions : they attempt to exploit for their own ends certain passages in the book devoted to the mistakes and shortcomings of our Party. The Russian Marxists are already sufficiently steeled in battle not to let themselves be troubled by these pinpricks, to continue their task of self-criticism and of exposure of their own defects, which will disappear as the working class movement is strengthened.”

Such, in sort, are the characteristic traits of the method of Leninism.

The substance of the method of Lenin was already virtually to be found in the teaching of Marx, which “was in essence, as Marx himself says, critical and revolutionary.” The whole method of Lenin is impregnated with just this critical revolutionary spirit. But this method is not simply the restoration, it is the materialisation and development of the critical and revolutionary method of Marx, of his materialist dialectic.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THEORY.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE THEORY.

SOME are of the opinion that Leninism is the supremacy of practice over theory, in the sense that the chief thing in Leninism is the translation into deeds of the Marxist theses, their "accomplishment." As for theory, this so-called Leninism cares little for it. We know that Plekhanov many times ridiculed Lenin's "heedlessness" of theory and particularly of philosophy. Theory is no longer in much favour among a number of actual Leninist practitioners who, overwhelmed with work, have scarcely time to think of it. This strange opinion of Lenin and Leninism is radically wrong, and the tendency of the practical people to turn up their noses at theory runs counter to the whole spirit of Leninism and involves serious dangers for the practice.

The theory is the synthesis of the experience of the labour movement of all countries. It loses its *raison d'être* if it is not connected with revolutionary practice, just as practice wanders off into darkness if it does not light its way with the revolutionary theory. But the theory becomes the greatest force in the labour movement if it is indissolubly bound up with revolutionary practice, for it alone can give to the movement confidence, guidance, understanding of the inner relations between events, it alone can help to make clear the process

and direction of class movements in the present and near future. Lenin himself has many times said that "*without a revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement.*" He understood better than anyone else the extreme importance of theory, particularly for a party like ours on which descended the role of vanguard of the international proletariat and which had to work in a most complicated internal and international situation. Foreseeing this special role of our Party, he thought it necessary, even in 1902, to recall that "*only a party guided by a radical theory can fill the role of vanguard fighter.*" Now that this prediction of Lenin's about our Party has been realised his views on theory take on a special value. Lenin gave extreme importance to theory: proof of it is that he himself undertook, in the realm of materialist philosophy, the generalisation of all the achievements of science since Engels, as well as a complete criticism of the anti-materialist tendencies among Marxists. Engels said that "*materialism should take on a new aspect with each great new discovery.*"

Lenin has given this new aspect, for his own time, in his remarkable work, *Materialism and Empirical Criticism*. Moreover it ought to be mentioned that Plekhanov, so ready to condemn Lenin's heedlessness of philosophy, did not resolve himself to attempt seriously the accomplishment of this task.

THE THEORY OF SPONTANEITY.

The "theory" of spontaneity is the theory of opportunism. It bows before the spontaneity of the Labour movement: in short, it denies to the party

of the working class the leading role of the vanguard.

This theory is in contradiction with the revolutionary character of the Labour movement. In fact, it declares that the struggle ought not to be led against the foundations of capitalism, that the movement ought to follow exclusively the line of "possible" demands, which capitalism can "admit." It is, in short, for the "line of least resistance," it represents the ideology of trade unionism.

It doesn't recognise that the spontaneous movement is given a conscious, methodical character. It doesn't want the Party to march at the head of the working class, to rouse the consciousness of the masses, to lead the movement after it. It thinks the conscious elements of the movement ought not to prevent the latter from going its own way, and that the Party ought to adapt itself to the spontaneous movement, and follow in its train. It is the theory of the under-estimation of the role of the conscious element in the movement, the ideology of the "followers," the logical base of *all* opportunism.

In practice, this theory, which appeared in Russia before the first revolution, led its partisans, the "*economists*," to deny the need for an independent workers' party in Russia, to oppose the revolutionary struggle of the working class against Tsarism, to preach the trade unionist policy in the movement—in short, to put the Labour movement under the protection and guidance of the Liberal bourgeoisie.

The fight of the old *Iskra*, and the brilliant criticism of the theory of the "followers," given by

Lenin in *What is to be Done?* not only confounded "economism," but also created the theoretical foundation for the truly revolutionary movement of the Russian working class.

Without this fight it would have been quite impossible to think of creating in Russia an independent workers' party called upon to play a directing part in the Revolution.

But the theory of spontaneity is not peculiar to Russia. It is extremely widespread, in a slightly different form, it is true, throughout all the parties of the Second International. It is, in short, only the theory of "forces of production," debased by the leaders of the Second International to justify everything and conciliate everybody, establishing facts that are already obvious to everyone and remaining satisfied with having stated them. Marx said that the materialist theory could not limit itself to explaining the world, it had to transform it. But Kautsky and Co. are not anxious about this transformation and prefer to rest content with the first part of Marx's formula. Here is one of the countless examples of the application of the "theory" of the forces of production. At the Congress of Basle the parties of the Second International had threatened to declare "war on war" in case of a military conflagration. But at the very beginning of the Imperialist war these parties threw aside the watchword of "war against war," and replaced it by that of "war for the Imperialist fatherland." This change of slogan brought about the death of millions of workers. But it would be quite wrong, so they say, to think there are guilty ones, that some people have betrayed the working class.

Everything happened according to the natural order of things. In fact, the International is an "instrument of peace," and not of war. Besides, given the "level of the forces of production," which then existed, it was impossible to act otherwise. And so, as Kautsky explains, the fault is with the "forces of production."

And the function of parties, and their importance in the movement? But what could a party do against so decisive a factor as the "level of the forces of production?"

It is possible to recount a host of examples like this falsification of Marxism, which is obviously intended to hide opportunism and is, in short, only a European adaptation of the theory of "following" which Lenin was fighting even before the first Revolution.

It is clear that the destruction of this essentially false theory is the preliminary condition for the creation of truly revolutionary parties in the West.

THE THEORY OF THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION.

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

First Thesis.—The domination of finance capital, whose chief business is the emission of stocks and bonds, in the advanced capitalist countries, the export of capital to the sources of raw materials, which is one of the bases of Imperialism; the omnipotence of a financial oligarchy, a consequence of the domination of finance capital, reveal the parasitic and brutal character of monopolist

capitalism, make the yoke of the capitalist syndicates and trusts much more intolerable, increase the indignation of the working class against capitalism, and drive the masses to the proletarian revolution in which they see their only means of escape. (Vide Lenin's *Imperialism*.)

As a result, an intensification of the revolutionary crisis in the capitalist countries, an increase in the causes of conflict on the internal proletarian front, in the "mother countries."

Second Thesis.—The growing export of capital into the colonies and subject countries, the extension of "spheres of influence" and colonisation to the extent of seizing upon all the territory of the earth, the transformation of capitalism into a *world system* of financial bondage and of colonial oppression of the vast majority of mankind by a few "advanced" countries—these have made the isolated national economic systems links in a single chain called the world-economy and have divided the population of the world into two camps: on the one hand, the "advanced" capitalist countries which exploit and oppress vast colonies as well as countries nominally more or less independent; on the other, the immense majority in the colonial and subject countries, driven to struggle to free themselves from the capitalist yoke. (Vide Lenin's *Imperialism*.)

In consequence, a worsening of the revolutionary crisis in the colonial countries, a strengthening of the spirit of revolt against Imperialism on the external front, the colonial front.

Third Thesis.—The monopoly of "spheres of influence" and of colonies, the unequal development

of the different capitalist countries which leads to a bitter struggle between the countries which have already partitioned the territories of the globe, and those countries which want to receive their "share," the Imperialist wars, the one method of restoring "equilibrium," bring about the creation of a third front, the inter-capitalist battleline, which weakens Imperialism and facilitates the union of the proletarian and colonial front against Imperialism.

Hence the inevitability of wars under Imperialism, the inevitability of the coalition of the proletarian revolution, its character, main lines and revolution in the East, the formation of a single world front of the revolution over against the world front of Imperialism.

From these deductions Lenin makes the general deduction that "Imperialism is the eve of the Socialist revolution." (Vide *Imperialism*.)

Consequently, the way of looking at the proletarian revolution, its character, main lines and extent, is no longer the same as before.

Formerly one usually analysed the premises of the proletarian revolution from the point of view of the economic situation of this or that isolated country. This method is now inadequate. To-day one has to begin from the point of view of the economic situation of all, or a majority of, countries, from the point of view of the state of world-economy. In fact, the countries and isolated national economies are no longer independent economic units, but are links of a single chain called the world-economy, and the old "civilising "

capitalism has become Imperialism, which is the world-system of financial bondage and of the colonial oppression of the majority of the population of the globe by a few "advanced" countries.

Formerly it was the custom to talk of the existence or absence of the objective conditions of the proletarian revolution in isolated countries, or, to be more exact, in this or that advanced country. This point of view is now inadequate. It is necessary to take into account the existence of the objective conditions of the revolution throughout the whole system of Imperialist world-economy, which forms a single whole. The existence within this system of some countries which are not sufficiently developed from the industrial point of view cannot be an insurmountable obstacle to the Revolution *from the moment* when the system as a whole is already ripe for the Revolution.

Formerly, again, one spoke of the proletarian revolution in this and that advanced country as having an independent growth. To-day this point of view is inadequate. It is necessary to speak of proletarian world-revolution, for the different national fronts of capital have become links in a single chain, the world-front of Imperialism to which should be opposed the single front of the revolutionary movement of all countries.

Formerly one used to see in the proletarian revolution the consequence of the exceptional internal development of a given country. At the present time this point of view is inadequate. It is necessary to regard the proletarian revolution before all as a result of the development of the contradictions

within the world-system of Imperialism, as the result of the breaking of the chain of the Imperialist world-front, in this or that country.

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

Where industry is most perfected, where the proletariat forms the majority, where civilisation is most advanced, where democracy is most developed—so one used to answer.

No, replies the Leninist theory of the revolution. The front of capital will not necessarily be pierced where industry is most developed, it will be broken where the chain of Imperialism is weakest, for the proletarian revolution is the result of the rupture of the chain of the Imperialist front at its weakest point. So then it is possible that the country which begins the revolution, which makes a breach in the capitalist front, may be less developed from the capitalist point of view than others which remain, nevertheless, within the framework of capitalism.

In 1917 the chain of the Imperialist world-chain happened to be weaker in Russia than in the other countries. It was there that it was broken and gave an outlet to the proletarian revolution. Why? Because in Russia there unfolded a great popular revolution led by the proletariat which had for itself so important an ally as the peasantry, oppressed and exploited by the landed proprietors. Because the revolution had Tsarism for its opponent, the most hideous representative of Imperialism, deprived of all moral authority and hated by

the whole people. The chain proved to be weakest in Russia, although that country was less developed from the capitalist point of view than, for example, France, Germany, England or America.

Where is the chain going to be broken next? Precisely where it is weakest. It is not impossible, for example, that it may be in India. Why? Because there is there a young and combative revolutionary proletariat which has for ally the movement for national liberation, which is unquestionably very powerful. Because in that country the revolution has for its enemy a foreign Imperialism, deprived of all moral authority and hated by the oppressed and exploited masses of India.

It is just as possible that the chain will be broken in Germany. Why? Because the factors which are at work in India are beginning to influence Germany just as much. Of course, the tremendous difference in level of development between India and Germany cannot but set its distinctive mark on the progress and outcome of the revolution in Germany.

That is why Lenin said that

"The capitalist countries of Western Europe will accomplish their evolution towards Socialism, not by the methodical maturing of Socialism in these countries, but by means of the exploitation of certain States by others, through the exploitation of the first state that is defeated in the Imperialist war. . . The East, on the other hand, definitely entered into the revolutionary movement in conse-

quence of this first Imperialist war; it has been drawn into the whirlpool of the revolutionary world movement."

To put it briefly, the chain of the Imperialist front should be broken, as a rule, where the links are most fragile and not necessarily where capitalism is most developed, where there is a considerable percentage of proletarians and relatively few peasants, and so on.

That is why statistical data of the proportion of the proletariat in the population of an isolated country lose, in the solution of the question of the proletarian revolution, the exceptional importance attached to them by the statisticians of the Second International, who have not understood Imperialism and are as afraid of revolution as of the devil.

The men of the Second International asserted (and keep on asserting) that between the democratic bourgeois revolution and the proletarian revolution there is a chasm, or, at any rate, a very long period of time (dozens or even hundreds of years), in the course of which the bourgeoisie, having come to power, develop capitalism while the proletariat accumulates forces and prepares for the "decisive struggle" against capitalism. The theory is obviously void of scientific foundations under Imperialism: it is and can be only a means of concealing the counter-revolutionary intentions of the bourgeoisie. It is clear that in the epoch when Imperialism, which carries within it the germ of collisions and wars, is sovereign, when the old "flourishing" capitalism is now only a "dying" capitalism, when the revolutionary movement is

growing in every country in the world, when Imperialism is allied with all reactionary forces, including autocracy and serfdom, making the bloc of all revolutionary forces from the proletarian movement of the West to the national-liberation movements of the East, so much more necessary, at the moment when the suppression of the survival of the feudal regime becomes impossible without a revolutionary struggle against Imperialism—it is clear, I say, that the bourgeois-democratic revolution, in a country more or less developed, should tend toward, and be transformed into, the proletarian revolution. The history of the revolution in Russia has peremptorily proved the correctness of this proposition. So Lenin was right when in 1905, on the eve of the first Russian revolution, he represented (in his brochure, *Two Tactics*) the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the Socialist revolution as two links of the same chain, as two natural stages of the Russian Revolution :

“The proletariat ought to push the democratic revolution to completion, rallying behind itself the peasant mass so as to crush by force the resistance of the autocracy and paralyse the unstable bourgeoisie. It should carry through the Socialist revolution by rallying to it the semi-proletarian elements so as to break the resistance of the bourgeoisie and paralyse the unstable peasantry and petty bourgeoisie. Such are its tasks which the partisans of the new “Iskra” limit considerably in their arguments and resolutions on the extent of the revolution.”

I will not speak here of Lenin's later work, where the idea of the transformation of the

bourgeois revolution into the proletarian revolution is put still more clearly and forms one of the corner stones of the theory of the revolution.

Certain Communists believe that Lenin came to this idea only in 1916, and that before that he thought that the revolution in Russia would remain within the bourgeois framework and that power consequently would pass to the bourgeoisie and not to the proletariat. This opinion has, it seems, penetrated even into our Communist press. But it is completely wrong.

To prove it, I could refer to the discourse at the Third Party Congress (1905), in which Lenin described the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, that is to say the victory of the democratic revolution, not as an "organisation for order" but as an "organisation for war."

Further, I could recall the articles on the *Provisional Government* (1905) in which Lenin, depicting the development of the revolution in Russia, declares :

"The Party ought so to act that the Russian revolution may be a movement not of a few months, but of a number of years, and that it may lead not merely to slight concessions on the part of the authorities, but to the complete overthrow of these authorities."

Developing the picture of this revolution which connects with that of Europe, Lenin goes on to say :

"And if we succeed, the revolutionary conflagration will encompass Europe; the European worker,

unable to tolerate the bourgeois reaction any longer, will rise in his turn and show us how things should be done; and then the revolutionary impulse in Europe will react upon Russia and will reduce the duration of our Revolution to a few years."

I could equally well cite an article published in November, 1915, in which Lenin writes :

"The proletariat fights and will fight for the conquest of power, the Republic, the confiscation of the land, the participation of the non-proletarian popular masses in the liberation of bourgeois Russia from the yoke of this feudal-militarist Imperialism which is called Tsardom. And it will immediately profit from that liberation from the yoke of Tsarism, of the power of the landed proprietors, not to come to the aid of the well-to-do peasants in their struggle against the agricultural workers, but to bring about the Socialist revolution in union with the European proletariat." ("Against the Stream.")

Finally, I could recall a well-known passage from *The Proletarian Revolution* and Kautsky, the *Renegade*, where Lenin, referring to his picture of the Russian revolution in *Two Tactics*, arrives at the following conclusion :

"The development of the revolution has confirmed the correctness of our reasoning. First the proletariat marched with all the peasantry against the monarchy, the landed proprietor, the mediævalist regime (and to that extent the revolution was still bourgeois, democratic-bourgeois). Then, with the poor peasants, the semi-proletarians, all the exploited, it marched against capitalism and its

*rural representatives—the rich, the “village vul-
tures,” the speculators; and so the revolution be-
came Socialist. To attempt to raise an artificial
barrier between the first and second revolutions
which are made separate only by the degree of
preparation of the proletariat, the degree of its
union with the poor peasants, is to distort Marx-
ism, to debase it, to put Liberalism in its place.”*

But, we are told, if it is so, why did Lenin oppose the idea of the “permanent revolution?”

Because he wanted to make full use of the *revolutionary* capacities and energy of the peasantry for the complete liquidation of Tsarism and the transition to the proletarian revolution, while the partisans of the “permanent revolution,” did not understand the important role of the peasantry in the Russian revolution, under-estimated its revolutionary energy and so hindered its emancipation from tutelage to the bourgeoisie, its rallying around the proletariat.

Because he wanted to *crown* the revolution with the coming of the proletariat to power, while the partisans of the “permanent revolution” wanted to begin by the establishment of the power of the proletariat, not realising that, by that itself, they were closing their eyes to the existence of survivals of serfdom, were neglecting so important a force as the peasantry, and were so hindering the latter from rallying to the proletariat.

So then, Lenin opposed the partisans of the “permanent revolution,” not because they asserted the permanence of the revolution, a thesis he him-

self never ceased to support, but because they under-estimated the role of the peasantry which is the greatest reserve of power for the proletariat.

The idea of the "permanent revolution" is not new. It was expounded for the first time by Marx in 1850, in the *Address to the League of Communists*. It was there that our Russian "Marxists" went to look for it, but the modification which they made it undergo was enough to make it unfit for practical use. The skilful hand of Lenin was needed to make good this error, to separate the idea of the "permanent revolution" from its dross, and make it a corner-stone of the theory of the revolution. This is what Marx says of the "permanent revolution" in his *Address*, after having enumerated the revolutionary democratic demands which the Communists ought to put forward :

When the petty bourgeois democrats wish, by satisfying most of the demands enumerated above, to end the revolution, as quickly as possible, our interests and our tasks consist in making the revolution permanent as long as all the more or less possessing classes are not removed from power, and while the proletariat has not conquered the power of the State, the associations of proletarians in the principal countries of the world are not developed enough to put an end to competition between the proletarians of those countries and the chief forces of production, at least, are not concentrated in the hands of the proletarians."

That is to say :

First, Marx in spite of what our Russian "Marxists" say, did not propose to *begin* the revolution

in the Germany of 1850 directly by the establishment of proletarian power.

Second, Marx proposed only to *crown* the revolution with the proletarian political power, by overthrowing successively every fraction of the bourgeoisie in order, after the coming of the proletariat to power, to light the torch of revolution in every country. Now this is *perfectly consistent* with all that Lenin taught, with all that he did in the course of our revolution, following his theory of the proletarian revolution under Imperialism.

So, then, our "Russian Marxists" have not only under-estimated the role of the peasantry in the Russian revolution, but have modified Marx's idea of the "permanent revolution," and deprived it of all practical value.

That is why Lenin ridiculed their theory and accused them of not wishing "to reflect on the reasons for which life, over a period of dozens of years, has passed beside this magnificent theory."

That is why he thought this theory was semi-menshevism, and said that it "borrowed from the bolsheviks the call to the decisive revolutionary struggle, and the conquest of power by the proletariat, and from the mensheviks the denial of the role of the peasantry." (Vide the article *The Two Lines of Revolution*, in *Against the Stream*.)

This then is how Lenin conceived the transformation of the democratic bourgeois revolution into the proletarian revolution, the using of the bour-

geois revolution for the "immediate transition to the proletarian revolution.

Let us continue. Formerly, the victory of the revolution in a single country was considered impossible, for, so it was said, to defeat the bourgeoisie by the combined action of the proletarians of all, or at least a majority of, the advanced countries was necessary. This point of view no longer tallies with facts. It is now necessary to begin with the possibility of victory over the bourgeoisie in a single country because the unequal, irregular development of the capitalist countries under Imperialism, the aggravation of the internal contradictions of Imperialism, leading inevitably to wars, the strengthening of the revolutionary movement in every country, leads not only to the possibility, but to the necessity of the victory of the proletariat in isolated countries. The history of the Russian Revolution is a striking proof of that. Of the old theory only this has to be retained, that certain indispensable conditions are required for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and without them the proletariat cannot even dream of seizing power.

This is what Lenin says of these conditions :

"The fundamental law of revolution, confirmed by every revolution, and particularly by the three Russian revolutions of the 20th century, is as follows: It is not sufficient for the revolution that the exploited and oppressed masses understand the impossibility of living in the old way and demand changes; for the revolution it is necessary that the exploiters should not be able to live and rule as of old. Only when the masses do not want the old

regime, and when the rulers are unable to govern them as of old, only then can the revolution succeed. This truth may be expressed in other words—revolution is impossible without an all-national crisis, affecting both the exploited and the exploiter. It follows that for the revolution it is essential, first, that a majority of the workers (or at least a majority of the conscious, thinking, politically-active workers) should fully understand the necessity for a revolution, and be ready to sacrifice their lives for it; second, that the ruling class be in a state of governmental crisis which attracts even the most backward masses into politics. It is a sign of every real revolution, this rapid ten-fold, or even hundred-fold increase in the number of representatives of the toiling and oppressed masses, heretofore apathetic, who are able to carry on a political fight which weakens the government and facilitates its overthrow by the revolutionaries.” (“Left-wing Communism,” ch. 9.)

But to overthrow the power of the bourgeoisie and establish that of the proletariat in a single country is still not to assure the complete victory of Socialism. The chief task, the organisation of Socialist production, is still to be accomplished. Can we succeed and secure the definitive victory of Socialism in one country without the combined efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries? Most certainly not. The efforts of a single country are enough to overthrow the bourgeoisie: this is what the history of our revolution proves. But for the definitive triumph of Socialism, the organisation of Socialist production, the efforts of one country alone are not enough, particularly of an essentially rural country like Russia; the efforts

of the proletarians of several advanced countries are needed. So the victorious revolution in one country has for its essential task to develop and support the revolution in others. So it ought not to be considered as of independent value, but as an auxiliary, a means of hastening the victory of the proletariat in other countries.

Lenin has curtly expressed this thought in saying that the task of the victorious revolution consists in doing the "utmost in one country for the development, support, awakening of the revolution *in other countries.*" (Vide *The Proletarian Revolution.*)



CHAPTER V.

THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT.

THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT AS THE
INSTRUMENT OF THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION.

THE question of the dictatorship of the proletariat is above all the question of the fundamental meaning of the proletarian revolution. The proletarian revolution, its movement, unfolding, and conquests, become realities only through the dictatorship of the proletariat. This dictatorship is the chief fulcrum of the proletarian revolution, its organ and instrument, destined first of all to wipe out the resistance of the routed exploiters, to consolidate the conquests of the revolution, and then to lead this revolution to completion, to the complete victory of Socialism. The revolution can overturn the power of the bourgeoisie without the dictatorship of the proletariat. But it cannot crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie, maintain its conquests and advance towards Socialism if it does not, at a certain stage of its development, create a special organ, the dictatorship of the proletariat, to be its fundamental fulcrum.

“The essential question of the revolution is the question of power” (Lenin). Does that mean that the revolution ends with the seizure of power? No. The seizure of power is only the beginning.

Overthrown in one country, the bourgeoisie still remains, for a number of reasons, stronger than the proletariat which has overthrown it. That is why it is necessary to safeguard one's power, to consolidate it and make it invincible. How can this be done? By accomplishing three main tasks which confront the dictatorship of the proletariat on the morrow of the revolution; they are :

(a) To break the resistance of the landed proprietors and capitalists, expropriated by the revolution, and to liquidate all their attempts to restore the power of capital;

(b) To organise the Socialist reconstruction, by gathering all workers around the proletariat and preparing for the gradual disappearance of classes;

(c) To arm the revolution, to organise the army of the revolution against the external enemy, Imperialism.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is necessary for the accomplishment of these three tasks.

"The transition from capitalism to Communism, says Lenin, represents an entire historic epoch. While it is incomplete, the exploiters will always cherish the hope of a restoration, and this hope will find expression in attempts at restoration. And after their first serious defeat, the exploiters who did not expect to be overthrown, who do not believe it and will not admit even the possibility of it, will throw themselves with redoubled energy, furious passion and implacable hate, into the battle for the recovery of their lost "paradise," to secure the

fortunes of their families who had lived so easy a life and whom now the "rabble" would condemn to misery and ruin (or to the indignity of work) . . .

"Now in the train of the capitalist exploiters will follow the mass of the petty bourgeoisie who, as the experience of every country shows, will oscillate and waver perpetually, will march to-day with the proletariat, and to-morrow will be frightened with the difficulties of the revolution, and, terrified at the first defeat or check to the workers, is a prey to nervousness, does not know where to turn, and rushes, whining, from one camp to the other, (The Proletarian Revolution.)

Now the bourgeoisie has every occasion to attempt a restoration, for after its overthrow it remains, for a long time still, much stronger than the proletariat which has overthrown it.

"If the exploiters, Lenin writes, are defeated only in a single country—and this is most frequent, for the simultaneous revolution in a number of countries is an exception—they remain stronger than the exploited." (The Proletarian Revolution.)

Wherein resides the strength of the overthrown bourgeoisie?

First, "in the power of international capital, in the strength and solidarity of the international ties between the bourgeoisie." (*Left-wing Communism.*)

Secondly, in the fact that "for a long time after the revolution the exploiters still retain a

number of enormous advantages: money (which cannot be immediately done away with), personal property very often of considerable value, direction of economic organisation and administration, knowledge of all the "secrets" of administration, superior education, ties with the upper strata of technicians (bourgeois in life and thought), a profound knowledge of the art of war (which is very important), and so on . . ." (*The Proletarian Revolution.*)

Thirdly, "in the *force of habit*, in the strength of *petty production*, for the latter unhappily still exists to a very large extent and constantly, daily, spontaneously, *gives birth* to capitalism and the bourgeoisie . . . to suppress classes is not merely to drive out the landed proprietors, and the capitalists—which we have done relatively easily—it is also to suppress the *petty producers of commodities*; now it is impossible to drive them out, we and they have to live well together, we have to transform them (and it is quite possible), to re-educate them: but it can only be done by a slow and prudent work of organisation." (*Left-wing Communism.*)

That is why Lenin declares:

"The dictatorship of the proletariat is the most heroic and implacable war of the new class against its more powerful enemy, the bourgeoisie, whose power of resistance is increased tenfold by its overthrow . . . The dictatorship of the proletariat is a relentless struggle with bloodshed and without, a struggle both violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative, a new war against the forces and traditions of the old order." (*Left-wing Communism.*)

It is obvious that it is absolutely impossible to accomplish these tasks rapidly and in the space of a few years. That is why the dictatorship of the proletariat, the transition from capitalism to Communism, has to be considered not as a period of extremely revolutionary deeds and decrees, but as an entire historical period filled with civil and foreign wars, a period of economic organisation and reconstruction, of offensives and retreats, victories and defeats. This historic epoch is necessary not only to create the economic and cultural conditions for the complete victory of Socialism, but also to allow the proletariat first to educate itself and become a force capable of governing the country, and secondly to re-educate and transform the petty bourgeois strata in such a way as to secure the organisation of Socialist production.

"You will have to go—wrote Marx—through fifteen, twenty or fifty years of civil and international war, not only to change social relationships, but also to transform yourselves and make yourselves fit for political domination."

Developing this thought of Marx's, Lenin wrote :

"Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, we have to re-educate millions of peasants, petty proprietors, and hundreds of thousands of administrators, officials and bourgeois intellectuals; we have to subject them to the proletarian State and to proletarian supervision, to overcome their bourgeois habits and traditions . . . , to re-educate, in a long struggle, the proletarians themselves who are not freed from their petty bourgeois prejudices at the first stroke, miraculously, by an order from

above or the lesson of the revolution or any sort of decree, but only in the course of a long and difficult struggle against the numberless petty bourgeois influences.” (Left-wing Communism.)

THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT AS THE
DOMINATION OF THE PROLETARIAT OVER THE
BOURGEOISIE.

What we have said shows already that the dictatorship of the proletariat does not consist simply in the fact of changing the people in power, of changing the Cabinet while leaving the old order of things, economic and political, quite intact. The mensheviks and opportunists of all countries who fear the dictatorship like fire, and replace the conception by that of the “conquest of power,” usually reduce the “conquest of power” to a change of Cabinet, and the appearance of a new ministry composed of men like Scheidemann and Noske, MacDonald and Henderson. There is no need to show that such Cabinet changes have nothing in common with the dictatorship of the proletariat, with the true conquest of power by the proletariat. With the conservation of the old bourgeois state of things, the government of MacDonald and Henderson will be of use in veiling the monstrosities of Imperialism; it will be only a tool in the hands of the bourgeoisie, used against the revolutionary movement of the oppressed and exploited masses. Such governments are necessary for capital as a screen when it is unbecoming, disadvantageous or difficult to oppress and exploit the masses openly. It is true that their appearance is symptomatic: it

shows that things go ill with the capitalists, but they remain none the less, under a veiled form, capitalist governments. From the government of MacDonald or Scheidemann to the conquest of power by the proletariat is as far as from earth to heaven. The dictatorship of the proletariat is not a change of ministry, but a new State, with new central and local organs, the State of the proletariat which rises on the ruins of the old State of the bourgeoisie. The dictatorship of the proletariat is born not of the bourgeois state of things, but of its destruction after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, of the expropriation of landed proprietors and capitalists, of the socialisation of the essential instruments and means of production, of the development of the proletarian revolution through violence. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the revolutionary power resting on violence against the bourgeoisie.

The State is an instrument in the hands of the dominant class, for breaking the resistance of its class enemies. *In this respect* the dictatorship of the proletariat is not different from the dictatorship of any other class, for the proletarian State is an instrument for crushing the bourgeoisie. The fundamental difference is that while all the class-States which have existed up to the present have been dictatorships of the exploiting minority over the exploited majority, the dictatorship of the proletariat is the dictatorship of the exploited majority over the exploiting minority.

To put it briefly, the *dictatorship of the proletariat is the domination of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, a domination not limited by law, based*

on force, and enjoying the sympathy and support of the toiling and exploited masses.” (The State and Revolution.)

There are two essential deductions from this :

First Deduction. The dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be a “complete democracy, a democracy for *all*, for rich and poor alike; it has to be a State that is democratic, but only *for the proletariat and the property-less*, a State that is dictatorial, but only *against the bourgeoisie.” (The State and Revolution.)* The sermons of Kautsky and Co. on universal equality, and pure, perfect democracy, are only bourgeois phrases which mask the impossibility of equality between exploiters and exploited. The theory of “pure” democracy is that of the Labour aristocracy which is tamed and corrupted by the Imperialist plunderers. It has been elaborated to conceal the evils of capitalism, to camouflage Imperialism and give it moral strength in its fight against the exploited masses. Within the capitalist system, there is and can be no true freedom for the exploited, for the buildings, paper supplies and printing works necessary for the utilisation of this freedom are monopolised by the exploiters. Within the capitalist regime, there is and can be no real participation of the exploited masses in the administration of the country, because in the most democratic countries governments are set up not by the people, but by the Rothschilds and Stinnes, Rockefellers and Morgans. Within the capitalist system, democracy is *capitalist* democracy—the democracy of the exploiting minority, based on the limitation of the rights of the exploited

majority, and directed against this majority. It is only under the dictatorship of the proletariat that real freedom for the exploited, and the real participation of workers and peasants in the administration of the country, are possible. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, democracy is *proletarian*: it is democracy for the exploited majority, based on the limitation of the rights of the exploiting minority and directed against this minority.

Second Deduction. The dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be the result of the peaceful development of bourgeois society and democracy; it can be the result only of the destruction of the bourgeois army and State machine, the bourgeois administrative apparatus and the whole bourgeois political system.

“The working class cannot confine itself to taking possession of a ready-made governmental State machine and setting it going for its own ends.” (Marx and Engels: Preface to *The Civil War in France*.)

“The proletarian revolution has not to transmit the military and bureaucratic machine from one hand to another, as has been done up to the present, but must break it . . . This is the indispensable condition for every real people’s revolution on the continent. (Marx: *Letter to Kugelmann*.)

Marx’s limitation with regard to the “continent” has furnished the opportunists and mensheviks of every country with a pretext for asserting that Marx admitted the possibility of a peaceful trans-

formation of bourgeois democracy into proletarian democracy, at least in some countries (England and America). Marx did in fact recognise the possibility of this in the England and America of 1860, where monopolist capitalism and Imperialism did not exist and where militarism and bureaucracy were as yet little developed. But now the situation in these countries is radically different; Imperialism has reached its apogee there, and there militarism and bureaucracy are sovereign. In consequence, Marx's restriction no longer applies.

"Now, in 1917, in the epoch of the first great Imperialist war, Marx's restriction falls of itself. England and America which have been till now, because of the absence of militarism and bureaucracy, the last and most important representatives of Anglo-Saxon "freedom," have now rolled in the bloody mire of militaristic and bureaucratic institutions which subject everything to themselves. Now both in England and America, the preliminary condition of every real people's revolution is the breaking, and the destruction of the governmental machine." (The State and Revolution.)

In other words, the destruction of the bourgeois governmental machine is the indispensable condition for the proletarian revolution, the inescapable law of the revolutionary movement in Imperialist countries.

Indeed, if very much later the proletariat triumphs in the principal capitalist countries and the present capitalist encirclement gives way to the Socialist encirclement, the "pacific" way of development is quite possible for certain countries

where the capitalists, in view of the "unfavourable" international situation, will judge it reasonable of their own accord to make serious concessions to the proletariat. But this supposition concerns only the distant problematic future. So far as the immediate future is concerned, there is no foundation for it.

"The proletarian revolution is impossible without the violent destruction of the bourgeois governmental machine and the putting of a new one in its place." (*The Proletarian Revolution.*)

THE SOVIET POWER AS THE STATE FORM OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT.

The triumph of the dictatorship of the proletariat means the crushing of the bourgeoisie, the destruction of its governmental apparatus, and the displacement of bourgeois democracy by proletarian democracy.

That is clear. But what are the organisations that will enable this colossal task to be accomplished? It is obvious that the old forms of proletarian organisation, built on the basis of bourgeois parliamentarism, will not be adequate. What then is the new form of proletarian organisation that will be capable not only of breaking this governmental machine and putting the proletarian democracy in place of bourgeois democracy, but also of becoming the foundation of the State power of the proletariat?

This new form of organisation of the proletariat is found in the Soviets.

Wherein lies the strength of the Soviets compared with the old forms of organisation?

(1) In that the Soviets are the organisations of the *widest* masses of the proletariat, for they alone include all workers without exception.

(2) In that the Soviets are the *only* organisations including all the oppressed and exploited workers, peasants, soldiers and sailors; and that in consequence the political leadership of the struggle of the masses can be most easily and completely attained through the Soviets.

(3) In that the Soviets are *the most powerful organs* of the revolutionary struggle of the masses, of their political activity, of their insurrection—the organs most capable of breaking the omnipotence of finance-capital and its political satellites.

(4) In that the Soviets are the *direct* organisations of the masses themselves—that is, the *most democratic* organisations—and consequently the ones that have most authority among the masses, that make easier their participation in the organisation and administration of the new State, that develop to the maximum extent their revolutionary energy, their initiative and their creative abilities, in the struggle for the destruction of the old regime and the establishment of the new proletarian regime.

The Soviet power is the unification of the local Soviets into a general State organisation, the Republic of Soviets.

With the Soviet power, the widest and most revolutionary organisations of the classes formerly oppressed by the capitalists and landed proprietors are now the “*permanent and sole support of the whole State power, the entire governmental apparatus.*”

The masses upon whom “in the most democratic republics,” the law confers absolute equality, and who are deprived in reality by various means and manœuvres of participation in political life, and cannot make use of their democratic rights and liberties, now take part, decisively and permanently, in the democratic administration of the State.” (Lenin : *Collected Works*, vol. xvi.)

That is why the Soviet power is a *new form of State organisation*, essentially different from the old bourgeois democratic and parliamentary form—a new type of State adapted not to the exploitation and oppression of the toiling masses, but to their complete enfranchisement, to the work of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Lenin rightly says that the coming of the Soviet power “marks the end of bourgeois democratic parliamentarism, the beginning of a new era for mankind, the era of the proletarian dictatorship.”

What are the characteristics of the Soviet power ?

(1) That the Soviet power is, of all State organisations possible while classes exist, the one which has the most pronounced mass character, that which is most democratic. In

fact, permitting, as it does, the alliance and collaboration of the workers and exploited peasants in their struggle against the exploiters and resting in its work on this alliance and collaboration, it is through that itself the power of the majority of the people over the minority, the State of that majority, the expression of its dictatorship.

(2) That the Soviet power is the most international of all State organisations in class society, for by suppressing all national oppression and resting on the collaboration of the toiling masses of different nationalities, it facilitates the union of these masses in a single State.

(3) That the Soviet power, by its structure, facilitates the guidance of the oppressed and exploited masses by the proletariat, their vanguard, which represents the most perfect and conscious element in the Soviets. "The experience of every movement of the oppressed classes, the experience of Socialist movements of the world, teaches us that the proletariat alone is able to group the various backward strata of the toiling, exploited population and lead them after it." (Lenin: *Works*, vol. xvi.). Now, the structure of the Soviet power facilitates the applications of the teachings of this experience.

(4) That the Soviet power, uniting legislative and executive power in a single organ and replacing territorial electoral divisions by divisions (factories and workshops) based on the principle of production, by this directly connects the workers

and labouring masses with the governmental apparatus and teaches them how to administer the country.

(5) That only the Soviet power is able to withdraw the army from bourgeois command and transform it, the instrument for oppressing the people, into an instrument for freeing it from the yoke of the native and foreign bourgeoisie.

(6) That "only the Soviet organisation of the State can destroy, at once and for all time, the old bourgeois judicial and administrative apparatus." (Lenin: *Works*, vol. xvi.)

(7) That only the Soviet State, allowing the constant participation of the organisations of the workers in the management of public affairs, is able to prepare that gradual disappearance of the State, toward which the development of a Communist society naturally tends.

So, then, the Republic of Soviets is the political form, so long looked for, within whose framework the economic emancipation of the proletariat, the complete triumph of Socialism, is to be realised.

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

That is why Lenin says that :

" *The Republic of Soviets of workers', soldiers,*

and peasants' delegates is not only a higher type of democratic institution, but is also the form capable of ensuring the most painless realisation of Socialism." (Theses on the Constituent Assembly.)



CHAPTER VI.

THE PEASANT QUESTION.

THE STATUS OF THE QUESTION.

SOME think that the basis, the point of departure, of Leninism is the question of the peasantry, its role and importance. This opinion is wrong. The fundamental question of Leninism, its point of departure, is the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the conditions of its establishment and consolidation. The peasant question, the question of seeking an ally for the proletariat in its fight for power, is only a corollary.

However, this does not take away anything of the importance of the question for the proletarian revolution. It was on the eve of the revolution of 1905 that the peasant question began to attract seriously the attention of the Russian Marxists. The question of the overthrow of Tsarism and the realisation of the hegemony of the proletariat then imposed on the party the search for an ally for the proletariat in the imminent bourgeois revolution. The peasant question put on a yet more urgent character in 1917, when the question of establishing and maintaining the dictatorship of the proletariat raised the question of the eventual allies of the latter in the approaching proletarian revolution. It is obvious in fact that if one is preparing to take power one has an interest in knowing the allies on whom one can count.

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

If the parties of the Second International had only indifference or even aversion for the peasant question, the reason is not solely to be found in the special conditions of the West, but above all in the fact that these parties did not believe in the dictatorship of the proletariat, feared the revolution and never dreamed of leading the proletariat to the conquest of power. Now if one does not want to lead the proletarians into battle, it is obviously futile to look for allies for them. The Second International considered its ironical attitude toward the peasant question as a sign of true Marxism. In reality there was nothing of Marxism in this attitude, for indifference to such an important question on the eve of the proletarian revolution is an indirect denial of the dictatorship of the proletariat, a definite betrayal of Marxism.

Are the revolutionary possibilities which the peasantry possesses already exhausted? and if not is there any hope of, or any reason for, using them for the proletarian revolution, making an ally for the proletariat out of the rural mass which was, during the revolutions of the West, and still remains a reserve of forces for the bourgeoisie? It is thus that the question is framed.

Leninism replies with a Yes. That is to say, it recognises that amongst the majority of the exploited peasantry there exist revolutionary capabilities which can be used in the interest of the

proletarian revolution. The history of the three Russian revolutions entirely confirm its deductions on this point.

Hence the necessity for supporting the toiling rural masses in their fight against exploitation and oppression. This certainly does not mean that the proletariat ought to support *every* peasant movement. It ought to support those which directly or indirectly facilitate the emancipatory movement of the proletariat, which are of advantage to the proletarian revolution, which help to make the peasantry a reserve and ally of the working class.

THE PEASANTRY DURING THE BOURGEOIS DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION.

During this period which stretches from the revolution of 1905 to that of February, 1917 (inclusive), the peasantry was freed from the influence of the Liberal bourgeoisie, was *separated* from the Cadets and evolved towards the *proletariat*, towards the Bolshevik party. The history of this period is the history of the fight of the Cadets (Liberal bourgeoisie) and the Bolsheviks (proletariat) for the conquest of the peasantry. The parliamentary period determined the outcome of this conflict. The four Dumas were an excellent object-lesson for the peasants. They showed the latter that they would receive neither land nor liberty from the Cadets, that the Tsar was wholly on the side of the great landed proprietors, that the Cadets supported the Tsar, that the only force on which they could count was represented by the

town workers, the proletariat. The Imperialist war only confirmed these lessons of the parliamentary period: it succeeded in separating the peasantry from the bourgeoisie and isolating the Liberals, by showing that it was impossible to obtain peace from the Tsar, and his bourgeois allies. Without the object-lesson of the parliamentary period, the hegemony of the proletariat would have been impossible.

In this way the alliance of workers and peasants in the bourgeois-democratic revolution was established. And thus also was established that hegemony of the proletariat, in the common struggle for the overthrow of Tsarism, which led to the revolution of February, 1917.

The bourgeois revolutions of the West (England, France, Germany, Austria) followed another road, we know. There the leading role belonged not to the proletariat, too feeble to be an independent political factor, but to the Liberal bourgeoisie. It was not by the small and unorganised proletariat, but by the bourgeoisie that the peasantry was delivered from the yoke of feudalism. The peasantry marched to the attack on the old regime side by side with the Liberal bourgeoisie. In the West it was a reserve of the bourgeoisie. In consequence the revolution resulted in a considerable increase in the political importance of the latter.

Why did the Russian revolution follow a road so different from that of the bourgeois revolutions in the West?

Because at the moment when it broke out in Russia the class struggle was more developed

there than it was not long ago in the West. In 1917, in fact, the Russian proletariat had succeeded in making itself an independent political factor, while the Liberal bourgeoisie, frightened by the revolutionism of the proletariat, had lost all revolutionary character and formed a bloc with the Tsar and landowning seigneurs against the workers and peasants.

To understand the special character of the Russia bourgeois revolution, the following circumstances should be taken into account :

(a) On the eve of the revolution, industry was extraordinarily concentrated. Enterprises with more than 500 workers each, employed 54 per cent. of the workers, while in a country so highly developed as the U.S.A., they employed only 33 per cent. This fact alone, allied with the existence of a party as revolutionary as that of the Bolsheviks, made the Russian working class the greatest political factor in the country.

(b) With the monstrous forms of exploitation in industry, allied with an intolerable police system, each serious strike became a political act of immense importance, helping to steel the working class and make it into a fundamentally revolutionary factor.

(c) Scared by the revolutionism of the proletariat and strictly dependent besides on the State which gave it orders, the Russian bourgeoisie had, since 1905, made itself the servant of Tsarism.

(d) The most odious survivals of the feudal régime in the countryside, where the landed

seigneur was all-powerful, could not but make the revolution popular among the peasants.

(e) Understanding all that was alive amongst the people, Tsarism reinforced with its despotism, the yoke of capitalism and the landed proprietor—and this helped to fuse the struggle of workers and peasants into a single torrent of revolution.

(f) Transforming all these contradictions of Russian political life into a revolutionary crisis, the Imperialist war had given a tremendous impetus to the revolution.

Where could the peasantry find support against the omnipotence of the landed proprietor, the despotism of the Tsar, and the devastating war which it brought? With the Liberal bourgeoisie? But the latter was its enemy, as the experience of the four Dumas had eloquently proved. With the Socialist revolutionaries? The Socialist revolutionaries, indeed, were "better" than the Cadets, their programme was rather more agreeable to the peasants; but what could they do when only the rural masses supported them and they were weak in the towns, the principal seat of the power of the enemy! Where was the new force that nothing could stop, that would march fearlessly in the front rank, in the fight against Tsar and landed seigneur, would help the peasantry to free itself, to obtain the land and leave the war? This force was the proletariat which had already, in 1905, shown its courage, its revolutionary spirit, its ability to lead the struggle to its conclusion.

That is why the peasantry which had abandoned the Cadets to cling to the Socialist revolutionaries,

understood the necessity for submitting itself to the leadership of so worthy a revolutionary chief as the Russian proletariat.

Such are the factors which determined the special character of the Russian bourgeois revolution.

THE PEASANTRY DURING THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION.

This period is relatively short (February-October, 1917), but from the point of the political formation of the masses, the eight months it includes are equal to a dozen ordinary years, for they are eight months of *revolution*. More and more the peasantry lost confidence in the Socialist revolutionaries and left them, to draw near to the proletariat which appeared to it as the one really revolutionary force that could give peace to the country. The history of this period is the history of the struggle of the Socialist revolutionaries (petty bourgeois democracy) and the Bolsheviks (proletarian democracy) for the conquest of the majority of the peasants. The Coalition government, the Kerensky ministry, the refusal of the Socialist revolutionaries and mensheviks to confiscate the land of the great proprietors, the efforts of the Socialists to continue the war, the June offensive on the Austrian front, the re-establishment of the death penalty in the army, the Kornilov insurrection—these factors determined the outcome of this struggle.

The fundamental question during the preceding period had been that of overthrowing the autocracy and the power of the landowning seigneurs. But after the February revolution, the Tsar being dethroned, the liquidation of the war, which consumed the living forces of the country and ruined the peasantry, became the essential task of the revolution. The centre of gravity was no longer in questions of internal arrangements, but in the question of the war. "Stop the war"—that was the general cry of the exhausted country, and particularly of the rural mass.

But in order to leave the war, it was necessary to overthrow the Provisional Government, to defeat the Socialist revolutionaries and mensheviks, for it was they who wanted to carry on the war to "final victory." In practice, the only way to end the war was to overthrow the bourgeoisie.

This was the work of the proletarian revolution which took away power from the Socialist revolutionaries, the last reserve and extreme Left-wing of the Imperialist bourgeoisie, to give it to the party of the proletarian revolution, which opposed the Imperialist war. The majority of the peasants supported the fight of the workers for peace and the Soviet power.

In this way, then, the Kerensky regime was an excellent object-lesson for the toiling masses of the countryside, for it showed that the Socialist revolutionaries and mensheviks, in power, gave no peace to the country, nor land and liberty to the peasant, that they were distinguished from the Cadets only by their mealy-mouthed sermons

and lying promises, and that in reality they pursued the same Imperialist policy, and that the only power able to lead Russia out of the dilemma was the power of the Soviets. The prolonging of the war only confirmed the correctness of this lesson : it accelerated the revolution and drove the rural masses and the soldiers to *form a bloc* with the proletariat. The isolation of the Socialist-revolutionaries and the mensheviks became an unquestionable fact. Without the experience of the period of coalition, the dictatorship of the proletariat would have been impossible.

These are the factors that facilitated the transformation of the bourgeois revolution into proletarian revolution.

THE PEASANTRY AFTER THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE SOVIET POWER.

After the overthrow of Tsarism, followed as it was soon after by the downfall of the bourgeoisie and the liquidation of the Imperialist war, the Soviet power had to withstand a long civil war out of which it emerged victorious and considerably strengthened. The question of economic organisation then came to the fore. To increase the output of nationalised industry, to link it for this purpose with peasant economy by means of State-regulated commerce, to replace the requisition of food products by the tax in kind, to reduce the latter by degrees so as to realise the equitable exchange of industrial and agricultural products, to intensify commerce and develop co-operation by causing the

rural mass to take part in it—these are measures of economic organisation which Lenin recommended for laying the foundations of Socialist economy.

But can this task be carried out in a rural country like Russia? The sceptics deny it, asserting that as the peasantry is composed of petty producers, it cannot be made use of for the organisation of the foundations of Socialist production.

But they are wrong, for they neglect certain factors that are of capital importance in the matter.

In fact, the peasantry of the Union of Soviet Republics cannot be compared with the peasantry of the West. A peasantry which has gone through three revolutions, which has fought against the Tsar and the power of the bourgeoisie at the side of the proletariat, and under the latter's leadership, which has obtained the land and peace thanks to the proletarian revolution, and has so become a faithful supporter of the proletariat—such a peasantry is radically different from one which fought during the bourgeois revolution under the leadership of the Liberal bourgeoisie, and, having received the land from the hands of this bourgeoisie, has become its auxiliary. Indebted for its freedom to its alliance with the proletariat which supported it with all its strength, the Russian peasantry cannot but realise that it is just as much in its interest to collaborate closely with the proletariat in the economic sphere.

Engels used to say that "the conquest of power by the Socialist party was the task of the

“immediate future,” and that for this end “the party ought to go from the town into the village and become strong in the countryside.”

The Russian Communists obeyed this precept. During three revolutions they never ceased to work in the countryside where now they have an influence such as our comrades in the West have not dreamt of. How can it be denied that this fact is such as to facilitate considerably the economic collaboration of the Russian workers and peasants.

Our sceptics declare that the existence of the rural petty proprietor is a factor that is incompatible with Socialist organisation. But look at what Engels has to say on this point :

“ We are determinedly on the side of the small peasant.

“ We will do all we can to make his life easier, and to facilitate co-operation if he wants it. If he does not decide upon it, we will give him time to think the matter over on his bit of land. We will act in this way not only because we think that the small independent peasant can quite well range himself on our side, but also because it is in the direct interest of the Party. The greater the number of peasants we will let become proletarians, and will draw to our side even while they are still peasants, the more rapid and easy will be the social transformation. For this transformation it is futile to wait till the moment when capitalist production will everywhere be developed to its maximum extent, when the last artisan and the

last peasant will fall victim to big capitalism production. The material sacrifices which society will have to make in the interests of the peasants may appear to be a squandering of money, from the point of view of capitalist economy.... It is, however, an excellent way of employing capital, because it will save an amount perhaps ten times greater in the expenses necessary for the complete transformation of society. In this sense, therefore, we can afford to be very generous to the peasants." (The Peasant Question.)

That is what Engels had to say on the subject of the peasantry of the West. But isn't it clear that this can be realised nowhere so easily and so completely as in the country of the dictatorship of the proletariat? Isn't it obvious that it is only in Soviet Russia that the "small independent peasant" can pass gradually to our side, that the necessary "material sacrifices" can be made, that "generosity towards the peasants" is possible, and that these measures in favour of the peasants and others like them are already in force in Russia? How can it be denied that this circumstance in its turn is such as to facilitate and advance the economic organisation in the country of the Soviets?

In the second place, the Russian rural economy cannot be compared with the rural economy of the West. The latter develops along the line of capitalism, leading consequently to the formation of huge estates, parallel with tiny allotments and a profound differentiation amongst the peasantry (great landed proprietors, small cultivators, agricultural labourers). It is not at all the same in Russia. The rural economy in its

evolution there cannot follow this road by reason simply of the existence of the Soviet power and the nationalisation of the chief instruments and means of production. It will develop by the adhesion of the small and middle peasantry to co-operation which the State will support by granting credits on favourable terms. In his articles on co-operation, Lenin pointed out very rightly that it should henceforth follow a new path—through its mediation the majority of the peasants must be drawn into the work of Socialist organisation, and the rural population must gradually be taught the principles of collectivism, first in the sphere of sales, and then in that of the production of agricultural produce.

In this connection the operation of agricultural co-operation is very interesting. Inside the Selskosoyus great new organisations have been formed for the various branches of rural economy—flax, potatoes, butter, and so on. Among these organisations which have a great future before them, there is, for example, the Central Co-operative for flax, which includes an entire network of societies of flax producers. Providing the peasants with grain and implements, it buys from them later the whole of the flax they produce, which it sells wholesale on the market, guaranteeing them a share in the profits, in this way linking the peasant economy through the Selskosoyus with State industry. This form of organisation of production is one of the many indications of the direction in which rural economy will develop in Russia.

It is obvious that the peasantry will willingly take part in this process, which safeguards them

from the restoration of large-scale land proprietorship, from wage slavery, misery and ruin.

This is what Lenin says about the role of co-operation :

“The possession of the principal instruments of production by the State, the possession of political power by the proletariat, the alliance of this proletariat with the huge mass of small peasants which it governs—what more do we need in order to be able, with co-operation alone (which we used formerly for trading and still have the right to use in that way, up to a certain point, under NEP), to proceed with the practical construction of Socialist society? This is not yet the construction of Socialist society, but it is all that is necessary for that construction.” (On Co-operation.)

Talking later of the necessity of giving financial and other help to co-operation, and praising co-operation as the “new principle for the organisation of the people,” and as the new “social system” under the dictatorship, Lenin declares :

“Every social system arises only with the financial help of a certain class. It would be waste of time to recount the hundreds of millions of roubles that the birth of “free” capitalism cost. We ought now to realise that the social system that we have to support above all is the co-operative system. But it is co-operation in the true sense of the word that we have to support; that is to say, it isn't a matter of supporting any and every form of co-operation, but of supporting a co-

operation in which the mass of the people actually participates." (*On Co-operation.*)

What do all these facts show?

That the sceptics are wrong. That Leninism is right in regarding the toiling peasant masses as the reserve of the proletariat.

That the proletariat when in power can and ought to make use of this reserve to unite industry with the rural economy, and lay firmly the foundations of the Socialist economy.



CHAPTER VII.

THE NATIONAL QUESTION.

THE STATUS OF THE QUESTION.

IN the course of the last twenty years, the national question has undergone a series of modifications of very great importance. At the present moment, by its amplitude as well as by its internal nature, it differs profoundly from what it was under the Second International.

It was then limited almost exclusively to the question of the oppression of "cultured" nationalities. The Irish, Hungarians, Poles, Finns, Serbs; such were the principal peoples more or less subject, whose destiny interested the Second International. As for the hundreds of millions of Asiatics and Africans, crushed beneath the most brutal yoke, almost nobody had a care for them. It seemed impossible to put the white peoples and the black on the same plane, the "civilised" and the "savages." The activity of the Second International in favour of the colonies was limited to rare and vague resolutions in which the question of the emancipation of the colonies was carefully evaded.

This opportunism on the national question has survived. Leninism has unveiled it and has destroyed the barrier between *whites and blacks*, between Europeans and barbarians; it has assim-

lated the *civilised* slaves with the *uncivilised* slaves of Imperialism and has bound up the national question with the colonial question. At the same time, the national question has become an international question; that of the liberation of the oppressed peoples of the colonies and of the countries subjected by Imperialism.

Formerly, the right of nations to dispose of themselves was frequently reduced to the "right to home rule." Certain leaders of the Second International went so far as to transform it into the right to merely *cultural* autonomy; that is to say, they would accord to the oppressed nations the right to have their own cultural institutions, but would refuse them the right to free themselves from the political yoke of the dominant nation. Consequently, the principle of nations to self-determination was in danger of being used to justify annexations. This confusion is now dissipated. Leninism has enlarged the conception of the people's right to self-determination; it has recognised the right of colonies and subject countries to separate themselves completely from the State to which they are bound and to form themselves into independent States. By this, the possibility of justifying annexations has been wiped out. And thus the principle of the peoples' right to self-determination, which was during the imperialist war an instrument in the hands of the Socialist-patriots to dupe the masses, serves now to unveil imperialist tendencies and chauvinist manoeuvres and serves as an instrument for the political education of the masses in the spirit of internationalism.

Previously, the question of the oppressed nations was considered as a legal question. A solemn pro-

clamation of the equality of the citizens of a country, innumerable declarations on the equality of nations; with such things the parties of the Second International amused themselves, while carefully concealing the fact that under Imperialism, which allows some peoples to live by the exploitation of others, *the equality of all nations* is only a fiction. Leninism has unmasked the hypocrisy of this *legal* point of view of the national question. It has shown that without direct support of the struggle of the oppressed peoples by the proletarian parties, the pompous declarations on the equality of the nations are only lying phrases. So the question of the oppressed nations has become the question of the constant support of the oppressed peoples in their struggle against Imperialism for their national independence.

For reformism the national question was an independent question, unconnected with the question of the domination of capital, of the overthrow of Imperialism, of the proletarian revolution. It was tacitly admitted that the victory of the proletariat in Europe is possible without a direct alliance with the movement for national liberation in the colonies, that the solution of the colonial question could be found apart from the proletarian revolution, apart from the struggle against Imperialism. This anti-revolutionary outlook is now unmasked. Leninism has proved, and the Imperialist war and the revolution in Russia have confirmed, that the national question can be solved only on the field of the proletarian revolution, that the victory of the revolution in the West requires the alliance of the European proletariat with the movement in the

colonies and the subject countries against Imperialism. The national question is part of the general question of the proletarian revolution, it is part of the problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Do there exist in the movements for national independence in the oppressed countries any revolutionary possibilities, and if so, is there any chance of using them for the proletarian revolution, of transforming the colonial and subject countries from the reserve of the Imperialist bourgeoisie into the allies of the revolutionary proletariat. This is how the question is put.

Leninism says *Yes!* to it; that is to say, it recognises the existence of these revolutionary possibilities and considers it necessary to make use of them for the overthrow of the common enemy, Imperialism. The mechanism of the development of Imperialism, the Imperialist war, and the Russian revolution completely confirm the deductions of Leninism on this matter.

Hence the necessity for the proletariat to sustain actively and resolutely the liberation movement of the oppressed peoples.

Of course, it does not follow that the proletariat ought to support *any* national movement. It ought to aid those which tend to weaken and overturn Imperialism, not those which would maintain and consolidate it. It so happens that the national movements of certain countries might be in conflict with the interests of the proletarian movement. In these cases there is

no question of supporting them. The question of the rights of a nation is not an isolated question, a separate one, but a part of the general question of the proletarian revolution. Consequently, it ought to be adapted and subordinated to the latter. About 1850, Marx was in favour of the national movement of the Poles and the Hungarians, and against that of the Czechs and the Jugo-Slavs. Why? Because the latter were then *reactionary peoples*, outposts in Europe of autocratic Russia, while the Poles and the Magyars were *revolutionary peoples* struggling against autocracy. Support of the national movement of the Czechs and Jugo-Slavs was then indirect support of Tsarism, the most dangerous enemy of the revolutionary movement in Europe.

The various demands of the democracy, and amongst others the people's right to self-determination, are not of absolute value, but are a part of the democratic (Socialist) movement of the world. It is possible that in certain cases the part might be antagonistic to the whole, and then it is necessary to reject it. (Lenin.)

So then, regarded not from the point of view of abstract right, but from the angle of reality, of the interests of the revolutionary movement, certain national movements could have a reactionary character.

Similarly, the unquestionably revolutionary character of most of the national movements is as *relative* and special as the reactionarism of certain others. To be revolutionary, a national movement need not necessarily be composed of proletarian

elements, or have a revolutionary or republican programme or a democratic base. The struggle of the Emir of Afghanistan for the independence of his country is objectively a *revolutionary* struggle in spite of the monarchism of the Emir and his lieutenants, for it weakens, disintegrates, undermines Imperialism, while the struggle of the democrats, of the *Socialists, revolutionaries*, and republicans like Kerensky and Tseretelli, Renaudel and Scheidemann, Tchernov and Dan, Henderson and Clynes, during the Imperialist war, was a reactionary fight, for it has as its result the glossing-over and concealment of Imperialism, its consolidation and victory. The struggle of the merchants and bourgeois intellectuals of Egypt for Egyptian independence is an objectively *revolutionary* struggle in spite of the bourgeois origin and position of the leaders of the national movement, in spite of their antagonism towards Socialism, while the struggle of the *Labour* government of England to maintain Egypt in tutelage to Great Britain is a *reactionary* struggle, in spite of the working class origin and position of members of that government, and of their so-called Socialist convictions. Similarly the national movement of other great colonial or subject countries like India and China is no less, even if it contradicts the principles of formal democracy, a direct hit at Imperialism, and, therefore, a *revolutionary* movement.

Lenin was right in saying that it was necessary to consider the national movement of the oppressed peoples not from the point of view of formal democracy, but from the point of view of its actual results in the general war against Imperialism; that is to say, it is necessary to appreciate this movement "not by itself, but on a world-scale."

THE LIBERATION MOVEMENT OF THE OPPRESSED
PEOPLES AND THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION.

In solving the national question, Leninism sets out from the following theses :

(a) The world is divided into two camps : on the one side, an infinitesimal minority of civilised nations possessing almost all finance-capital and exploiting the rest of the population of the globe ; on the other side, the oppressed and exploited peoples of the colonies and subject countries, who form the majority of the population.

(b) The colonies and the countries subjected and exploited by finance-capital constitute an immense reserve of forces for Imperialism.

(c) It is only by a revolutionary struggle against Imperialism that the oppressed peoples of the colonial and subject countries will succeed in freeing themselves from slavery and exploitation.

(d) The principal subject peoples have already entered upon the path of the national liberation movement, which will inevitably bring about the crisis of world-capitalism.

(e) The interests of the proletarian movement in the advanced countries and of the national movement in the colonies require that these two movements form a united front against the common enemy, Imperialism.

(f) The victory of the working class in the advanced countries and the liberation of the peoples oppressed by Imperialism are impossible with-

out the formation and consolidation of a common revolutionary front.

(g) The formation of a common revolutionary front is possible only if the proletariat of the oppressing countries supports directly and resolutely the movement for national independence of the oppressed peoples against the Imperialism of the mother-country for *a people which oppresses others can never be free.* (Marx.)

(h) This support consists in the defence and application of the principle of the right of the nations to separate themselves from the mother-country, and to constitute themselves independent States.

(i) Without the application of this principle, it is impossible to realise the union of all nations in a single world-economy, the material basis for the Socialist victory.

(j) This union can only be voluntary, founded on the mutual confidence and fraternal relations of the various peoples.

There are, therefore, two tendencies in the national question: the tendency toward political emancipation from the yoke of Imperialism and the creation of independent national States, a tendency which has its source in the reaction against Imperialist oppression and colonial exploitation, and the tendency toward the economic union of the nations, a tendency determined by the formation of a world-market and a world-economy.

The history of capitalism shows us two tendencies in the national question. The first is the awakening of national life and of national movements, the struggle against all national oppression, the creation of national States. The second is the development of all sorts of relations between the nations, the destruction of national barriers, the creation of the international unity of capitalism, of economic, political, scientific, unity, etc. These two tendencies are the universal law of capitalism. The first predominates at the beginning of its evolution; the second characterises the maturity of capitalism that is on the road to its transformation into a Socialist society. (Lenin: Critical Remarks.)

For Imperialism, these two tendencies represent irreducible contradictions, for it cannot live without exploiting the colonies, without forcibly maintaining them within the framework of a *single whole*; it can unify the nations only by annexions and colonial extensions, without which it cannot reproduce itself.

For Communism, on the contrary, these tendencies are only two phases of a single process: that of emancipation of the peoples oppressed by the yoke of Imperialism. We know, in fact, that universal economic fusion is possible only on the basis of mutual confidence and by virtue of an agreement freely assented to, that formation of a voluntary union of the peoples ought to be preceded by the separation of the colonies from the *single Imperialist whole*, by the transformation of the colonies into independent States.

Hence the necessity of an incessant and obstinate struggle against the jingoism of the *Socialists* of the great powers (England, France, America, Japan, etc.), who do not wish to fight their Imperialist governments nor to support the struggle of the oppressed colonial peoples for their emancipation and separation from the mother-country.

Without this struggle, it is impossible to educate the working class of the dominant nations in the spirit of true internationalism, to draw it close to the toiling masses of the colonies and the subject countries, to prepare it for the proletarian revolution. The revolution would not have triumphed in Russia, Koltchak and Denikin would not have been defeated, if the Russian proletariat had not on its side the sympathy and support of the oppressed peoples of the old Tsarist empire. But, to obtain their sympathy and their aid, it had first of all to break their chains, to free them from the yoke of Russian Imperialism. Without this it would have been impossible firmly to establish the Soviet power, to implant a true internationalism, and to create that remarkable organisation of peoples which is called the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics and represents the prototype of the future union of all the nations in a single world economy.

Hence the necessity of fighting in the oppressed countries the narrowness of those Socialists who see only their immediate national interests, confine themselves to local activity and refuse to understand the connection of the liberation movement of their country with the proletarian movement of the dominant countries.

Otherwise, it is impossible to maintain the solidarity of the proletariat of the oppressed nations with that of the dominant countries in their struggle against the common enemy, Imperialism; otherwise it is impossible to realise internationalism.

This is the path to follow for the education of the toiling masses of the oppressed and the dominant nations in the spirit of revolutionary internationalism.

This is what Lenin writes about this education :
Can this education be identical in the great nations, which oppress others, and in the little oppressed nations, in the country which annexes and in the country annexed?

Obviously not. The march towards the single goal—complete equality, close union, the fusion of all nations—can make use of diverse paths. Thus, to get to a point situated in the centre of the page, one can set out from either the left or the right-hand edge of the page. If, in preaching the fusion of the peoples, the Socialist of a great oppressing country forgets that Nicholas II., Wilhelm, George V., Poincaré and others are also for “fusion” with small nations (by means of annexation) that Nicholas II. is for “fusion” with Galicia, Wilhelm II. for “fusion” with Belgium, etc., he will be in theory only a ridiculous doctrinaire, and in practice only an auxiliary of Imperialism.

The centre of gravity of the internationalist education of the workers of the oppressing countries

ought to rest in the propaganda and active support of the right of the oppressed peoples to separate themselves from the mother-country. Without this, no internationalism is possible. We can and ought to treat as an Imperialist and a rogue every Socialist in an oppressing State, who does not carry on this propaganda. The right of separation from the mother-country is an indispensable demand, although until the coming of Socialism this separation may be possible in only one case out of a thousand.

On the other hand, the Socialist of a small nation ought to carry the centre of his agitation to the second half of our formula: "the voluntary union," of the nations. He can be, without failing in the duties of an internationalist, both for the political independence of his nation and for its inclusion in some neighbouring State. But, in every case, he ought to fight national narrowness, and not be limited to his movement, he ought to consider the general aspect of the movement, and understand that it is necessary to subordinate the special to the general interest.

People who have not fathomed the question see a "contradiction" in the fact that the Socialists of oppressing States ought to demand the "freedom to separate" and the Socialists of the oppressed nations the "freedom to unite" with another people. But a little reflection is sufficient to enable to see that there is no road to internationalism and the fusion of the nations other than that we have pointed out in our thesis. (Lenin: *The Balance Sheet of the Discussion.*)

CHAPTER VIII.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS, THE SCIENCE OF THE DIRECTION OF THE CLASS WAR OF THE PROLETARIAT.

THE period of the Second International was above all a time for the formation and instruction of proletarian armies during a relatively tranquil time. Parliamentarism was the principal form of the class war, whilst such things as the great conflict of classes, preparation for revolutionary battles, and methods of installing the dictatorship of the proletariat, were not considered. One was contented with discussing the legal possibilities of forming and instructing proletarian armies, of utilising Parliamentarism in the framework of a regime which limited, and apparently would indefinitely limit, the role of the proletariat to an opposition. It is evident that, in such a period, and with such a conception of the tasks of the proletariat, there could not possibly exist either strategy or true tactics, but simply fragments of them.

The great error of the Second International lies not in having utilised the Parliamentary forms of fighting, but in having over-estimated their importance, in having almost considered them the only methods possible, and, when the period of

revolutionary combats which were outside the scope of Parliament arrived, of having swerved to the side and refused to undertake the accomplishment of their new tasks.

It is not until the next stage, the stage of direct action, of proletarian revolution, when the overthrowing of the bourgeoisie becomes an absolute necessity, that the question of proletarian reserves (*i.e.*, strategy) becomes urgent, and the character of the struggle and its organisation, be it Parliamentary or non-Parliamentary (tactics), shows itself clearly. It is only at this stage that a true strategy and tactical scheme for the proletarian fight can be elaborated.

It is from this angle that Lenin treats the ideas of Marx and Engels, so mangled by the opportunism of the Second International, on the subject of Strategy and Tactics. But he is not contented simply with reproducing their ideas. He develops them, completes them, and unifies them into a system of rules and precepts for the direction of the proletarian class war. Such works as "What Next?" "Two Essays on Tactics," "Imperialism," "The State and Revolution," "The Proletarian Revolution," "Infantile Sickness," are incontestably a priceless contribution to the Marxist arsenal. "Strategy" and "Tactics," as dealt with by Lenin, are simply the science of the direction of the revolutionary fight of the proletariat.

THE STAGES OF REVOLUTION AND STRATEGY.

Strategy consists in determining the direction of the main task of the proletariat, also, consequently,

in ordering the disposition of revolutionary forces during the course of this stage of the revolution.

Our revolution varied its strategy according to the different stages we passed through.

1st Stage—Feb. 1903-1917.

Aim—the overthrow of Czarism, and the abolition of the last feudal survivals.

The essential force of the revolution: the proletariat.

The immediate reserve: the peasants.

Immediate task—to isolate the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie who were obliged to win over the peasants and ward off the revolution by an agreement with Czarism.

Disposition of forces—alliance of workers with peasants.

“The proletariat ought to achieve a democratic revolution by rallying to itself the mass of the peasants, and thus crushing the resistance of autocracy and paralysing the unstable bourgeoisie.”
(*Two Tactics.*)

2nd Stage—Mar. 1917—Oct. 1917.

Aim—To overthrow Imperialism in Russia and withdraw from the imperialist war.

Essential force of the Revolution—the proletariat.

Immediate reserve—the poorer ranks of peasants.

Probable reserve—the proletariat of neighbouring countries.

Favourable circumstances—the prolonging of the war and the imperialist crisis.

Immediate task—to isolate the petty-bourgeois democrats, (*i.e.*, the mensheviks), forcing them to win over the mass of rural workers and to avert revolution by an agreement with imperialism.

Disposition of forces—alliance of workers with poor peasants.

“The proletariat should achieve the social revolution by rallying to itself the mass of the semi-proletarian country elements, to break by force the resistance of the bourgeoisie and to paralyse the peasants and unstable petty bourgeoisie.”
(*Two Tactics.*)

3rd Stage (consecutive with October Revolution).

Aim—to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country, and to use it as a fulcrum for the overthrowing of Imperialism in all countries. The revolution is not to be limited to one sole country—but has entered its world-wide stage.

Essential force—the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country and the revolutionary movements of the proletariat of other countries.

Principal reserves—the semi-proletarian masses and the peasants of advanced

lands, the nationalist movements in colonies, and dependent states.

Immediate tasks—to isolate the democratic petty bourgeoisie (partisans of Second International, promoters of the policy of conciliation with Imperialism).

Disposition of forces—alliance of proletarian revolution with Nationalist movement and dependent states.

Strategy depends on the essential and reserve forces of the revolution remaining unchanged during a given stage; it adapts itself at each development of the revolution.

FLUCTUATIONS IN THE MOVEMENT AND TACTICS.

Tactics consist in determining the line of conduct of the proletariat during a relatively short period of ebbing and flowing, of advance and reaction of the revolutionary movement, in pursuing this line of conduct by replacing old slogans, methods of fighting and organisation, with new ones, and linking on the one to the other, etc. If the aim of the strategy, for example, is to push things to the very limit and actually take over the country, against Czarism or the bourgeoisie—tactics is concerned with objectives much more limited. It must occupy itself with gaining this, or that campaign, with this or that intervention, at the appropriate moment during a given period of revolutionary activity and reaction. It forms a part of strategy, and therefore, is subordinated to it.

Tactics vary with the rise and fall of the revolutionary wave. Thus, in the first stage of the revolution, Feb. 1903-1917, it varied on many occasions whilst the strategical plan remained unchanged. From 1903-1905, was a period of *offensive* tactics, for then the movement was growing. Local political strikes, political demonstrations, general political strikes, boycott of the Duma, insurrection, revolutionary slogans. Such were the successive forms of the revolutionary struggle, in accordance with which the forms of organisation varied. Workshop committees, committees of revolutionary peasants, strike committees, soviets of workers' deputies, the workers' party agitating more or less openly, such were the forms of organisation during that period.

From 1907 to 1912, the movement suffered a phase of reaction, and the Party was obliged to adopt the tactics of retreat. Accordingly, the methods of attack and the organisation changed. The boycotting of Parliament gave place to the participation in the Duma, direct revolutionary action gave way to intervention and Parliamentary agitation, the general political strike to economic strikes, or even to complete absence of manifestations.

THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION.

The reserves of the revolution are :—

Direct :— ,

- (a) Peasants and intermediate strata of the population.

- (b) Proletariat of neighbouring countries.
- (c) Revolutionary movement in colonies and subject states.
- (d) Dictatorship of proletariat.

The proletariat, whilst maintaining its supremacy, may temporarily renounce one of these reserves in order to neutralise a powerful opponent, or to gain a truce by means of it.

Indirect :—

- (a) Antagonisms and conflicts between indigent non-proletarian classes, capable of being used by the proletariat to weaken an adversary or strengthen a direct reserve.
- (b) Antagonisms, conflicts, and wars between bourgeois states hostile to proletarian state, which the proletariat can utilise to concentrate an offensive or to cover a retreat.

The importance of the direct reserves is evident; as for the indirect reserves, although it is not perhaps always clearly evident, they are all capital for the revolution. One cannot deny, for example, the immense importance of the conflict between the democratic petty bourgeoisie and the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie during and after the proletarian revolution, a conflict which undeniably helped to keep the peasants under the influence of the bourgeois. However, the war to the death which the principal imperialist groups commenced at the moment of the October revolution, pre-

vented their concentrating their forces against Soviet Russia, and allowed the proletariat to organise its forces, to consolidate its power, and prepare the crushing of Koltchak and Denikin.

Now that the antagonisms between the various Imperialist groups are getting accentuated to the point of making a new war inevitable, these indirect reserves will have a much greater importance for the proletariat.

Strategical Direction consists in rationally utilising all these reserves to attain the essential aim of the revolution during a given stage.

In what does this consist?

First, in concentrating the bulk of its forces on the most vulnerable point of the enemy at the decisive moment, whilst the revolution is still ripe; in developing the offensive so that insurrection breaks out, and the rallying of the reserves of the vanguard is necessary to achieve success. For example, take the strategy of the Party from April to October, 1917. The most vulnerable point of the enemy was undoubtedly the war. Here the Party gathered the whole population around the proletarian vanguard on this question. The strategy consisted in moulding and leading the vanguard by means of demonstrations, manifestations and street corner meetings, by means of Soviets in the country, and soldiers' committees at the front, to rally the reserves around the vanguard. The issue of the revolution has demonstrated the wisdom of this strategy.

This is what Lenin, paraphrasing the thesis of Marx and Engels, says of this utilisation of the forces of revolution :

“ Never play with insurrection, and once it is commenced, get this idea well into your head, that it must be pursued to the very end. At the psychological moment, gather together forces much superior to those of the enemy, or else this latter, being better prepared and better organised, will annihilate the insurgents. The insurrection once begun, act with the maximum of vigour, and at whatever cost take the offensive. ‘ The defensive is the death of insurrection.’ Attempt to catch the enemy on the nod, to take advantage of the moment when his troops are dispersed.

“ Each day achieve some success, however small (one might say each hour in the case of a single town) and at all costs maintain a superior ‘ morale ’ ” (Counsels of an Exile.)

Secondly, in well choosing the time for the decisive “ coup ” and the insurrection, which time should be when the crisis has attained its highest pitch, or when the vanguard, sure of the support of the reserves, is ready to engage battle to the bitter end, or when disorder is worst in the ranks of the enemy.

“ One can consider the time ripe for the decisive battle when all the forces of classes hostile to us are sufficiently wasted in internecine quarrels, and weakened in their mutual strife; when all the intermediate elements which are hesitating and unstable (i.e., the petit bourgeoisie) are sufficiently

unmasked, and their prestige lowered by their failure in practice; when the mass of the proletariat begin to applaud the most revolutionary acts against the bourgeoisie. Then the time is ripe for revolution. Then if we have been keeping good account of all the conditions enumerated above, and have well chosen the moment, our victory is assured." (Infantile sickness.)

The insurrection of October might be taken as a model of the application of this strategy. If the Party fails to observe the second condition it commits (either by retarding the movement or by advancing it too soon) a dangerous error, capable of bringing in its train a check. An example of this error, *i.e.*, of the inopportune choice of the moment for insurrection, is seen in the attempt of a number of our comrades to begin the insurrection by the arrest of the Democratic Conference in August, 1917, whilst there was still a certain amount of hesitation amongst the Soviets and we were at a halting point, the reserves having not yet rallied round the vanguard.

Thirdly, in invariably following, in spite of all obstacles, the direction once adopted, so that the vanguard shall never lose sight of the essential aim of the fight, and the masses shall march without deviating towards the goal, whilst grouping themselves as closely as possible around the vanguard. The violation of this rule is most dangerous, for it involves loss of sense of direction. For example, take the decision taken by our Party immediately after the Democratic Conference to participate in the "Pre-Parliament." At this moment, the Party seemed to have forgotten that

the creation of the "Pre-Parliament" was really nothing but an attempt of the bourgeoisie to make the people forsake the Soviets and turn to bourgeois Parliamentarism, which "would upset the whole plan and destroy the workers and peasants waging the revolutionary fight on the slogan, 'All power to the Soviets.'" This fault was mitigated by the Bolsheviks withdrawing from the "Pre-Parliament."

Fourthly, in manœuvring with the reserves when the enemy is in superior numbers, when it is assuredly disadvantageous to engage in battle, and when retreat, in view of the correlation of forces, is the only means whereby the vanguard can escape annihilation and conserve its forces.

"The revolutionary parties should complete their instruction. They have learned how to take the offensive. Now they should understand the necessity of completing their knowledge with the science of retreat. Taught by bitter experience the revolutionary class has begun to understand how it is impossible to conquer without knowing both the art of taking the offensive and of retreat."
(*Infantile Sickness.*)

The aim of this strategy is to gain time, to hamper the enemy, and to mobilise all the forces in order to take the offensive. Thus the signing of the Treaty of Brest allowed the Party to gain time, to exploit the conflicts of Imperialism, to hamper the enemy's forces, to hold the peasants, and to prepare the offensive against Koltchak and Denikin.

“ In concluding a separate peace, we free ourselves so that at this very moment we can exploit the hostility of two warring Imperialist groups, whose warfare prevents them (up to a certain point) from concluding an agreement with us, we assure ourselves of a period of tranquility which enables us to further and to consolidate the social revolution.” (Thesis on the Peace.)

And now—says Lenin, three years after Brest-Litovsk—the imbeciles themselves see that the Treaty of Brest was a concession which has strengthened us whilst it has cut up the forces of international Imperialism.

TACTICAL DIRECTION.

Tactical direction is a sub-division of strategical direction to which it is subordinated. It consists in assuring the rational utilisation of all the forms of fighting and of organisation of the proletariat so as to obtain in a given situation the maximum of results necessary for the preparation of the strategical victory.

In what consists principally the rational utilisation of the methods of the struggle and the organisation of the proletariat?

First, in putting in the forefront the methods of struggle and organisation which, corresponding best to the state of the development of the movement, permit of mobilising and de-mobilising conveniently the masses on the revolutionary front.

The masses must necessarily realise the impossibility of maintaining the old order of things, the need for ending them, and show themselves ready to support the vanguard. But this state of knowledge can only come from their own experience. To give them the possibility of understanding the inevitability of the overthrowing of the old order, to show in advance methods of fighting and forms of organisation enabling them to discover experimentally the truth of revolutionary slogans, this is a task to be accomplished.

The vanguard would have become detached from the workers, whilst these latter would have lost contact with the masses, if the Bolsheviks had not at that time resolved to participate in the Duma, to agitate there, to concentrate their forces on Parliamentary action in order to allow the masses to realise the futility of the Duma, the falsehood of the promises of the Imperialist Cadets, the impossibility of agreement with Czarism, and the necessity for an alliance of workers and peasants. Without this experience during the period of the Duma, it would have been impossible to unmask the Cadets to the masses and to assure the ultimate leadership of the proletariat.

The tactics of "otzovism" was dangerous, because it threatened to detach the vanguard from its innumerable reserves.

The Party would have been detached from the workers, and these would have lost their influence on the peasants and the soldiers if the proletariat had followed the Left-wing Communists who de-

manded a rising in April, 1917, whilst the mensheviks and the social-revolutionaries (partisans of the war and of Imperialism) had not yet had time to discredit themselves in the eyes of the masses, who were to learn the lies of menshevik social-revolutionaries on Peace, land and Liberty. Without this experience of Kerensky, the mensheviks and the social-revolutionaries could never have been isolated and the dictatorship of the proletariat would have been impossible. Thus the only true tactic is to expose the faults of the petty-bourgeois parties, and to declare open war from the bosom of the Soviets.

The tactics of the Left-wing Communists was dangerous because it threatened to take from the Party its role as vanguard of the proletarian revolution, and to make of it a troupe of empty and inconsistent conspirators.

“ It is impossible to achieve success with a vanguard only. To throw them into a decisive battle before the masses are prepared to support them, or at least to observe a good-natured neutrality—would not only be a folly, but a crime. Now, supposing that the mass of workers and of those oppressed by capitalism adopted this attitude—propaganda and agitation would not in themselves suffice. The political experience of the masses must come into play. Such is the fundamental law of big revolutions, a law confirmed now in a remarkable way both by Russia and by Germany. Just as the Russian masses, uneducated, often illiterate, so the German masses, infinitely more cultivated, had to learn in their turn the powerlessness, the valuelessness, the platitude, the infamy

of the government of the leaders of the Second International, the inevitability either of a dictatorship or of extreme reaction (Korniloff in Russia, Kapp and his companions in Germany), or of a dictatorship of the proletariat leading resolutely to Communism." (Infantile Sickness.)

Secondly—in finding in the chain of events the link on which to lean at a given moment, and the possession of which will ensure holding of the whole chain and preparing the condition for the strategical victory.

You must choose among the tasks presenting themselves to the Party for performance that which is most urgent and most important, and the execution of which will permit of the execution of others.

We will illustrate this proposition by two examples, one borrowed from history of times long past, and one from recent times.

When the Party was only just being formed, when the innumerable organisations were not united, when primitivism, the idea of cliques, and the confusion of ideology reigned supreme, the essential link in the chain, the fundamental immediate task, was the creation of an illegal paper for the whole of Russia. In fact, in those conditions, such a paper was the only way of creating a new solid party, capable of uniting into one whole all the innumerable circles or organisations—of preparing the conditions for a common ideo-

logy and tactic, to lay thus the foundations of a real Party.

After the war, with the appearance of the restoration of economy, when industry was in complete disorganisation, when agriculture was feeling the lack of industrial products, when the soldering of the state industries with the peasant economics was the necessary condition for the realisation of Socialism, the essential link in the chain, the fundamental link was the development of commerce. Why? Because under NEP the unison of industry with peasant economy was otherwise impossible than through commerce. Because production without the exchange of merchandise is the death of industry, because you cannot increase production without developing sales; because it is only after becoming consolidated in commerce that industry and agriculture can be allied, that the other problems can be solved as they arise, and in this way the laying of the foundations of a social economy can be commenced.

“ It is not enough to be revolutionary and partisan of Socialism or of Communism. One must know how to find at any given moment, the link of the chain on which we can strain, which will enable one to pull on the whole chain and to pass to the next link. At this very moment, this link is the development of international commerce under State regulation. Commerce is the link in the historic chain of events, in the transition forms of our social construction on which we must bend our efforts.” (Importance of Gold.)

REFORMISM AND REVOLUTION.

How does one distinguish between revolutionary tactic and reformist?

Some there are who imagine Lenin as contrary to reformism, to compromises, to agreements. This is not true. The Bolsheviki know that in one sense "it is well to accept anything," that in certain cases, reforms in general, compromises and agreements in particular, are necessary and useful.

"To wage war for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie, war 100 times more difficult, more long drawn out, more complicated than the most bloodthirsty war which could be possible between nations, and to renounce in advance manoeuvring the exploitation (even if only temporary) of antagonism of interest among the enemy; to refuse agreements and compromises (even though temporary conventional and unstable) with possible allies, is not this ridiculous to the last extreme? Is it not as if in the ascent of a steep unexplored mountain one refused to go up by zigzags, even to refuse to go back at times, or to depart from the set path in order to try another?" (Infantile Sickness.)

What is evidently of the greatest importance is not the reforms, compromises or agreements, but the use they are put to.

With the Reformist, reform is everything, whilst in revolutionary work it only appears as a form. This is why with the reformist tactic under a bour-

geois government, all reform tends inevitably to consolidate the powers that be, and to weaken the revolution.

With the revolutionary on the contrary, the main thing is the revolutionary work and not the reform. For him, reform is only an accessory of revolution. And so, with revolutionary tactic under a bourgeois government, all reform inevitably tends to weaken this government, to become a fulcrum for the development of the revolutionary movement.

The revolutionary will accept a reform to unite a legal with an illegal action, to dissimilate the progress of clandestine work, to educate the masses and prepare the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

The reformist on the contrary will accept reforms in order to rest on his laurels, will denounce all illegal work and hinder the preparation of the masses for revolution.

Thus is it with reforms and agreements under Imperialism.

Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, the situation changes somewhat. In certain cases, the proletarian power may find itself forced to renounce temporarily the whole immediate reform of the state of existing things and proceed on a progressive transformation—to follow—as Lenin said—a reformist path, a path of zigzags—of concessions to non-proletarian classes in order to weaken the latter, to give the revolution a breathing

time, a chance to muster all its forces and prepare for a new offensive. This path, one cannot deny, is in a certain sense, that of the reformer. But one should remember that in actuality, the reform emanates from a proletarian source, which gives thereby a truce, and that it is destined not to weaken the revolution, but the non-proletarian classes. Consequently, it is useful and necessary.

If the proletarian power may use this policy, it is solely because, in the preceding period, the advance of the revolution has been very considerable and thus gives it a chance to retire for a while, when necessity makes it obvious. Thus then, if formerly, under bourgeois power, reforms were only a product incidental to revolution, now, under the dictatorship of the proletariat, they have their source in the revolutionary conquests of the proletariat, and in the reserves accumulated by the latter.

“ It is not by Marxism that the relation of reforms to revolution can be exactly or rationally determined. Marx could only see this relationship from the point of view of his own period, when the proletariat had only won a victory perhaps less solid or durable than in any other country. In these circumstances there were no foundations for a true relationship, for reform is the accessory product of the struggle of the revolutionary working class. After the proletarian victory, even if only in one country, a new element appears in the relationship of reform to revolution. In principle, nothing is changed, but the form suffers a modification that Marx could not foresee, and which could only be conceived in a land where the philo-

sophy and the politics of Marx had triumphed. After the victory, reforms (while still remaining an accessory product) are, in the country of the victorious proletariat, a necessary and legitimate truce, when the forces are not sufficiently strong to pass through this or that stage of development. Victory gives a certain reserve strength, which can be preserved intact materially and morally, even during a forced retreat."



CHAPTER IX.

THE PARTY.

IN the pre-revolutionary period, the period of the domination of the Second International, when the Parliamentary forms of struggle were regarded as the chief ones, the Party did not and could not have the supreme importance which it has since acquired in the course of the great revolutionary battles. According to Kautsky, the Second International was essentially an instrument for times of peace : consequently, it was impossible for it to undertake anything serious during the war, and during the period of the revolutionary actions of the proletariat. What does this mean? It means that the Parties of the Second International are not adapted to the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, that they are not parties of combat leading the workers to the conquest of power, but machines for electoral campaigning and for the Parliamentary struggle. That is why, under the Second International, the essential political organisation of the proletariat was not the Party, but the Parliamentary fraction. The Party was then an appendix, a servant, of the Parliamentary fraction. It is evident that in these conditions there could be no question of preparing the proletariat for the revolution.

But it is not at all the same in the new period, which is the period of the open collisions of classes, of the revolutionary actions of the proletariat, of

the preparation for the overthrow of Imperialism and for the conquest of power. The re-organisation of the work of the Party on a revolutionary foundation, the preparation of the workers for the direct fight for power, the preparation and rallying of reserves the alliance with the proletariat of neighbouring countries, the establishment of a firm connection with the colonial movement : such are the principal tasks which are imposed upon the proletariat. To rely for their accomplishment on the old social-democratic parties, formed in the school of pacific Parliamentarism, is to condemn oneself to defeat. To remain under their leadership is to consent to remaining unarmed in face of the enemy.

The proletariat, of course, cannot resign itself to this situation. It has understood the necessity for a militant revolutionary Party, courageous enough to lead it in the struggle for power, experienced enough to unravel the complexity of factors and events, and flexible enough to steer it safely past the rocks. It has clearly understood that without such a Party it cannot dream of overthrowing Imperialism and establishing its dictatorship. Now this Party is the Party of Leninism. What are its characteristics?

THE PARTY IS THE VANGUARD OF THE WORKING CLASS.

The Party should be the vanguard of the working class. It should group within it the best elements, should embody their revolutionary spirit, their unbounded devotion to the cause of the prole-

tariat. But to fill this role, it should be armed with the revolutionary theory, it should know the laws of the movement, the laws of the Revolution. Otherwise it is not in a position to draw the proletariat after it and to lead its struggle. It cannot be a true Party if it limits itself to registering what the working masses feel and think, to following the spontaneous, every-day, politically-indifferent movements, if it cannot raise itself above the transient interests of the proletariat and arouse class consciousness in the masses. It ought to march at the head of the working class, to see farther than does the latter, to bring the proletariat under its influence, and not be dragged after it like the Parties of the Second International, which in this way makes the proletariat a tool of the bourgeoisie. Only a Party conscious of its function as advance-guard, and able to raise the proletarian mass to class consciousness, is in a position to divert the working class from the path of trade unionism, and transform it into an independent political force. The Party is the political leader of the working class.

I have outlined above the difficulties of the struggle of the working class, the necessity for strategy and tactics, for rules for manœuvring and using reserves, for the methods of the offensive and defensive. How can the innumerable mass of the proletariat enlighten itself in this complicated situation, how will it discover the correct attitude? An army at war cannot do without a General Staff if it does not wish to be beaten. Very much more so the proletariat cannot do without one, if it does not wish to deliver itself, bound hand

and foot, to its enemies. But where is this General Staff to be found? Only in the revolutionary Party. Without it the working class is an army without a leader.

But the Party cannot be only the vanguard. It should be a Party of the class, a Party intimately connected with the latter. The distinction between the vanguard and the rest of the working masses, between the Party member and the non-Party masses, cannot come to an end while the proletariat continues to see the refugees of other classes streaming to its ranks, while the whole working class is still unable to raise itself to the level of the vanguard. But the Party will fail in its function if this distinction is turned into separation, if it shuts itself up and becomes detached from the non-Party masses. To lead the class it is necessary for it to be in close contact with the non-Party mass, for the latter to accept its lead, for the Party to enjoy amongst this mass an unquestionable moral and political authority. Two hundred thousand workers have just entered our Party. It is a remarkable event; they are not so much come of their own accord as sent by their non-Party comrades who have proposed them, and have generally been called upon to ratify their admission. This proves that the mass of non-Party workers regard our Party as their own, as the Party in whose development they have vital interests, and to which they freely entrust their destiny. It is obvious that without these invisible moral ties which bind them to the Party the latter would lose much of its strength. The Party is the inalienable Party of the working class.

"We are the Party of the working class which in consequence should act almost wholly (in time of civil war, wholly) under the direction of our Party, and should be grouped to the greatest possible degree around it. But it would be wrong to believe that under capitalism the whole class or nearly all of it is able to raise itself to the consciousness and activity of the vanguard, of its Socialist Party. Under capitalism, it is obvious, the trade union organisation (more primitive, more accessible to the backward strata) may succeed in organising all or nearly all the working class. But not to understand the extent of our own tasks, to limit them, would be to forget the difference between the vanguard and the masses whose friend it is, it would be to forget the constant duty of the vanguard to raise progressively the broad proletarian masses to its own level." (From *One Step Forward*.)

THE PARTY IS THE ORGANISED DETACHMENT OF
THE WORKING CLASS.

The Party is not merely the vanguard of the working class. If it wants really to lead the latter's struggle, it ought also to be its *organised* detachment. Within the capitalist regime, it has extremely important and very varied tasks. It ought to direct the proletariat in its struggle amid difficulties of all sorts, should lead it to the offensive when the situation demands it, should withdraw it by retreat from the blows of its adversary when it is in danger of being crushed by them, should inculcate in the mass of non-Party workers the spirit of discipline, of method, of organisation, of

determination, which is necessary for the struggle. But it can acquit itself of these tasks only if it is itself the embodiment of discipline and organisation, if it is itself the *organised* detachment of the working class. Otherwise it can lay no claim to the leadership of the proletarian mass. The Party is the organised detachment of the working class.

The first point of our statute, drawn up by Lenin, lays down that the Party is an organised whole; he thought of it as the sum of its organisations and its members as the members of some one of its organisations. The mensheviks who opposed this formula as early as 1903, proposed a "system" of automatic admission into the Party. According to them, the status of member of the Party ought to be accorded to every sympathetic University professor and to every striker who supported the Party in some way or other, but who neither belonged nor wished to belong to any of its organisations. It is obvious that the adoption of this system would have had as its result the filling of the Party with professors and students, and would have made it a formless institution, lost in the mass of "sympathisers," where it would have been impossible to establish any distinction between the Party and the class, and to raise the unorganised masses to the level of their vanguard. With this opportunist system our Party could obviously not have accomplished its mission of organising the working class in the course of the revolution.

"If one admits Martov's point of view, the frontiers of the Party would have remained in-

determinate for 'every striker' could 'declare himself a member of the Party.' What advantage is there in this amorphousness? The spreading of just a 'name.' Its harmfulness? The confusion, essentially disorganising, of class and party.' (From *One Step Forward*.)

But the Party is not merely the sum, but the unified system of *relationship*, of these organisations, their formal union into a single whole, permitting of higher and subordinate directing organs, where the minority submits to the majority, and where the decisions adopted are obligatory for all members.

If it were not so, the Party could not realise the methodical and organised direction of the struggle of the working class.

"Formerly, our Party was not a formally organised whole, but only the sum of distinct groups. So these groups could exercise only an ideological influence on one another. Now we have become an organised Party; that is to say, we have a power, by virtue of which lesser units of the Party are subordinated to higher ones." (From *One Step Forward*.)

The principle of the submission of the minority to the majority, of the direction of work by a central organism, has often been attacked by the unstable elements, who describe it as bureaucratism, formalism, etc. But without this principle whose strict application is the essence of Leninism in the matter of organisation, the Party could not have

carried out any methodical work, nor guided the struggle of the working class. Lenin calls the opposition to this principle "Russian Nihilism" and says it is time to put an end to this "aristocrat's anarchism."

This is what he says on the matter in *One Step Forward* :

"This aristocrat's anarchism is characteristic of the Russian Nihilist, to whom the organisation of a Party seems a monstrous "machine"; the submission of the Party to the whole, and of the minority to the majority, a form of slavery; the division of labour under the direction of a central organism, a transformation of men into machines; the statute concerning the organisation of the Party, a useless thing which we could quite well do without. It is obvious that these protests against "bureaucratism" serve only to veil the personal discontent of their authors with the composition of the central organisms. . . . You are a bureaucrat because you have been appointed by the Congress not with but without my consent; you are a formalist because you rely on the formal decision of the Congress, and not on my opinion; you do things mechanically because you refer yourself to the majority of the Party Congress and take no notice of my desire to be co-opted; you are an autocrat because you do not wish to hand over power to the hands of the old group of cronies." (It is Martov, Axelrod, Potressov and others who are here discussed; they did not submit to the decisions of the Third Congress, and accused Lenin of bureaucratism).

THE PARTY IS THE HIGHEST FORM OF THE CLASS-
ORGANISATION OF THE PROLETARIAT.

The Party is the organised detachment, but not the only organisation of the working class. The latter has a series of others which are indispensable for its struggle against capital: trade unions, co-operatives, factory committees, Parliamentary fractions, politically neutral women's associations, the Press, youth associations, revolutionary militant organisations (in the course of direct revolutionary action), soviets of deputies, the State (if the proletariat is in power), etc. Most of these organisations are non-party; some adhere to a Party, or are a ramification of it. All of them are, under certain conditions, absolutely necessary to the working class, to consolidate its class positions in the different spheres of the struggle and to make of it a force capable of replacing the bourgeois order by the Socialist order.

But how can unity of direction be realised with organisations so diverse? How can their multiplicity be prevented from leading to disagreements as to direction? These organisations, it may be said, carry out their work each in its special sphere, and therefore cannot be in anyone's way. That is so. And they all direct their activity toward a single end, for they all serve one class, the proletariat. Who is it then determines this one direction? What central organisation is there, experienced enough to work out this general line, and able, thanks to its authority, to induce all these organisations to follow it, able to secure unity of direction

and to prevent any possibility of sudden halts and deviations?

This organisation is the Party of the proletariat.

It possesses, in fact, all the qualities that are required. First, it includes the flower of the working class, an élite directly connected with the non-Party organisations of the proletariat and often leading them. In the second place, it is the best school for the production of leaders able to direct the various organisations of the working class. In the third place, its experience and authority make it the one organisation capable of centralising the fight of the working class and of transforming in this way all the non-Party organisations of the working class into organs for connection with the latter. The Party is the highest form of the class-organisation of the proletariat.

This is not to say, of course, that the non-Party organisations—trade unions, co-operatives, and so on, should be formally subject to Party management. What is necessary is that the Communists who belong to these organisations *in which* they may exercise great influence, should use persuasion to get them to draw close to the Party of the proletariat and accept its political guidance.

That is why Lenin says that “the Party is the highest form of the class-unity of the workers,” whose political leadership ought to extend over every other form of proletarian organisation.

That is why the opportunist theory of the

“independence” and “neutrality” of the non-Party organisations, the theory which gives rise to *independent* parliamentarians, to publicists *unattached* to the Party, to *narrow* trade unionists and *bourgeois-minded* co-operators, is absolutely incompatible with the theory and practice of Leninism.

THE PARTY IS THE INSTRUMENT FOR THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT.

The Party is the highest form of the organisation of the proletariat. It is the chief director of the proletarian class and its organisations. But it does not follow that it ought to be regarded as an end in itself, a force sufficient unto itself. The Party, at the same time as it is the highest form of the class-unity of the proletarians, is also an *instrument* in the hands of the proletariat, first of all for the establishment of its dictatorship, and then to consolidate and extend it. It could not have such great importance if the question of the conquest of power did not face the proletariat, if the existence of Imperialism, the inevitability of wars and the presence of a crisis did not demand the concentration of all the forces of the proletariat and all the threads of the revolutionary movement in the hands of a single organ. The Party is, first of all, necessary to the proletariat as the General Staff for the seizure of power. It is obvious that without a Party able to muster all the mass-organisations of the proletariat and to centralise the management of the whole movement in the course of the struggle, the workers could not

have realised their revolutionary dictatorship in Russia.

But the Party is not of necessity merely for the establishment of the dictatorship; it is required even more to maintain the dictatorship, to consolidate and extend it in order to ensure the complete victory of Socialism.

It is now clearly understood that the Bolsheviks could not have kept power for—I will not even say two and a half years, but for two and a half months, if our Party was not ruled by an iron discipline and supported unreservedly by the mass of the working class, that is, by all the conscious, sincere and devoted elements of it, which had enough influence to draw the other sections after them. (Left-wing Communism.)

What is meant by “maintaining” and “extending” the dictatorship? It means to inculcate the spirit of discipline and organisation in the proletarian masses, to fortify them against the harmful influence of the petty bourgeois element, to re-educate the petty bourgeois strata and transform their mentality, to help the proletarian masses to become a force able to suppress classes and prepare the conditions for the organisation of Socialist production. But it is impossible to accomplish this unless the Party is made strong by cohesion and discipline.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is a relentless struggle with bloodshed and without, a struggle both violent and peaceful, military and economic,

educational and administrative, a war against the forces and traditions of the old order. The force of habit of millions and tens of millions of men is a very formidable force. Without a Party of iron, steeled in the struggle, enjoying the confidence of all decent elements in the working class, knowing how to observe the state of mind of the masses, and to influence it, it is impossible to conduct such a struggle. (Left-wing Communism.)

7. | The Party is necessary to the proletariat for the establishment and maintenance of the dictatorship. But it does not follow that the disappearance of classes and of the dictatorship will lead to the disappearance of the Party.

THE PARTY, AS A UNITED WILL, IS INCOMPATIBLE
WITH THE EXISTENCE OF FACTIONS.

It is impossible to win and maintain the dictatorship of the proletariat without a Party made strong by its cohesion and discipline. But iron discipline cannot be thought of without unity of will and absolutely united action on the part of all members of the Party. This does not mean that the possibility of a conflict of opinion within the Party is excluded. Discipline, indeed, far from excluding criticism and conflict of opinion, pre-supposes their existence. But this most certainly does not imply that there should be "blind" discipline. Discipline does not exclude, but pre-supposes *understanding*, voluntary submission, for only a conscious discipline can be a discipline of iron. But when discussion has been closed and a decision made,

unity in will and action is the indispensable condition without which there can be neither Party nor discipline.

In the present epoch of intensification of civil war, the Communist Party can only accomplish its task if it is organised on a basis of centralism, ruled by an iron, almost military discipline, directed by a central organism possessing strong authority, commanding extensive powers and enjoying the general confidence of the members of the Party. (Conditions of Admission into the Communist International.)

That is what the discipline of the Party ought to be, not only before but after the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

“To weaken, however little, the iron discipline in the Party of the proletariat (particularly during its dictatorship) means giving effective aid to the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.” (Left-wing Communism.)

It follows that the existence of factions is incompatible with the unity and discipline of the Party. It is obvious that it leads to the existence of several centres of direction, and so to the absence of a general directing body, to division in the united will that should direct the carrying out of the Party's tasks, to the undermining of discipline, and to the weakening of the dictatorship. It is true that the parties of the Second International, which oppose the dictatorship and have no intention of leading the proletarians to the conquest of power,

can permit themselves the luxury of factions, for they have no need of an iron discipline. But the Parties of the Communist International, which organise their activity with a view to the conquest of power and the maintenance of the dictatorship of the proletariat, cannot afford this luxury. The Party as a united Will must exclude every tendency to form factions, to divide power within it.

That is why Lenin, in a special resolution at the Tenth Congress, showed the "danger of faction-forming, for the unity of the Party and the realisation of unity of Will in the vanguard of the proletariat, the unity that is the essential condition for the success of the dictatorship of the proletariat."

That is why he demanded, at the same Congress, the "absolute suppression of all groups based on this or that platform," on pain of "immediate exclusion from the Party." (Vide the Resolution *On the Unity of the Party.*)

THE PARTY IS STRENGTHENED BY PURIFYING ITSELF FROM OPPORTUNIST ELEMENTS.

The opportunist elements of the Party are the source of factions. The proletariat is not an exclusive class—peasants, petty bourgeoisie and intellectuals proletarianised by the development of capitalism, flow ceaselessly into its ranks. At the same time the upper strata (the leading trade unionists and parliamentarians, corrupted by the bourgeoisie with the surplus profit of the colonies)

tend continually to break away. "These bourgeois-minded workers, this Labour aristocracy, petty-bourgeois in mode of life, income and ideology, is the main strength of the Second International and, at the present time, the most dependable *social support of the bourgeoisie*. These people are veritable *agents of the bourgeoisie in the Labour movement*, the servants of capitalism, the propagators of reformism and jingoism." (*Imperialism.*)

All these groups penetrate somehow or other into the Party, into which they introduce the spirit of opportunism. They represent the chief source of faction-forming and division. They disorganise the Party, undermining it from within. To begin the battle against Imperialism with such "allies" as these is to open oneself to simultaneous attack from front and rear. It is necessary, therefore, to conduct a ruthless fight against these opportunist elements, and not to hesitate to expel them from the Party.

The assumption that they have to be overcome by an ideological struggle inside the Party is a very dangerous theory which condemns the Party to paralysis, to chronic uneasiness, and threatens to hand it over to opportunism, to leave the proletariat without a revolutionary Party, and to deprive it of its chief weapon in the fight against Imperialism. Our Party could not have taken power and organised the dictatorship of the proletariat nor could it have been victorious in the civil war, if it had had people like Martov, Dan, Potressov and Axelrod among its members.

It has succeeded in creating internal unity and in welding its ranks powerfully together, above all because it was able to purify itself in time from pollution with opportunism, and to expel the liquidators and the mensheviks. The proletarian parties, in order to develop and grow strong, must get rid of the opportunists and reformists, the social-Imperialists and the Socialist-jingoes, the social-patriots and the social-pacifists. The Party will make itself strong by freeing itself from opportunist elements.

“With reformists and mensheviks in its ranks, the proletarian revolution cannot triumph or maintain itself. This is obvious à priori. It has been proved, besides, by the experience of Russia and Hungary . . . In Russia, the Soviet regime has many times got through difficult situations in which it would certainly have been overthrown if the mensheviks, the reformists and the petty-bourgeois democrats, had remained in our Party. In Italy, according to the general opinion, the proletariat will soon enter upon decisive battles with the bourgeoisie for the conquest of political power. At such a time it is essential to dismiss the mensheviks, the reformists, and Turratists from the Party; further, it will perhaps be necessary to remove from all important posts Communists who are hesitant, even to the slightest degree, or inclined to effect unity with the reformists. . . . On the eve, as in the moment, of battle, the slightest hesitation in the Party can ruin everything, can make the revolution miscarry, and snatch power from the proletariat while it is

still ill-secured and exposed to furious attacks. If the hesitating leaders withdraw at such a time, it strengthens, rather than weakens, the workers' movement and the revolution." (Lenin: *On Lying Speeches about Freedom.*)



CHAPTER X.

THE STYLE.

We are not concerned here with literary style, but with what may be called the style of work. Leninism is a school of theory and practice which turns out a special type of militant, a particular style of work. What are the characteristics of this style?

There are two—Russian revolutionary inspiration and the practical spirit of the American. Leninism is their harmonious union.

Revolutionary inspiration is the antidote against routine, conservatism, ideological stagnation, slavish submission to ancestral traditions. It is the vivifying force which awakens thought, pushes forward, breaks the fetters of the past and opens out vast perspectives; without it progress is impossible. But in practice it degenerates into "revolutionary" phraseology if it is not allied with American practicalism. Many are the examples of this degeneration. Who does not know that disease in "revolutionary" construction, whose cause is a blind faith in the power of schemes, in the decree that is to create and arrange everything. In a story entitled, "The Communist Man made Perfect," a Russian writer, I. Ehrenburg, has given a good picture, though with

some exaggerations, of a type of Bolshevik affected by this disease, who has set himself the aim of designing the ideal man, and is completely absorbed in this "work." But no one has ridiculed this unhealthy faith in the power of plans and supremacy of decrees more than Lenin, who called it "Communist vanity."

"The Communist who imagines he can succeed in every task by drawing up Communist decrees is guilty of Communist vanity." (Speech to the Congress of the Section for Political Education.)

To fantastical revolutionarism Lenin usually opposed ordinary, every-day tasks, thus emphasizing that revolutionary fantasy is contradictory to the letter and spirit of Leninism, who says,

"Fewer pompous phrases, and more every-day work . . . less political trepidation and more attention to the simpler, but more tangible facts of Communist construction. . . ."

The American practical spirit, on the other hand, is an antidote against "revolutionary" fantasy. It is a tenacious force for which there is no such thing as the impossible, which patiently surmounts every obstacle and carries through to the finish every task, however small, that it has once begun.

But this practicalism almost inevitably degenerates into vulgar "affairism" (pre-occupation with details) if it is not allied with revolutionary inspiration. This particular deformation has been described by B. Pilniak in his novel, "Hunger."

The author portrays types of Russian Bolsheviks, headstrong, determined and energetic, but with no horizon, not seeing the more remote consequences of their actions, nor the end that has to be attained and deviating therefore from the revolutionary path. No one has combated this affairism as vigorously as Lenin. He described it as "narrow, brainless practicalism," and generally opposed to it inspired revolutionary work and revolutionary perspective in the least of every-day tasks, thus emphasising that this practicalism is as opposed to true Leninism as is "revolutionary" fantasy.

The union of Russian revolutionary inspiration with the American practical spirit—this is the essence of practical Leninism. Only this union will give us the perfect type of Leninist worker.

STALIN.

