

**REVOLUTIONARY
LESSONS**

REVOLUTIONARY LESSONS

Including—
“Towards Soviets”
“Lessons of the Russian Revolution”
and
“Bourgeois Democracy”

BY
N. LENIN



LONDON, 1929
MODERN BOOKS LIMITED

PUBLISHED IN MARCH, 1929.
PRINTED IN ENGLAND BY THE
DORRIT PRESS, LIMITED
(T.U. THROUGHOUT)
68-70 LANT ST.,
LONDON,
S.E.1.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Foreword	vii
Towards Soviets	I
Preface	3
Thesis	5
A Letter on Tactics	II
Lessons of the Russian Revolution	29
Radical Questions of the Revolution	3I
“All Power to the Soviets”	53
What are the Soviets?	63
Bourgeois Democracy	69
Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat	7I

FOREWORD

THIS booklet consists of writings of Lenin that have been previously published in the form of pamphlets of great historical importance.

The first section shows that the conception of the organisation of Russia as a proletarian Soviet Republic, in contradistinction to a parliamentary Republic, had been in Lenin's mind since the beginning of the March Revolution, and that all subsequent developments—the organisation of the poor as opposed to the richer peasantry, the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship and the setting up of a new revolutionary International—were contained in that original conception. The documents give a remarkable instance of political foresight, as is shown by the course of events.

It will be seen that Lenin's ideas were regarded as novel and paradoxical by some of his friends, in spite of the fact that they themselves had been agitating for the transfer of power to the Soviets.

Of the second section, part was written in July, 1917, and deals with the lessons to be drawn from the March Revolution, while the short essay on the Soviets was written later. Here again the value of the writings has been enhanced rather than depreciated by the passage of time. It appears clear that for a time, Lenin was the only one to appreciate the inevitable course that events would take, and it is a testimony to his genius

that he traced the course of events in advance and was able so to shape his own and his Party's action as to lead the working class of Russia in the November Revolution.

Lenin's essays make a valuable survey of the course of the revolution from March to November. The Thesis at the end sums up his teachings on democracy and dictatorship.

**TOWARDS
SOVIETS**

PREFACE

On April 4th (17th), 1917, at Petrograd, I first had to lecture on the subject indicated by the title at a meeting of Bolsheviks. The latter were delegates to the All-Russian Conference of Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies—delegates who were on the point of dispersing, and consequently could not allow me any further respite. At the end of the meeting, the chairman, comrade G. Zinoviev, requested me, on behalf of the whole meeting, immediately to repeat my address at a joint meeting of Bolshevik and Menshevik delegates, who desired to discuss the question of unity between the two wings of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.

However difficult it was immediately to repeat my address, I did not consider I had the right to refuse, since both those whose views agreed with mine, and the Mensheviks were making the request; and, in view of their immediate departure, they really could not wait any longer.

At the lecture I read the theses published in No. 26 of "Pravda" for April 7th (20th), 1917.*

Both the theses and my lecture provoked controversy

* I reprint these theses, together with brief explanatory notes, from the number of "Pravda" in question as an introduction to the present letter.

amongst the Bolsheviks themselves and on the editorial committee of "Pravda." After a series of conferences, we unanimously came to the conclusion that it would be most profitable to discuss these differences of opinion openly, thus providing material for the forthcoming All-Russian conference of our Party (the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, organised under the E.C.†) at Petrograd on April 20th.

In execution of this resolution I am publishing the accompanying letter, without pretending to give a complete study of the question at issue, and only wishing to outline those main principles which are specially important in view of the practical problems of the working class movement.

† As distinguished from the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, organised under the Organisation Committee, as the Mensheviks were at the time.—Trans.

Thesis

ARRIVING in St. Petersburg on the night of April 3rd* (16th), I could, of course, venture to make a statement, at a meeting on the 4th (17th), on the problems confronting the revolutionary proletariat only in my own name, and with reservations on the ground of insufficient preparation.

The only thing I could do to lighten my task—and that of conscientious opponents—was to draw up my theses in writing. I read them through and handed over the text to comrade Tseretelli. I read them very slowly, on two occasions: first at a meeting of Bolsheviks, then at a meeting of both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.

I now print these my personal theses, supplying only the briefest explanatory notes which were developed much more fully in my address.

THESES.

(1). In our attitude to the war, which, as far as Russia is concerned, unquestionably remains, even under the Government of Lvov and Co., a predatory capitalist war in consequence of the capitalist character of that Government, we cannot admit the slightest concession to "revolutionary national defence."

The class-conscious proletariat can give its consent to a revolutionary war, which would really justify a "revolutionary national defence" on the following con-

* The first date given is in the Old Style. This applies throughout.

ditions only: (a) the transfer of power into the hands of the proletariat and of the poorest sections of the peasantry, allied to it, (b) the renunciation of all annexations in deed, and not merely in word, (c) a complete rupture, in actual practice, with all the interests of capital.

In view of the undoubted good faith of wide sections of the rank-and-file advocates of "revolutionary national defence," who accept the war only out of necessity and not for the sake of conquest; and in view of their deception by the capitalist class, we must with particular clearness, persistence and patience, point out to them their mistake, explain the indissoluble connection of capitalism with the imperial war, and show that it is impossible to end the war without violence, in a truly democratic manner, and without the overthrow of capitalism.

The organisation of the widest possible propaganda of this view in the Army.

(2.) The peculiar character of the present situation in Russia lies in the fact that it represents the transition from the first stage of the Revolution, which has placed power in the hands of the capitalist class as a result of the insufficient class-consciousness and organisation of the proletariat, to its second stage, which must transfer power into the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasantry.

This transition is marked, on the one hand, by a maximum of lawfulness (Russia to-day is amongst all the belligerent countries, the freest country in the world), and, on the other hand, by the absence of the use of vio-

lence against the masses; and, finally, by their non-reflecting trust in a government of capitalists, the worst foes of peace and Socialism.

This peculiar character requires of us an ability to adapt ourselves to the special conditions of party work amidst the unprecedentedly wide and, politically, only just awakened masses of the proletariat.

(3.) No support of the Provisional Government: demonstration of the utter mendacity of all its pledges, especially concerning the renunciation of annexations. Exposure as a policy, instead of the inadmissible and illusion-sowing "demand" that this Government, a Government of capitalists, should cease to be imperialist.

(4.) Recognition of the fact that, in the majority of Councils of Workers' Deputies, our party is in a minority—in a weak minority as yet—as against the coalition of all the lower middle class opportunist elements which have succumbed to the influence of the capitalist class and which transmit this influence to the proletariat, from Populist Socialists and Socialist-Revolutionaries down to the Organisation Committee of the Social-Democratic Party (Chkheidze, Tseretelli, etc.), Steklov, and others.

Enlightenment of the masses as to the fact that the Councils of the Workers' Deputies are the only possible form of revolutionary Government, and that therefore our duty, while this Government is still under the influence of the capitalist class, can only be patiently, systematically, persistently, in a manner adapted to the practical requirements of the masses, to explain its mistakes and tactics.

While we are in a minority, we carry on the work of criticism and explanation of mistakes, urging at the same time the necessity of the transfer of all power to the Councils of Workers' Deputies, in order that the masses may free themselves from mistakes by actual experience.

(5.) Not a parliamentary republic—a return to it from the Councils of Workers' Deputies would be a step backward—but a republic of Councils of Workmen's, Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country and from top to bottom.

The abolition of the police, the army,* the bureaucracy.

The payment of all officials—elective and revocable at any time—at a rate not exceeding the average wage of a good workman.

(6.) In the agrarian programme, the transfer of the centre of gravity to the Councils of Labourers' Deputies.

The confiscation of all landowners' estates.

The nationalisation of all lands, for disposal by the local Councils of Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies. The setting up of Councils of Deputies of the poorest peasantry. The carving out of every large estate (from 100-400 dessiatines in size, according to local and other conditions, and the decision of the local authorities) of model farms, to be maintained under the control of the Labourers' Deputies at public expense.

* i.e. the replacement of the standing army by the universal arming of the people.

(7.) The immediate amalgamation of all banks in the country into one National Bank, to be controlled by the Council of Workers' Deputies.

(8.) Not the "introduction" of Socialism, is our immediate task, but only, for the present, the transition to control, by the Council of Workers' Deputies, of social production and distribution of the products of labour.

(9.) The tasks of the Party :

(a) An immediate Party Congress.

(b) Amendment of the Party programme ;
principally :

i. Concerning Imperialism and Imperialist wars.

ii. Attitude towards the State, and our demand for the "Commune-State."*

iii. Amendment of the out-of-date minimum programme.

(c) Change of the name of the Party.†

* i.e. a form of State, the prototype of which was provided by the Paris Commune.

† Instead of the "Social-Democratic Party," the official leaders of which all over the world have betrayed Socialism and gone over to the capitalists (the "national defence" party and the wavering "Kautskians"), we must call ourselves the Communist Party.

(10.) The renewal of the International.

The initiative in forming a revolutionary International opposed to the social-jingoes and the "Centre."†*

†* The "Centre" is that section of international Social-Democracy which wavers between the jingoes ("national defence" party) and the internationalists, e.g., Kautsky and Co. in Germany, Longuet and Co. in France, Chkheidze and Co. in Russia, Turati and Co. in Italy, MacDonald and Co. in England, etc.

A Letter on Tactics

MARXISM imposes upon us the duty of taking the most exact and objectively verifiable view of the class relations and of the concrete circumstances of every historical moment. We, Bolsheviks, have always tried to be faithful to this obligation, which is an absolutely imperative one from the point of view of those who desire to gain a scientific basis for their policy.

“Our theories are not a dogma, but a guide for action,” Marx and Engels always insisted. They justly ridiculed the learning by heart and mere repetition of “formulæ” which at best can only serve to indicate general problems, whose form is necessarily altered by the concrete economic and political conditions at each definite period of the historical process.

By what precisely established and objective facts, then, must the party of the revolutionary proletariat be guided in order to estimate the problems which confront it, and the line of action which it has to adopt?

Both in my first “Letter from Afar” (“The first stage of the first Revolution”), printed in Nos. 14 and 15 of “Pravda” (March 21st and 22nd [April 3 and 4], 1917), and in my Thesis I define “the peculiar character of the present situation in Russia” as the transition from the first stage of the Revolution to the second. For this reason I stated what, in my opinion, at this moment was the main aim, “the question of the hour,” in the following words: “Workers, you have displayed the wonderful heroism of the proletariat, of the people, in the civil war

against Tsarism; you must produce miracles of proletarian and social organisation, in order to prepare for victory in the second stage of the revolution." ("Pravda" No. 15).

What is the first stage? It is the transfer of power to the capitalist class (bourgeoisie). Up to the March revolution of 1917, power in Russia was in the hands of one ancient class, namely, the feudal-aristocratic-landowning class headed by Nicholas Romanov.

After that revolution, power has been in the hands of a different, a new class, namely, the capitalist class (the bourgeoisie).

The shifting of power from one class to another is the first, main, fundamental symptom of a revolution, both in the strictly scientific and the practical political sense of the word. To this extent, the capitalist or bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia is at an end.

At this point I hear the voice of critics who like to call themselves "old Bolsheviks": "Did we not always say that the bourgeois-democratic revolution would be ended only by 'the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry'? Has the agrarian revolution, then, also bourgeois-democratic in its essence, come to an end? Is it not a fact, on the contrary, that it has not yet begun?"

My answer is that the Bolshevik aims and ideas in general have been fully confirmed by history, but that concretely matters have turned out otherwise than any-

one (whosoever he might be) could have expected—more strikingly original, more peculiar, more mixed. To ignore, or forget this fact would mean to imitate those “old Bolsheviki” who have more than once played a melancholy part in the history of our Party, repeating mechanically a formula which they have learned by heart, instead of studying the special character of new and living reality.

“The revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry” has already been realised* in the Russian Revolution, since this “formula” has in view merely the mutual relationship of classes, and not the concrete political institution embodying this mutual relationship, this co-operation. “The Council of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies”—here is life’s concrete realisation of “the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.”

This formula is already out of date. Life itself has brought it out of the domain of formulæ into the domain of reality, has invested it with flesh and blood, has rendered it concrete, and has thereby modified it.

There is a new and different problem on the agenda : the separation of the proletarian elements (anti-patriotic, internationalist, “communist,” standing for the transition to communism), inside this dictatorship, from the small bourgeois or lower-middle class elements (Chkheidze, Tseretelli, Steklov, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, and other revolutionary patriots, hostile to the movement

* In certain forms and to a certain extent.

towards the establishment of the Commune system, believers in "supporting" the middle class and the middle class government).

Whoever now talks only about "the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" has lost touch with life, has, in virtue of this circumstance, gone over, in practice, to the lower middle class against the proletarian class struggle; and he ought to be relegated to the museum of "Bolshevik" pre-revolutionary antiquities (or, as one might call it, the museum of "old Bolsheviks").

The revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry already exists, but in an extremely original form, bound up with a number of highly important variations. I will deal with the latter in one of my subsequent letters. For the present it is necessary to bear in mind this indisputable fact, that a Marxist must take account of real life, of the exact facts of reality, and not hang on to the tails of the theories of yesterday, which, like every theory, at best only outline the fundamental, the general and do not come near enough to the complexities of life.

"Theory is grey, my friend, but green is the immortal tree of life." He who formulates the question of the "completeness" of the bourgeois revolution in the old way is sacrificing living Marxism on the altar of a dead letter.

According to the old idea, after the establishment of the supremacy of the capitalists there can and must

follow the supremacy of the proletariat and peasantry—their dictatorship. But, in real life, it has already turned out differently: there has come about an extraordinarily original, new, unprecedented interlacing of the one and the other. There exist side by side, together, at one and the same time, both the supremacy of the capitalists and the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry which voluntarily gives up power to the capitalist class, voluntarily becomes a mere appendix of it.

For we must not forget that in point of fact, in Petrograd, the power is in the hands of the workers and soldiers; the new Government does not and cannot use violence against them, since there is no police, no army separate from the people, no bureaucracy standing all-powerful above the people. This is a fact. It is just a fact which is characteristic of a State of the type of the Paris Commune. It is a fact that does not fit into the old schemes. We must know how to adapt our schemes to real life, and not repeat the now meaningless phrases about "the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" in general.

Let us approach the problem from a different point of view, in order to shed upon it as much light as possible.

The Marxist must not leave the firm ground of the analysis of class relations. The capitalist class is in power. But does not the mass of peasantry also constitute a bourgeoisie of another social layer of a different

kind, with different characteristics? Why is it impossible for this layer to rise to power, thus "completing" the bourgeois-democratic revolution? Why cannot this be?

This is how the "old Bolsheviks" often argue.

My reply is, that it is quite possible. But a Marxist, when taking stock of characteristics of a given moment, must base himself not on the possible, but on the actual, and the actual shows us the fact that the freely elected soldiers' and peasants' Deputies freely enter into a second, a shadow Government, freely enlarging, developing, completing it. And, just as freely, they are surrendering power to the capitalist class—a phenomenon in no way "infringing" Marxian theory, since we always knew and repeatedly pointed out that the bourgeoisie maintains itself in power, not only by force, but through the lack of class-consciousness, inertness, ignorance, and unorganised state of the masses.

In face of this actual state of affairs at present, it is simply ridiculous to turn away from facts and to talk of "possibilities."

It is possible that the peasantry will take all the land and all the power. So far from forgetting this possibility, so far from limiting my outlook by the present moment, I squarely and precisely formulate an agrarian programme which provides for new development, namely, a deeper cleavage between the village labourers and poorest peasantry on the one hand and the employing peasantry on the other.

But another thing is possible : it is possible that the peasants may listen to the advice of the lower middle class Socialist-Revolutionary party, which has yielded to the influence of the bourgeoisie, which has become "patriotic," which advises the peasants to wait until the Constituent Assembly, even though the date of summons of the latter has not yet been fixed !*

It is possible that the peasants will maintain, will continue their compromise with the capitalist class—the compromise they have just arrived at through the Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, not only formally, but in reality. Different things are possible. It would be a profound mistake to forget the agrarian movement and the agrarian programme. But it would be just as profound a mistake to forget reality, which shows us, as a fact, an agreement—or, to use a more exact, less legal, and more economic class-expression—the class co-operation between bourgeoisie and the peasantry.

When this fact ceases to be a fact, when the peasantry separates from the bourgeoisie, takes away the land from it, assumes power against it—then that will be a new stage of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and it will be dealt with separately.

* Lest my words be misinterpreted, I shall anticipate a little and say at once that I am absolutely in favour of the labourers' and peasants' Soviets at once taking all the land, observing themselves most rigorously order and discipline, preventing the least damage to machines, buildings, cattle, on no account disturbing the course of agriculture and corn production, but on the contrary increasing it, because the soldiers require twice as much as before, and the civil population must not go hungry.

A Marxist who, because of the possibility of such a future stage, forgets his duty now, when the peasantry is making a compromise with the capitalist class, would relapse into a petty bourgeois mode of thinking. For, in effect, he would be preaching to the proletariat a doctrine of faith in the lower middle class [petty bourgeoisie] ("this lower middle class, this peasantry, must separate itself from the capitalist class during the course of the bourgeois-democratic revolution"). Because of the "possibility" of a sweet and pleasant future, when the peasantry will not longer follow in the train of the capitalists, when the S.R.'s, the Chkheidzes, the Tseretellis, the Steklovs will no longer be the hangers on of a capitalist government—because of that "possibility" of a pleasant future he would forget the unpleasant actuality, when the peasantry still follows in the train of the capitalists, and the S.R.'s and Social-Democrats have not yet abandoned the role of hangers on of the capitalist government, of an opposition of "His Majesty" Prince Lvov.

This hypothetical person of ours would resemble the sentimental Louis Blanc, the sweetly reasonable Kautsky; but in no way would he resemble a revolutionary Marxist.

But are we not exposed to the danger of falling into subjectivism, into a desire to "leap over" the unfinished (because it has not yet passed through the peasant movement) bourgeois-democratic revolution, in order to arrive directly at a socialist revolution?

If I had said "No Tsar, but a Labour Government," I would be running this danger. But I did not say that;

I said something quite different. I said that, apart from a capitalist government, there can be no government in Russia outside the Councils of Workers', Labourers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies. I said that power can now pass in Russia from Guchkov and Lvov only to those Councils, and the majority of them are precisely the peasants, the soldiers—the lower middle classes (to use scientific, Marxian terms, based on the distinction of classes, and not those of common parlance or legal vocabulary).

I absolutely insured myself, in my Theses, against any leaping-over an unexhausted peasant or, generally speaking, lower middle class movement, against any playing at "the conquest of power" by a Workers' Government, against any form whatsoever of a Blanquist coup; for I referred explicitly to the experience of the Paris Commune. Which experience, as is well known, and as Marx showed in 1871 and Engels in 1891, entirely precluded Blanquism and efficiently guaranteed the direct, immediate and absolute rule of the majority and the active role of the masses only in proportion to the conscious activity of that majority.

In my Thesis, and with the greatest possible definiteness, I reduced the question to one of a struggle for influence within the Councils of Workers', Labourers', Peasants', and Soldiers' Deputies. In order to dispel any shadow of doubt on this score, I twice underlined in my theses the necessity of a patient, persistent work of "propaganda," "adapted to the practical requirements of the masses."

Ignorant people, or renegade Marxists like Mr. Plekhanov and his kidney, will cry out about Anarchism, Blanquism, and so on. A person who cares to think and learn cannot but know that Blanquism means the seizure of power by a minority, while the Councils of Workmen's, etc., Deputies are avowedly the direct and immediate organisations of the majority of the people. An agitation which is reduced to a struggle for influence within such Councils (Soviets) cannot—simply cannot—land into the morass of Blanquism. Similarly it cannot be diverted into the morass of Anarchism; for Anarchism is the denial of the necessity of the State and of State power for the period of transition from the supremacy of the capitalists to the supremacy of the proletariat; whereas, I, with a definiteness that excludes all possibility of misunderstanding, insist on the necessity of a State organisation for this period, although, in keeping with Marx and the experience of the Paris Commune, I insist not on the ordinary parliamentary-bourgeois State, but on a State without a standing army, without a police distinct from the people, and without a bureaucracy standing above the people.

When Mr. Plekhanov screams his loudest, in his "Edinstvo," about Anarchism, this is only another proof of his break with Marxism. To my challenge in the "Pravda" (No. 26), to tell us what Marx and Engels taught about the State in 1871, 1872 and 1875, Mr. Plekhanov has had, and will have, to reply with silence as far as the substance of the question goes, and to content himself with stereotyped outcries after the manner of the enraged bourgeoisie.

The former Marxist Mr. Plekhanov has completely failed to understand the teaching of Marxism on the subject of the State. Incidentally, the germ of this lack of understanding is to be found even in his German pamphlet on Anarchism.

* * * *

Let us now see how comrade Kamenev, in his note in No. 27 of "Pravda," formulates his objections to my theses and the above views; it will help me to define them more clearly.

"As for comrade Lenin's general scheme," writes comrade Kamenev, "it seems to us unacceptable, in so far as it considers the bourgeois-democratic revolution as being completed, and counts with the immediate development of that revolution into a Socialist revolution. . ."

There are two grand errors here.

First.—The question as to the "completeness" of the bourgeois-democratic revolution is wrongly stated. The question is given an abstract, simple, unicoloured—if such an expression be permitted me—form, which does not correspond to objective reality. To put the question in this way; to ask, at the present time, "Is the bourgeois-democratic revolution completed?" and only that—means to deny oneself the possibility of understanding the extremely complicated, at least "bicoloured" reality. This is in theory. In practice, it means helplessly abandoning oneself to lower middle-class "revolutionism."

Indeed, real life shows us both the transfer of power to the capitalist class (the "completed" bourgeois-democratic revolution of the usual type), and the existence,

side by side with the real government, of a shadow government, representing "the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." This latter "also-government" has voluntarily surrendered power to the capitalist class and has voluntarily attached itself to the capitalist government.

Now does the Old-Bolshevik formula of comrade Kameney, "the bourgeois-democratic revolution is not yet completed," cover such actual reality? No, the formula is antiquated. It is no longer of any use. It is dead. Efforts to resuscitate it will be vain.

Second.—Let us consider the practical point of view. It is not known whether there can yet be attained in Russia a special "revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," separate from a capitalist Government. We cannot base Marxist tactics on the unknown.

But, if this can yet be attained, there is one, and only one, means of attaining it: the immediate, decisive, irrevocable separation of the proletarian communist elements of the movement from the lower middle class elements.

Why?

Because the whole of the lower middle class has not accidentally, but of necessity, turned to chauvinism ("national defence"), to "support" of the capitalist class, to dependence on it, to being frightened to do without it, and so on and so forth.

How can we "push" the lower middle class to power, if that lower middle class already can, but will not, take it?

Only by the segregation of the proletarian, the Communist party, of the proletarian class struggle, free from the timidity of the lower middle class. Only the consolidation of the proletariat, free in fact, and not in words, from the influence of the lower middle class, is capable of making the ground so "hot" for the latter that, under certain conditions, it will be forced to take over power; we do not even exclude the possibility that Gutchkov and Miliukov—again in certain circumstances—might be in favour of a government, of an autocracy of Chkheidze, Tseretelli, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, Steklov—since all these, after all, stand for "national defence"!

He who separates at once, without delay and beyond recall, the proletarian elements in the Soviets (i.e., the proletarian, Communist party) from the lower middle class elements, faithfully reflects the interests of the movement in the two possible contingencies: first, that Russia may yet pass through a "dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" separate from and independent of, not subjected to, the capitalist class; and second that the lower middle class may not be able to tear itself away from the capitalist class, and may for ever (i.e., until Socialism) be hesitating between it and us.

A man who only guides his activity by the simple "formula" about the dictatorship of the proletariat and "the bourgeois-democratic revolution is not completed,"

takes upon himself a kind of guarantee that the lower middle class is beyond all doubt capable of independence of the capitalist class. Thereby he surrenders himself helplessly to the mercy of the lower middle class.

Incidentally, while we are on the topic of the "formula" about the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, it will not be out of place to recall that, in "Two Lines of Tactics" (July, 1905), I specially declared:

"The revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry has, like everything else in the world, a past and a future. Its past was autocracy, serfdom, monarchy, privilege. . . Its future will be the struggle against private property, the struggle of the wage labourer against his master, the struggle for Socialism. . . ."

Comrade Kamenev's error lies in the fact that even in 1917 he is still looking only at the past of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry; whereas in reality its future has already begun, inasmuch as the interests and the policy of the wage-worker and those of his master are in practice no longer identical—especially on such a question of paramount importance as "national defence," that is, the attitude towards the Imperialist war.

Here I come to the second mistake in comrade Kamenev's statement. He reproaches me because my scheme "counts" on "an immediate development of that (bourgeois-democratic) revolution into a Socialist revolution."

This is not true. I not only do not "count" on "an immediate development" of our revolution into a Socialist one, but definitely warn against such an expectation; saving clearly, in thesis No. 8: "not" the introduction of "Socialism as our immediate aim. . . ."

Is it not clear that one who is calculating on the immediate development of our revolution into a Socialist one could not oppose the immediate work of establishing Socialism?

More than this, it is impossible "immediately" to introduce in Russia even the "Commune-State" (i.e., a State organised on the type of the Paris Commune), since it is essential for this that the majority of deputies in all (or the majority) of the Soviets should clearly realise the entire fallacy and mischief of the tactics and policy of the S.R.'s of Chkheidze, Tseretelli, Steklov and Co. Whereas I quite definitely declare that I "rely" in this sphere only on "patient" propaganda. (Have we to wait patiently for a change which we can achieve "immediately"?).

Comrade Kamenev bursts out a little impatiently in repeating the bourgeois fallacy about the Paris Commune—that it wished "immediately" to introduce Socialism. This is not so. The Commune, unfortunately was too slow in introducing Socialism. The real meaning of the Commune is not to be found where the bourgeois thinker usually seeks it, but in its creation of a particular form of State. And that form of State has already been produced in Russia—it is the Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

Comrade Kamenev did not go deeply into actual fact—into the significance of the existing Soviets, and into their identity, in type and socio-political character, with the Commune—and, instead of studying the fact, he began to talk as if I were counting on something in the “immediate” future. The result, unfortunately has been a repetition of the method of many bourgeois. From the question of what are the Soviets, are they higher in type than the parliamentary republic, are they more beneficial for the people, more democratic, more suitable e.g. for fighting with famine, and so on; from this present, real, pressing question, our attention is turned aside to the empty, quasi-scientific, but really superficial and pedantic subject of “counting on an immediate transformation.”

It is an empty and misleading subject. I “count” exclusively and solely on the fact that the workers, soldiers, and peasants will be more successful than officials and police in grappling with the difficult practical questions of increasing corn production, of improving the soldiers’ lot, and so on, and so forth.

I am deeply convinced that the Councils of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies will more easily and quickly assure the independent existence of the masses of the people than a parliamentary republic (as to the comparison of the two types of State, I shall deal more fully in another letter). They will decide better, in a more practical way, and more correctly, how to advance towards Socialism, and what steps have to be taken in that direction: Control over banking, the amalgamation of

all banks into one—that is not yet Socialism, but it is a step towards it. The junker and the capitalist are taking such steps in Germany to-day against the people. The Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies will be able to take them much more successfully to-morrow in the interests of the people, if all the power of the State is assumed by them.

And what forces us to take such steps?

Hunger. Disorganisation of production. The threatening collapse. The horrors of war. The horrors of the wounds inflicted by the war upon humanity.

Comrade Kamenëv concludes his statement with a remark that, in an open discussion, he hopes to be able to justify his point of view, "as the only possible one for revolutionary social-democracy, which desires to and must remain to the end the party of the revolutionary masses of the proletariat, and does not wish to become a group of Communist propagandists."

It seems to me that, in these words, one can discern a profoundly mistaken estimate of the present moment. Comrade Kamenëv contrasts "the party of the masses" with "a group of propagandists." But have not the "masses" just at this moment yielded to the stupefying fumes of "revolutionary" chauvinism? Is it not more honourable for the internationalists at such a moment to be able to resist the fumes that stupefy the "masses," than to "desire to remain" with the masses, i.e. to give way to the general intoxication? Have we not witnessed in all the belligerent European countries, how the jingoes

defended themselves on the plea of desiring "to remain with the masses"? Is it not essential to be able for a certain time to be in a minority against the "mass" intoxication? Is not just the work of propagandists essential precisely at the present moment, in order to set free the proletarian line of policy from the "mass" effect of the chauvinist and lower middle class intoxication? It is just the fused state of the masses, proletarian and non-proletarian, without any class distinction within them, that constitutes one of the conditions of the rise of chauvinist epidemic. To speak contemptuously of "a group of propagandists" of the proletarian tendency, seems to be a little out of place.

LESSONS OF
THE RUSSIAN
REVOLUTION

Radical Questions of the Revolution.

A REVOLUTION marks a critical transition in the life of great masses. Of course, only a fully matured crisis renders a real revolution possible and necessary. Moreover, even as a transition period in the life of a single individual teaches him much, leads him through an emotional stage suffused with new rich content, so also does a revolution teach a whole nation in a relatively short time highly instructive and valuable lessons.

During a revolution millions and tens of millions of people learn in a single week incomparably more than at other times in a whole year. For at such critical moments in the life of a nation it becomes markedly evident which classes pursue certain aims, what are their relative forces, and the means at their command.

Every conscious workman, soldier and peasant, should attentively ponder the lessons taught by the Russian Revolution; the more so now, at the end of July, when it is manifest that the first phase of our revolution has ended in failure.

§

Indeed, let us see what the masses of workmen and peasants have been fighting for in bringing the revolution into life, What have they been expecting from the revolution? We all know that all along they hoped for freedom, peace, bread, and land.

Now what are the actual facts ?

Instead of freedom the arbitrary rule of the past is being restored. Capital punishment is being introduced at the front, peasants are brought to trial for "wilfully" seizing the landlords' lands. The printing establishments of the Labour press are raided. The Bolsheviks are arrested, not infrequently without accusation, or on the pretext of charges which are simply calumnious.

It may be argued that the persecution of the Bolsheviks is by no means a violation of freedom, since only certain persons on specific charges are thus persecuted. But such arguments bear the marks of premeditated untruth. For why should printing offices be raided, newspapers suppressed for the crimes of individuals, even if these crimes are proven and sustained by law ? It would be altogether different if the government declared criminal the entire Bolshevik party, its ideas and views. But every one knows that the government of free Russia never could, and, indeed, never attempted, to do anything of the kind.

And look at the venomous slanders launched against the Bolsheviks ! The newspapers of both landlords and capitalists have been furiously attacking the Bolsheviks for their campaign against the war, against the landlords and against the capitalists. These newspapers openly demanded the arrest and prosecution of the Bolsheviks even before there was a single charge against a single Bolshevik.

The people desire peace. But the revolutionary government of free Russia has resumed the war aimed at the spoliation of foreign nations by the Russian financial magnates. The government of free Russia has entrenched itself behind wiles and tricks, but it has not yet proposed a just peace to all nations.

Bread there is none. The menace of famine is imminent. It is an open secret how the capitalists and the rich loot the treasury on war orders (the war costs the people 50,000,000 roubles a day!) They reap enormous profits from the high cost of living, and absolutely nothing is being done towards improving the production and distribution of goods by and for the working class. The capitalists are more and more daring in locking out the workmen, throwing them on the street at a time when the people suffer from under-production.

The overwhelming majority of the peasants throughout a long series of conferences have loudly and unequivocally announced their decision to proclaim as a crying injustice—nay, more, as direct plunder—the ownership of the soil by the powerful landlords. And the government which calls itself revolutionary and democratic persists in foiling the peasants' desires, in deceiving them with promises and delays. The capitalists for months harassed the measures for enacting laws prohibiting the sale and purchase of land introduced by Chernov, Minister of Agriculture,* and when a law of this type was finally

* Chernov was the leader of the Socialist Revolutionary party (see note on p. 38) and author of its agrarian programme.

promulgated, the capitalists began a despicable campaign of calumny against Chernov, which continues unabated.. In its defence of the landlords the government has not recoiled from knavery; it has determined to proceed by law against the peasants for the "wilful" seizure of land!

Yes, the peasants are deceived; they are persuaded to await the convocation of the Constituent Assembly; but the capitalists keep on postponing it. Now that the date for convocation has been, under pressure by the Bolsheviks, set for October 13th, the capitalists openly resent such an "impossibly" short interval, and again insist upon postponing the Constituent Assembly. The most influential members of the Party of capitalists and landlords—the "Cadet" Party†, or the "Party of the People's Freedom"—such as Countess Panina, openly preach the postponement of the Constituent Assembly until the end of the war.

Have patience with the land question until the Constituent Assembly! With the Constituent Assembly wait until the end of the war! With the end of the war wait until complete victory is won! This is the programme. So do the capitalists and landlords, holding as they do the majority in the government, laugh and scoff at the poor peasants.

† So called after the initial syllables of its full name: Constitutional Democrats. It corresponds to the Liberal parties in the west of Europe.

But how did all this come to pass in a land where the rule of Tsardom has been overthrown? In a country that is not free the people are governed by a Tsar and a handful of capitalists, landlords and bureaucrats elected by no one. In a free country the people are governed by those whom they themselves have chosen for this very purpose. At the elections the people divide themselves into parties, and, as a rule, every class of the population forms its own party; thus the landlords, the capitalists, the peasants, the workmen, have each their own parties. So, in free countries the government of a nation is shaped and influenced by the open struggle between parties and by their final agreements among themselves.

After the overthrow of the Tsar's regime, March 12th, 1917, Russia for about four months was governed like a free country, namely, by means of an open struggle between freely organised parties and of free agreements among themselves. In order therefore to understand the development of the Russian revolution it is most important to scrutinise the nature of the various parties, the interests they have been defending, and, finally, the relations of these parties to one another.

§

After the overthrow of the Tsar's rule the power passed into the hands of the Provisional Government. The Provisional Government consisted of representatives of the bourgeoisie—that is to say, the capitalists,

with whom the landlords joined hands. The party of the Cadets, the leading capitalist party, occupied first place as the ruling and state party of the capitalist and landlord class.

It was not by sheer accident that the power came into the hands of this party, though of course it was not the capitalists who fought the Tsar's troops, who shed blood for freedom's sake, but the workmen, peasants, sailors and soldiers. The ruling power, nevertheless, fell into the hands of the capitalist party, because the capitalist class had at its command the power of wealth, of organisation, and of education. Since, 1905, and particularly during the war, the capitalist class, together with its joint partner, the landlord class, achieved great success in its work of organisation.

The Cadet Party has always been monarchist, in 1905 as well as during all the years until 1917. After the people's victory over the tyranny of Tsardom, this party proclaimed itself republican. Historic experience teaches that whenever the people vanquishes its ruling dynasty, the capitalist class is ready to be converted to republicanism, in order to preserve the privileges of capitalism and to assert its hegemony over the people.

The Cadet Party in words stands for the "People's Freedom." In deeds this party stands for all that is capitalist. No wonder all the landlords, the monarchists, the Black Hundreds* were quick to join it. Proof?

* "Black Hundreds" is a nickname for the hooligan elements, first organised in the Revolution of 1905 by the reactionaries of the Tsarist regime.

The press and the elections. Immediately after the revolution all the capitalist press and all the Black Hundred press sang in complete unison with the Cadets. All the monarchist parties, fearful of overt acts, supported the Cadets in the elections—at least in Petrograd.

Having thus seized the power, the Cadets spared no effort to continue the war. The Russian capitalists are promise, in case of victory, the occupation of Constantinople, Galicia, Armenia, etc. As to the people, the Cadet government fed it profusely on promises, postponing the solution of questions most important to the workmen and peasants until the Constituent Assembly, without however setting a date for its convocation.

Making use of their liberty the people began to organise. The chief organisations of the workmen and peasants, representing the overwhelming majority of Russia's population, were the Soviets of Workmen's, Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. These Soviets† sprang into existence during the days of the March revolution and after a few weeks, in most of the large cities of Russia, as well as in many of the townships, all the conscious leading elements of the working class and the peasantry were united in the Soviets.

The Soviets were elected without any restrictions whatever. The Soviets were the real organisation of the masses of the nation, of the workers and of the peasants. The Soviets were the real organisations of the enormous majority of the people.

† "Soviet" is the Russian word for "Council."

It is manifest that the Soviets both could and must take over the entire governing power. Indeed there could and should have been no other government but that of the Soviets until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. Only then would our revolution securely occupy the position of a really popular, really democratic revolution. Only then would the toiling masses, who really crave peace, be able resolutely and unflinchingly to enter upon a course of action which would immediately put an end to the war and bring about peace. Only then could the workers and peasants check and bridle the capitalists who pile up colossal war profits, having brought the country to the verge of collapse and famine. But within the Soviets only a minority of the delegates were on the side of the revolutionary party of the workers—the Bolsheviks, who demanded the transfer of all ruling power to the Soviets. The majority of the delegates sided with the Mensheviks* and “Essers,”† who opposed such a transfer of power. Instead of superseding the government of the capitalists by that of the Soviets, these parties advocated the support of the capitalists by means of a coalition government. This policy of alliance with the capitalists pursued by the very parties which the nation blindly trusted and followed, the Essers and the

* “Mensheviks” were the moderate wing of the Russian Social Democratic party. The name is derived from a Russian word signifying “minority,” applied to them because at the Congress of the then still united Social-Democratic Party in 1903 they were left in a minority as against the Bolsheviks who had a majority on a question of policy.

† “Essers” (Socialist-Revolutionaries), so called after their initials (S.R.).

Mensheviks, reflects the whole revolutionary process undergone by the Revolution since its inception five months ago.

§

The mutual understanding between the capitalists and the Essers and Mensheviks has become manifest, now in one form, now in another, all through the course of the Russian revolution.

In the latter part of March, 1917, soon after the nation had conquered and the rule of the Tsar had been overthrown, the capitalist Provisional Government included Kerensky, as the "Socialist" member. Now Kerensky in point of fact, has never been a Socialist; he was only a "Trudovik."* Only in March, 1917, did he begin to figure among the Socialist-Revolutionaries, when such a position was no longer dangerous or unprofitable. It was, of course, the aim of the capitalist Provisional Government to use Kerensky, then Vice-President of the Petrograd Soviet, as a link by which it could chain to itself the whole Soviet. The Soviet—that is to say, its majority, consisting of Essers and Mensheviks—took the bait, and soon after the formation of the Provisional Government, consented to support it "in so far as it fulfils its promises."

The Soviet regarded itself as the accountant, the comptroller of the deeds of the Provisional Government. But during all this time the Provisional Government did

* "Trudovik"—member of the "Party of Toil," claiming to represent the interests of the peasantry.

not make a single serious effort to foster the development of the revolution. It did absolutely nothing with regard to its own immediate task of convoking the Constituent Assembly; it has not yet presented the question to the local areas, nor has it even established a central commission to elaborate this question. The government's only care was to renew the war, and cautiously and insiduously to thwart the course of the revolution; to promise everything and to accomplish nothing. The Essers and the Mensheviks played the role of fools lavishly fed on grand phrases, promises, "to-morrows." Like the crow in the fable, they succumbed to flattery, listened complacently to the capitalists' assurances that they highly esteemed the Soviets, and that they would not move a step without them.

In reality, however, time passed and still the capitalist government did nothing to further the revolution. On the contrary, it succeeded, against the revolution, in laying the foundation for a counter-revolutionary organisation of the generals and officers of the active army—or, at all events, in bringing them closer together. It succeeded, against the revolution, in calling into existence an organisation of merchants and manufacturers who, gradually yielding under the pressure of the workmen, began at the same time to harass production, and to prepare its complete cessation at the propitious moment.

But the organisation of the more advanced workmen and peasants within the Soviets unswervingly went forward. The best men of the oppressed classes felt that the government, in spite of its understanding with

the Petrograd Soviet in spite of Kerensky's grandiloquence, remained as much as ever the enemy of the people, the enemy of the revolution. The masses, too, felt that if the resistance of the capitalists remained unbroken, the cause of peace, the cause of freedom, the very cause of the revolution itself would be irreparably lost. Impatience and vindictive passions rose high in the masses.

§

On May 3-4 it burst. The movement broke forth elementally, spontaneously. It was so rigorously directed against the government that one regiment, fully armed, went straight to the Marinsky Palace to arrest the Ministers. It was universally apparent that the government could no longer hold out. The Soviets at that time could (and ought to) have taken the power into their hands without the least resistance from any quarter. Instead, the Essers and Mensheviks have supported the toppling capitalist government, have ever more entangled themselves in their "alliance policy," have taken ever more fatal steps leading to the ruin of the revolution.

The revolution teaches all classes with a rapidity and thoroughness unknown in times of peace and every day life. The capitalists, who are better organised, more expert in the business of the class struggle and

class politics, learned the lesson more readily than the other classes. Seeing that the position of the government was untenable they resorted to a method which, since 1848, has been for decades practised by the capitalists in order to befog, divide and finally to overpower the working class. This method is the so-called "coalition ministry," composed of capitalists and of renegades from the Socialist camp.

In those countries where freedom and democracy have existed side by side with the revolutionary movement of the workers—for example, in England and France—the capitalists make use of this subterfuge, and very successfully, too. The "Socialist" leaders, upon entering the capitalist ministries, invariably prove mere figureheads, puppets, simply a shield for the capitalists, a tool with which to defraud the workers. The "democratic and republican" Russian capitalists set in motion the very same scheme. The Essers and Mensheviks fell a victim to it, and on May 19th a "coalition" ministry, with the participation of Chernov, Tseretelli* and Co., became an accomplished fact.

The Essers and Menshevik parties were jubilant, complacently basking as they did in the radiance emanating from the Ministerial glory of their leaders. The capitalists congratulated themselves on having obtained such formidable allies against the people as the "leaders

* The leader of the Mensheviks, a Georgian by extraction, a member of the Second Duma.

of the Soviets"—on having received from them the promise to support the renewal of the war, which had been temporarily interrupted. Well did the capitalists know the impotence of these leaders; well did they know that their own promises regarding the control and organisation of production, peace policy, etc., would never be kept.

And so it happened. The second phase of the development of the revolution, extending over the period between May 19th and July 1st fully satisfied the expectations of the capitalists as to their success in deceiving the Essers and Mensheviks.

While Peshekhonov and Skobelev* (of the duped parties) were fooling both themselves and the people into believing highflown phrases that they would take away 100 per cent. of the capitalists' profit, that "their resistance is broken," etc., the capitalists went on fortifying themselves. Nothing, absolutely nothing was done to check them all during that time. The renegade Ministers proved to be mere talking machines to mislead the oppressed classes, and the entire governmental apparatus remained in the hands of the bureaucrats and the capitalists. The notorious Palchinsky,† assis-

* Peshekhonov—a prominent member of the small Populist Socialist party, a sort of Radical party, with mild Socialist leanings. Skobelev—a member of the Menshevik party, who sat in the last Duma. The two, together with Tseretelli, entered the Provisional Government after the crisis of May 3/19, 1917.

† A former emigré in London, a civil engineer by profession, a sympathiser with Menshevism.

tant Minister of Commerce, was a typical representative of this machine, blocking as he did any and every measure directed against the capitalists. The Ministers kept on chatting—and all remained as before.

Minister Tseretelli was especially utilised by the capitalists in their fight against the revolution. He was dispatched to “pacify” Kronstadt,†† where the revolutionists had dared to remove the commissary appointed by the government. At that time the capitalist press launched an incredibly clamorous, malicious, furious campaign of falsehood and invective against Kronstadt, accusing it of intending to “split off from Russia,” repeating this and similar absurdities in a thousand variations, to frighten the petty bourgeoisie and the unsophisticated philistines. The most typical representative of this dull panic-stricken class, Tseretelli, innocently took the bait and energetically went to work to “subdue and pacify” Kronstadt, without realising his own position as a minion of the counter-revolutionary capitalist class. In fact, this man was a tool in bringing about an “understanding” with revolutionary Kronstadt, according to which the commissary of the place was not to be appointed by the Government, but elected by the local citizens and only confirmed by the Government. With

†† Kronstadt, the well-known naval fortress defending Petrograd, a stronghold of the Bolsheviki in the first months of the Revolution.

such miserable compromises, the Ministers who had deserted Socialism to please capitalists, spent their time.

Thus, whenever a capitalist Minister could not possibly appear in defence of the Government, as, for example, before revolutionary workers, or the Soviets, a "Socialist" Minister—such as Skobelev, Tseretelli, or Chernov—appeared, or rather, was sent by the capitalists. He would conscientiously accomplish the capitalists' job, defend the Ministry, whitewash the capitalists, befog the minds of the people by repeating promises, promises, only promises, and end by advising them to wait, wait, wait.

Minister Chernov was kept particularly busy bargaining with his capitalist colleagues. Down to this very month of July, when, after the shake-up of July 16-17 the new "crisis of power" took place, and the Cadets left the Cabinet, Minister Chernov was always occupied with the useful, interesting, profoundly national work of "persuading" his capitalist colleagues, of exhorting them to consent at least to a law prohibiting the purchase of land. Such a law had been solemnly promised to the peasantry at the All-Russian Congress of Peasants' Soviets in Petrograd, but it remained only a promise. Chernov was unable to fulfil it either in May or in June. Only when the revolutionary explosion took place on July 16-17 and when the Cadets left the Ministry—only then was the law put in force. But it proved to be a solitary measure, incapable of seriously aiding the peasants in their struggle with the landlords for possession of the soil.

Meanwhile the "revolutionary democrat," Kerensky, this newly-fledged member of the Socialist Revolutionary party, was brilliantly accomplishing at the front the counter-revolutionary task of resuming the war, the task in which Guchkov,* the despised of the people, had utterly failed. Kerensky was intoxicated with his own eloquence; the imperialists who used him burned incense to him—he was flattered and worshipped. And all this for his loyal, devoted service to the capitalists—exhorting the "revolutionary armies" to consent to a renewal of a war avowedly waged to conquer Constantinople and Lemberg, Erzerum and Trebizond for the Russian capitalists.

Thus passed the second phase of the Russian revolution from May 10th to June 22nd. The counter-revolutionary capitalist class having strengthened its position and fortified itself under cover and protection of the "Socialist" Ministers, was preparing an onslaught upon both the external and the internal enemy—the revolutionary workmen.

§

On June 22nd the party of the revolutionary workmen, the Bolsheviks, arranged for a demonstration in Petrograd to give articulate expression to the ever-grow-

* Guchkov, the founder and leader of the "Octobrists," a moderate Conservative party of the capitalist and financial magnates, at one time President of the Duma, Minister of War in the first Provisional Government till the advent of the Coalition Cabinet.

ing dissatisfaction and indignation of the masses. The leaders of the Essers and Mensheviks entangled in their alliances with the capitalists, bound hand and foot by their imperialist war-policy, became alarmed, feeling that they were losing their hold upon the masses. A general outcry was raised against this demonstration—an outcry in which the Essers and Mensheviks joined with the counter-revolutionary Cadets. Under the guidance of the Essers and Mensheviks, as a result of their policy of alliance with the capitalists, the tendency of the small property owners (petty bourgeoisie) to unite with the big counter-revolutionary capitalists defined itself with amazing clearness. In this very fact is contained the historic significance, and the profound class-meaning of the crisis of July 22nd.

The Bolsheviki, unwilling to lead the workmen into a desperate battle against the united Cadets, Essers and Mensheviks, decided to give up the demonstration. But the Essers and Mensheviks, hoping to retain at least a little of their waning influence among the masses, felt impelled to order a general demonstration for July 1st. As for the capitalists, they lost their wits out of sheer rage, recognising in this move the leaning of the petty bourgeoisie toward the side of the proletariat—and determined to paralyse the action of the democracy by a military movement on the front.

Indeed, the 1st of July gave an awe-inspiring victory to the slogans of the revolutionary workmen, the

rallying cries of the Bolsheviki among the Petrograd masses; so on July 2nd the capitalists and the Bonapartist Kerensky announced that the military offensive at the front had begun on that very 1st July.

This meant practically the resumption of a war, in the interests of the capitalists, against the will of the great majority of the toiling masses. With this renewed belligerency there was connected, on the one hand, the tremendous growth of chauvinism and the passage of military—and, consequently, of political, power into the hands of a gang of Bonapartists; on the other hand, the recourse to violent repression of the masses, persecution of the internationalists, abolition of the freedom of propaganda, arrests and wholesale shooting of those who opposed the war.

If the 19th of May tied the Essers and Mensheviki to the triumphal chariot of capitalism by a rope, the 2nd of July shackled them with chains.

§

The resentment of the masses upon the renewal of the war spread with rapidity. On July 16-17, their indignation burst forth in an explosion which the Bolsheviki tried to mitigate and to direct into organised channels.

The Essers and Mensheviki, fettered to their reactionary troops to Petrograd, to the restoration of capital punishment, to the disarming of the workmen and the

revolutionary soldiers, and to arrests, persecutions, and the suppression of newspapers. The power which the capitalists, inside the Government, could not entirely usurp, and which the Soviets refused to take, fell into the hands of a military clique of Bonapartists, who were, of course, supported by the Cadets and the landlords, by the Black Hundreds and the capitalists.

Step by step downward. Once on the inclined plane of alliances with the capitalists, the Essers and Mensheviks irretrievably went down to the very bottom. On March 13th, in the Petrograd Soviet, they had promised only conditional support to the Provisional Government. On May 19th they saved it from collapse, and allowed themselves to become hirelings and defenders, unreservedly countenancing an aggressive campaign on the front. On June 22nd they united with the counter-revolutionary capitalists in a campaign of falsehood and calumny against the revolutionary workmen. On July 2nd they approved the renewal of the predatory war. On July 16th they assented to the calling in of the reactionary regiments, the beginning of the final and complete surrender of power to the Bonapartists. Thus they proceeded step by step downward.

The disgusting fate of these parties, the Essers and Mensheviks, is by no means an accident. European experience has many times proven it to be the outcome of the economic situation of the small property holders.

It is a matter of common observation how the small property owner uses all his energies to get into the society of the wealthy, to become a "captain of industry," to enter the ranks of the great capitalists. So long as capitalism reigns supreme, the small property holder will be confronted with two alternatives—either to succeed in climbing to the heights of the capitalist class (at best possible for but one per cent.)—or to remain for a while struggling in the position of a ruined little "boss," a semi-workman, and to land at last with a crash in the ranks of the working class. It is likewise in politics. The petty bourgeois democracy, especially in the persons of its leaders, clings to the skirts of the big capitalists. These leaders console their followers with promises and assurances of the plausibility of alliance with the "grand bourgeoisie." For a short time at best they are favoured by the capitalists with some tit-bits of concession to the few top-layers of the toiling masses; but in everything decisive, in every matter of importance, the petty-bourgeois democracy remains an impotent appendage, an obedient tool in the hands of the financial magnates. The experience of England and France has often proved this.

During the Russian revolution, when under the pressure of the war and the momentous crisis created by it, events unfolded with extraordinary swiftness, the period of March-July, 1917, has fully corroborated the

Marxist theory regarding the instability of the position occupied by the small property owners.

This is the ultimate lesson of the Russian revolution : There is no salvation for the toiling masses in the iron jaws of war, of famine, of enslavement by landlords and capitalists except in complete renunciation of any and all alliances with the capitalist class. Only the revolutionary workers, supported by the poorest peasants, can overcome the resistance of the capitalists and lead the nation to the winning of the soil without compensation, to complete liberty, to victory over starvation and over the war, and to a just and lasting peace.

* * * * *

The foregoing article, as will be seen from the text, was written in July. The history of the August revolution has fully borne out the contentions stated therein. Moreover, the Kornilov* uprising, toward the end of August, has created a new turning point in the revolution, unmistakably proving to the people that the Cadets, in union with the counter-revolutionary generals, seek to

* General Kornilov, commander-in-chief, who conspired with some members of the Kerensky Cabinet to march upon Petrograd for the suppression of the Soviets and the establishment of a military dictatorship. The attempt collapsed miserably, thanks to the energetic action of the Petrograd and Moscow workers.

overthrow the Soviets and restore the monarchy. How strong this new turn of the revolution will be, and how successful it will be in putting an end to alliances with the capitalists, are questions for the near future to decide.

Sept. 19th., 1917.

“All Power to the Soviets.”

The most serious question of every revolution is plainly that of the governing power. Everything depends upon the question of what class holds that power. Now if the organ of the leading government party in Russia (Essers), the “Dielo Naroda” (“Cause of the People”) recently complained (No. 147) that in the struggle for power the questions of bread and the Constituent Assembly are forgotten, the obvious retort is: “Blame yourselves. It is the hesitancy, the irresolution of your party which is to blame for the continuous performance of Ministerial leap-frog—for the repeated postponement of the Constituent Assembly, for the undermining by the capitalists of the measures undertaken for the adequate control and distribution of the bread supply.”

The question of the governing power can be neither obviated nor dismissed, for it is just this fundamental question which determines the development of the revolution, both in its external and internal policy. It certainly cannot be disputed that our revolution has lost in vain half a year squabbling over the establishment of power, but this is due to the vacillating policy of the Essers and Mensheviks. And this policy was in the last instance determined by the class standard of the petty bourgeoisie, by its economic instability in the struggle between labour and capital.

The question now is, whether or not the petty-bourgeois democracy has learned a lesson during this great half-year, so unusually rich in historical content. If not, then the revolution is lost, and only the victorious

uprising of the working class can save it. If it has, it is imperative that steps be taken at once to construct a stable, unfaltering power. Now, during a popular revolution—a revolution that has aroused the masses, the majority of the workmen and peasants—only that power can be stable which avowedly and unconditionally rests upon the majority of the population. Hitherto the governing power in Russia has been in fact in the hands of the capitalist class, which is forced now and then to make partial concessions, only to withdraw them at the first opportunity. In words, it is a popular, democratic, revolutionary government; in deeds it is an anti-popular, anti-democratic, counter-revolutionary, capitalist government. This is the fatal contradiction that has heretofore been the source of the instability and fluctuation of power, of the “Ministerial leap-frog” so sedulously played by the Essers and Mensheviks to the detriment of the people.

Either rout the Soviets and let them die an ignominious death, or give all power to the Soviets—this I proclaimed before the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, in June, 1917, and the history of July and August has incontrovertibly borne out the correctness of that utterance. All power to the Soviets. This power alone can claim stability, inasmuch as it truly rests upon the majority of the population, in spite of all the lies spread broadcast by the lackeys of the capitalists, such as Potressov, Plekhanov,* etc., who, when the power is

* Potressov, a noted writer among the pro-war Mensheviks. Plekhanov, the founder of the Russian Social-Democratic party, a man of international reputation, who became a “patriot” on the outbreak of the war. He died in 1918, abandoned by everybody except a handful of followers.

actually surrendered to an insignificant minority of the people—the capitalists and exploiters—call it “widening the base” of the government.

Only the Soviet power could be firm, the only power which it would be impossible to overthrow, even in stormiest moments of the most tempestuous revolution; only such a power could ensure the steady, ever-spreading development of the revolution, the peaceable struggle of the parties within the Soviets. So long as such a power is lacking, the inevitable consequences will be irresolution, instability, vacillation, endless “crises of power,” the futile comedy of “Ministerial leap-frog,” and outbursts from both left and right.

But the cry “All Power to the Soviets” is frequently, if not always, interpreted very incorrectly to mean a Ministry recruited from the parties of the Soviet majority. We shall consider at length this highly-mistaken notion.

A Ministry of the Soviet majority would mean only a personal change in the composition of the Ministry, leaving intact the entire old apparatus of the governing power, an apparatus thoroughly bureaucratic, incapable of carrying out any serious reforms, not even those found in the platforms of the Essers and the Mensheviks.

“All Power to the Soviets” means the thorough reconstruction of the whole State apparatus, the apparatus of antiquated officialdom which thwarts everything democratic; it means the removal of this apparatus and the substitution of a new, popular, really democratic

apparatus of the Soviets, that is to say, the organised and fully armed majority of the people—workers, soldiers and peasants. And, finally, it means full independence for the majority of the nation, not only in choosing delegates, but also in administering the State, and carrying out all necessary reforms.

In order to make the contrast more clear-cut and definite we shall recall a very important confession made some time ago by the organ of the Government party, the Essers, "Dielo Naroda" ("Cause of the People"). "Even in the departments which are in the hands of the Socialist Ministers," writes this paper at the time of the notorious "Coalition Ministry," "even in these departments the whole administrative apparatus is antiquated, and obstructs work."

That goes without saying. The history of the capitalist-parliamentary and the capitalist-constitutional countries shows that a change of Ministers means very little, for the real work of administration is lodged in the hands of a colossal army of officials, and this army is permeated with the anti-democratic spirit. By thousands and millions of threads it is connected with the landlords and the capitalists, and is dependent upon them in every way. This army breathes only the atmosphere of capitalist relations with which it is surrounded; it is congealed, shrivelled with age, stiff and inert; it is powerless to escape from this atmosphere, unable to think, feel or act otherwise than it has always acted. This army is imbued with admiration for rank, for certain privileges of "State" service, and its upper strata are enslaved by

stocks and bonds to Financial Capital, in a measure acting as its direct agents, the executors of its interests and influence.

To attempt by means of this administrative apparatus the carrying out of such reforms as the confiscation of landed estates, the monopolising of bread, etc., is a huge illusion, a deception of the people.

This apparatus can well serve a republican capitalist class, creating a republic in the form of a "monarchy without a monarch," after the fashion of the Third French Republic; but it is absolutely powerless to carry out reforms, not only ultra radical, but even such as would limit the rights of capital, the rights of "sacred private property." Thus in all "coalition" Ministries which include Socialists, the inevitable consequence is that the Socialists, however conscientious and personally irreproachable, remain in reality a mere screen for the capitalist government, a lightning rod to divert the popular indignation from the government, a tool by which to foil the masses. It was so with Louis Blanc in 1848, it has been so time and time again since then, in England and France, when Socialists participated in the government; it was so too with Chernov and Tseretelli in 1917—and so it will be as long as the capitalist order exists and is supported by an outworn, capitalist bureaucratic administrative apparatus.

The Soviets of Workmen's, Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates are invaluable for the very reason that they represent a new, incomparably higher, incomparably more democratic type of administrative apparatus. The

Essers and Mensheviks did everything possible and impossible to convert the Soviets (particularly the Petrograd Soviet and the All-Russian Central Executive Committee) into mere talking machines, busy, under the pretence of "control," with formulating futile resolutions and humble petitions which the government disregarded in the most polite and affable manner. But the fresh breeze of the Kornilov rebellion, pregnant with threatening tempest, forced the Soviet to cast off for a time all that was obnoxious, and the initiative of the revolutionary masses loomed up as something majestic, powerful and invincible.

Let those who are weak of faith learn by this historic example. Shame upon those who say, "We have no apparatus with which to replace the old one, which invariably supports the capitalist class"; for we have such an apparatus—the Soviets. Fear not the initiative and independent action of the masses, have confidence in the revolutionary organisations of the masses, and in all departments of the State you will behold the strength, the magnificence, the invincibility of the workmen and peasants, which they showed in their enthusiastic solidarity against the Kornilov uprising.

Distrusting the masses, fearing their initiative and independence, trembling at their revolutionary energy instead of enthusiastically and unreservedly supporting it—this was the greatest sin of the Essers and Mensheviks. Here can be found the root cause of their irresolution, their vacillation, their endless and endlessly fruitless attempts to pour new wine into the bottles of the old bureaucratic apparatus.

Read the history of the democratisation of the Russian army in the Russian revolution of 1917, the history of Chernov's Ministry, the history of the Palchinsky, the history of Peshekhonov's resignation—you will find at every step the most instructive substantiation of this fact. The fact that there was no complete confidence in the elected soldiers' organisations, no full realisation of the principle of election of officers by the soldiers themselves, enabled the Kornilovs, Kaledins and counter-revolutionary officers to be at the head of the army. This is a fact. And whoever does not wantonly shut his eyes cannot help seeing that after the Kornilov affair the Kerensky government left everything as it was—that in reality it restored Kornilov's rule. The appointment of Alexeiev, the pact with the Klembovskis, Gagarins, Bagrattions and other Kornilov followers, the kindly treatment accorded to the Kornilovs and Kaledins—all this shows how Kerensky was restoring the Kornilov rule.

Experience teaches that there is no middle course possible. Either all the power to the Soviets and the complete democratisation of the army, or—Kornilov.

And the history of Chernov? Wasn't the greatest enthusiasm aroused among the peasants by any step, however small, toward the real satisfaction of their needs—every step which attested confidence in them, and in their mass organisations and mass actions. But for four months Chernov was compelled again and again to "bargain" with the Cadets and the bureaucrats, who with their everlasting protractions and underhanded tactics finally forced him to leave without having accomplished

anything. The landlords and capitalists, "having won the game," held back the Constituent Assembly, and even started a series of repressive measures against the Land Committees.

Experience teaches that there is no middle course possible. Either all power to the Soviets, centrally and locally, all the land to the peasants at once, before the decision of the Constituent Assembly, or the landlords and capitalists will thwart everything, restore the rule of the landlords, arouse the resentment of the peasants, and so aggravate the situation as to cause a regrettably violent agrarian revolt.

It is the same story with the capitalists, who prevent any serious control over production, the merchants preventing the State control of the bread supply, and even attempts to establish the principle of its regulated democratic distribution.

In Russia the question now is not to invest new reforms, or to undertake cherished transformations. Nothing of the kind. Yet that is how the question is put—and put knowingly and falsely by the capitalists, who protest against the "introduction of Socialism" and the "dictatorship of the working class." In reality, the situation in Russia is such that the unequalled sufferings of the war, the imminent danger of famine, have themselves dictated the way out, have themselves pointed out the imperative necessity of these reforms; bread monopoly, control of production and distribution, the limitation of the issue of paper money, regular exchange of bread for commodities, etc.

Measures of this kind and in this direction are universally acknowledged to be inevitable. They have been begun in many places and in widely different ways, and everywhere their realisation is obstinately resisted by the landlords and capitalists, aided by the Kerensky government—a thoroughly bourgeois and Bonapartist government.

I. Prilezhaiev recently wrote in the "Dielo Naroda" ("Cause of the People," No. 147), lamenting the resignation of Peshekhonov, the failure of price-fixing and the collapse of the bread monopoly: "Courage and resolution—that is what all our governments, of whatever complexion, have lacked. . . . The revolutionary democracy need not hesitate; it should take the initiative itself, and intervene in the economic chaos. . . . Here, if anywhere at all, a firm policy and resolute power are indispensable."

Yes, what is true is certainly true! Golden words. It has not, however, occurred to the author that the question of a firm policy, of a daring spirit, of determination, is not a question of personalities, but a question of the class that is capable of daring and decisive action. The only such class is the working class. With the daring and resoluteness of power, its unflinching policy is nothing less than the dictatorship of the working class, including the poorest peasants. I. Prilezhaiev without being conscious of it, craves that very dictatorship.

What would such dictatorship mean? Nothing less than that the resistance of the Kornilov followers would be overcome, and the complete democratisation of the

army accomplished. Ninety-nine per cent. of the army would declare themselves ardent adherents of this dictatorship two days after its realisation. This dictatorship would give the land to the peasants and full power to the peasants' local committees; how can any sane man doubt that the peasants would support such a dictatorship? What Peshekhonov only imagined ("the resistance of the capitalists is broken," he said before the Soviets), this dictatorship would convert into reality without the least harm to the newly-established democratic organisations for food supply, industrial control, etc. On the contrary, it would support and develop them, while removing all obstacles from their path.

Only the dictatorship of the working class and the poor peasants is capable of breaking the resistance of the capitalists, of manifesting a truly majestic courage and resoluteness of power, of securing to itself the enthusiastic, loyal and heroic support of the army masses and the peasant masses.

All power to the Soviets—the sole power which can render further evolution gradual, peaceful and tranquil, proceeding in perfect accord with the level of consciousness and decision exhibited by the majority of the popular masses—in perfect accord with the level of their own experience. All power to the Soviets—this means a complete surrender of the administration of the country and of control over its economic resources to the workmen and peasants, whom no one would dare to resist, and who would soon learn by experience, from their own practice, justly to distribute the bread, the land, and the necessities of life.

What are the Soviets?

Of the many terms in which the social and political sciences abound, the term "people" is perhaps the vaguest. Indeed, we have no clear-cut image and hence no effective idea of this apparently concrete entity "People." Intimately connected with this term, no less vague and still more confusing, is the word "government," a word depicting a reality as concrete and as hard as the age-old rocks themselves. The relation, however, obtaining between these two realities is in one respect clear; inasmuch as all the power of a people is vested in its government, the people is divested of all power,—a relation so typically and, as it were, monumentally expressed in the cry, "The State, I am the State," desperately uttered by the head of the French government during the period of its ultimate decay.

The Russian revolution, now occupying the centre of the quaking world's stage, allows the careful observer to catch a glimpse of what that entity People really must be. The Russian people, struggling to assert itself, has in the travail of the Revolution given birth to a new creation, flexible, mobile, and yet persistent as are the thought and will it expresses. This creation is the Soviets.

The trumpets of the March revolution, 1917, brought down the Romanov dynasty, and the rejoicing of the Russian people knew no bounds. But the events immediately following had a sobering effect upon the masses. The first burning question arose: "Is the

Revolution safe?" As the embodied answer to this question, sprang up the Soviet, a revolutionary creation, a child of the people's awakening consciousness. City, town and village as well as each unit of the army, all formed their local Soviets to safeguard the Revolution.

These local organs, always functioning and therefore always reflecting the thoughts, desires and will of the small communities they represent, send delegates to the capital, who form the Central Executive Committee of all the Soviets of Workmen's, Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates. The election to the central body is carried out on the basis of party lines, so that the central Executive Committee has always represented all the various currents and even undercurrents of the Russian Revolution.

Soon after the overthrow of Tsardom, the people felt that the newly-formed Provisional Government of Lvov-Rodzianko-Miliukov* did not intend to deviate from the general policies of the old regime. This popular feeling imparted itself to the local Soviets, which resulted in the second question: "Who is the friend and who is the foe?" In other words, the Soviet was forced to explain the sense of the Revolution. The first answer was a fermentation within the Soviets, reflecting the people's questioning mind, and this fermentation ended

* Lvov (Prince), a moderate Liberal, head of the First Provisional and of the First Coalition Governments. Rodzianko, a rich landowner and nobleman, an "Octobrist" and last President of the Duma. Prof. Miliukov, the well-known leader of the "Cadets."

in the cleavage of the Soviet forces. Materially the split manifested itself in the first "coalition government," headed by Kerensky.

This second question was made more vital and insistent by the Kornilov uprising. It grew more and more obvious to the people that the Coalition Government was merely an expression of the old order under a new name. In response to the growing popular unrest, the rift in the Soviet deepened; whatever elements irresistibly tended to the right were pushed out by popular pressure upon the left, and the result was the July insurrection. The Soviet thus emphasised the popular interpretation of the sense of the Revolution. It is not merely a political revolution, but an economico-social revolution, and whoever thwarts its course is the people's enemy.

But if indeed this is the historical sense of the Revolution, then arises a third question:—By whom and how shall the issues of the Revolution be promoted and realised in life? Of course by the People, and by the power which expresses the People—by the Soviets. Such was the categorical answer given by the November uprising, which for ever put an end to the policy of coalition and alliances of the real Revolution with the representatives of the dying old order. Thus by a process of elimination the Soviet was finally purified of elements leaning toward the right; a process which showed that, as the individual hesitates before making his choice and stamping as his will one or the other of the ideas conflicting in his mind, so the Russian people hesitated before it found and expressed its conscious will. And the Soviet made all this possible.

In brief, these are the three phases passed through by the Soviet—from birth to manhood:—(1) It issued from the very heart of the people as guardian of the Revolution; (2) While growing, it served as the pendulum—the interpreter of the Revolution; (3) Fully matured as the volitional and intellectual organ of its parent, the people, it became the instrument for realising the issues of the Revolution.

The superiority of the Soviet over any other form of representation is easily demonstrable. All governments pretend to represent the will of the people. Now granted (for the sake of argument) that a people's will is as real as the will of an individual, and that it is the sum or resultant of the sundry will composing it, it is manifest that no representative body can satisfactorily execute this composite will.

As a matter of fact, the will of an individual is not easily satisfied by proxy. So that it may be tersely stated that the efficacy of a representative is inversely proportional to the numerical strength of the constituency represented.

Viewed from this angle it is obvious why an order of things that has become detrimental to the people at large can be perpetuated by a "representative" government which has degenerated into a tool of the invisible government. The history of the War is very instructive in this, as in many other respects. It is now clear as day how the invisible power, the class owning and domi-

nating the economic apparatus in all countries, owned also the representative government, and through it tried to perpetuate secret diplomacy, financial speculation, capitalist exploitation of the masses, all factors inevitably leading to both internal and external wars—and all this in the name of the People.

In the first place, the Soviet is a local body, of the people and with the people. A member of the Soviet represents no more than about five hundred votes. He can be at any time replaced; he is always in sight—no invisibles are allowed. Furthermore, the Soviet works “centripetally”—the central body is controlled by the local constituent bodies. In this respect the Soviet government may be compared to a central meteorological bureau, whose usefulness and efficacy, whose very reason for existence is determined by the workings of the local weather bureau.

Indeed, history seems to show mankind a new form of State organisation which closely approaches the demands of the people, and corresponds with the new order of things ushered in by the Russian Revolution.

These last few days have brought here (in Petrograd) face to face these two types of representation—on one hand, the Constituent Assembly, in which one man represents 200,000 wills, and on the other, the All-Russian Soviets, whose direct guards, interpreters and promoters of the social revolution, whose each member is so closely connected with the very pulse of the people.

The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly by the power of the Soviets stirred no ripple on the faces of the immense sea of the Russian masses ; while the threatened curtailment of the powers of the Soviets, two months previously, destroyed the Provisional Government.

The Soviet, being close to the people, must express realities literally, as the people itself expresses them.

The Soviet is probably the most important contribution of the Russian Revolution.

January, 1918.

**BOURGEOIS
DEMOCRACY**

Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

*Thesis submitted to the First Congress of the Communist
International at Moscow, March 2nd-6th, 1919*

By N. Lenin.

1. The growth of the revolutionary movement amongst the working classes of all countries has resulted in frantic efforts on the part of the bourgeoisie and its agents in working-class organisations, to find ideo-political arguments in defence of the dominion of the exploiters. A favourite argument takes the form of the condemnation of dictatorship and the defence of democracy. The deceitfulness and hypocrisy of such an argument, repeated in a thousand ways by the capitalist press, and re-echoed at the Berne Conference of February, 1919, must be plain to all who refuse to betray the fundamental principles of Socialism.

2. This argument plays with the ideas of "democracy generally" and "dictatorship generally," without reference to the question of class. This non-class, supra-class, and general formulation of the question, constitutes nothing else but a direct insult to the basic principle of Socialism, namely, that doctrine of the class war, which, though recognised verbally, is virtually forgotten in practice by those Socialists who have gone over to the bourgeois camp. In no capitalist country of to-day does there exist a "general democracy," but only a bourgeois

F .

democracy; and there is no question of a "general dictatorship," but only of a dictatorship of the oppressed class—that is, the proletariat—over the oppressors and exploiters—that is, the bourgeoisie—with the object of overcoming the resistance offered by the exploiters in the defence of their rule.

3. History teaches us that no oppressed class has ever yet come into power, or could ever do so, without going through a period of dictatorship, *i.e.*, the conquest of political power and the forcible suppression of the most desperate, most furious, most reckless resistance always offered by the exploiters. The bourgeoisie, whose rule is now championed by those Socialists who are opposed to dictatorship, and are ready to die on behalf of "democracy generally," acquired power, in all the foremost countries, by a series of rebellions and civil wars, by violent suppression of absolute monarchy, of the feudal system, of slave owners, and of their attempts at restoration. Time and again the Socialists of every country have in their books, pamphlets, resolutions at the class character of these bourgeois revolutions. Thus the defence of bourgeois democracy under the cloak of speeches about "Democracy generally," and the outcry against the dictatorship of the proletariat, under the cloak of wailing about "dictatorship generally," are a direct act of treachery against Socialism, a desertion, in effect, to the bourgeois camp, a denial of the proletariat's right to its own proletarian revolution, and a defence of bourgeois reformism, coming at the very moment when bourgeois reformism has collapsed throughout the world, and when the war has created a revolutionary situation.

4. By pointing out the class character of bourgeois civilisation, democracy and parliamentarism, Socialists were expressing the idea explained with the greatest scientific accuracy by Marx and Engels, when they said that the democratic bourgeois Republic was nothing but an apparatus for the oppression of the working class by the bourgeois class, of the working masses by a handful of capitalists. Amongst those who now raise their voices against dictatorship and in defence of democracy, there is not a single revolutionary nor a single Marxist who has not solemnly sworn to the workers that he had recognised that fundamental truth. But now, when the revolutionary proletariat is beginning to move, with the object of destroying this apparatus of oppression and of introducing a dictatorship of the proletariat, these traitors to Socialism try to make out that the bourgeoisie has presented the toilers with "pure democracy," has renounced resistance, and is willing to yield to a majority of the workers, just as if the democratic Republic possessed no State apparatus for the oppression of labour by capital.

5. The Paris Commune, extolled in words by all who wish to be considered Socialists—since they know that the workers warmly and sincerely sympathise with it—has very clearly proved the historical limitations and limited worth of bourgeois parliamentarism and democracy, which, although very free institutions in comparison with those of the Middle Ages, must, in these times of proletarian revolution, be subjected to absolutely necessary and fundamental changes. Marx, who best of all interpreted the historical meaning of the Commune, has proved in his analysis the extortionist character of

bourgeois democracy and parliamentarism, under which, once in the course of several years, the oppressed classes are allowed the right to decide what member of the propertied classes shall "represent and crush" (vertreten und zertreten) the people in Parliament. And now, when the Soviet movement throughout the world is openly continuing the work of the Commune, these traitors to Socialism forget the concrete experiences and concrete lessons of the Paris Commune, and repeat the old middle-class rubbish about "democracy generally." They forget that the Commune was a non-parliamentary institution.

6. The importance of the Commune, further, consists in the effort to break up and destroy the capitalist state machinery of bureaucracy, courts of justice, military and police apparatus, and to replace it by a self-governing mass organisation of workmen, making no distinction between legislative and executive powers. All bourgeois democratic republics of to-day, including the German, which the traitors to Socialism falsely assert to be proletarian, retain this bourgeois State apparatus. This is again a clear and distinct proof that the defence of "democracy" is only another name for the defence of the bourgeoisie and its extortionist privileges.

7. "Freedom of meeting" may be cited as an example of what is demanded by "democracy pure and simple." Every class-conscious workman who has not broken away from his class understands at once that it would be absurd to grant full liberty to hold meetings to the exploiters during the period when those exploiters are resisting their overthrow and defending their privileges. Neither in England in 1649, nor in France in 1793, did the bourgeoisie, in its revolutionary phase,

grant liberty to hold meetings to the monarchists and aristocracy, when the latter called in foreign troops and "held meetings" to organise attempts at restoration. And if the bourgeoisie to day, having long since become reactionary, demands guarantees in advance from the proletariat to be free to hold meetings, irrespective of what resistance the capitalists may offer against expropriation, the workers will only laugh at the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, the workers know full well that even in the most democratic bourgeois republics "freedom of meeting" is an empty phrase, for not only do the rich enjoy the protection of a powerful State apparatus, but they can also command the best public and private buildings and have more leisure at their disposal. Town and country proletarians, as well as the smaller peasants, have none of these advantages. As long as these conditions continue, "equality," *i.e.*, "democracy pure and simple," is a delusion. In order to win real equality and to realise democracy for the workers in practice, the capitalists must first be deprived of all their public and grand private buildings, the workers must be given leisure, and their freedom to meet, should be defended by armed workmen, and not by "the aristocracy," or by capitalist officers in command of brutalised soldiers.

It is only after such changes have been effected that it will be possible, without insulting the workers, the toilers, the poor, to talk about liberty to hold meetings, about equality. And there is no one to effect these changes but the advance guard of the toilers—the proletariat—the conqueror of the capitalist exploiters.

8. "Liberty of the Press" is also a much-used catch-word of "democracy pure and simple." But once again the workers know, and Socialists in every country have often acknowledged, that this liberty, too, is a delusion as long as the best printing offices and the largest stocks of paper remain in the hands of the capitalists, and as long as capital retains its power over the press, a power which is always more pronounced, more striking, more cynical, wherever democracy and the republican régime are most highly developed, as, for instance, in America. Here, again, in order to secure real equality and real democracy for the working masses, the capitalists must be deprived of the power to employ writers in their service, to buy up publishing businesses and to bribe newspapers. With this aim in view the yoke of capitalism must be shaken off, the extortioners overthrown, and their resistance crushed. The capitalist have always understood "liberty" to mean liberty for the rich to make profits, and liberty for the workers to die of starvation; by "Liberty of the Press" they mean liberty for the rich to bribe the press and to fabricate and inspire so-called public opinion. The defenders of "democracy pure and simple" again reveal themselves in practice as defenders of the lowest and most mercenary system employed by the rich, to control the masses' source of enlightenment; they reveal themselves as deluders of the people, distracting them, by high-sounding and lying phrases, from the carrying out of their historic task of delivering the press from the hands of capital. Real liberty and equality must be established by Communism, under which there will be no possibility of profiting at the expense of others, no possibility of

either directly or indirectly subjecting the press to the power of money, and where nothing will prevent the workers, individually or in groups, from enjoying and realising in practice equal rights of using the printing offices and stocks of paper belonging to the Community.

9. The history of the 19th and 20th centuries had revealed to us even before the war the true meaning of this famous "democracy pure and simple" under capitalism. Marxists have always maintained that the more developed, the more "pure and simple" democracy is, the more open, the fiercer, the more merciless, is the class war, and the more "pure and simple" is the pressure of capital and the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The Dreyfus affair in republican France; the sanguinary attacks on strikers by soldiers, supplied with arms for the purpose from capitalist sources, in the free and democratic republic of America: these and thousands of similar instances reveal the truth, which the bourgeoisie tries in vain to conceal, that even in the most democratic republics there reigns in practice the terrorism and dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, showing itself quite openly each time the extortioners imagine that the power of capital is beginning to totter.

10. The imperialist war of 1914—18 has, once and for all, disclosed to the most backward of workers the true nature of bourgeois democracy, revealing it as nothing less than a capitalist dictatorship, even in the freest republics. In order that a German or an English group of millionaires might be enriched, millions of men have been murdered, and the military dictatorship of the

capitalist class has been established in the freest republics. Even after the defeat of Germany, this dictatorship is still kept in the Entente countries. More than anything else the war has served to open the eyes of the workers, has stripped bourgeois democracy of its sham ornaments, and revealed to all the nations vast abysses of greed and speculation during the war and because of it. The bourgeoisie carried on the war in the name of liberty and equality, and in that same name military contractors have amassed untold riches. No effort on the part of the yellow Berne International will be able to conceal from the masses the plundering character, now definitely unmasked, of bourgeois "liberty," bourgeois "equality," bourgeois "democracy."

II. In Germany, which, in a capitalist sense, is the most highly developed country in Europe, the first months of republican liberty, brought by the destruction of Imperial Germany, showed the German working-man and the whole world, which class is actually dominant in the bourgeois democratic republic. The murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg was an event of world-historic significance, not only because the best and leading personalities of the real proletarian communist International were tragically done to death, but also because the foremost European—one might say without exaggeration the foremost world-state—has revealed its class-foundations to the very roots. If persons under arrest—that is, persons under the protection of the State—can be murdered with impunity by officers and capitalists under a government of social patriots, then it follows the democratic republic under which such things

can happen is, in effect, a bourgeois dictatorship. People who give vent to their indignation at the murders of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, but who have not grasped this truth, merely display their own stupidity, or their own hypocrisy. In one of the freest and most advanced republics in the world, in the German Republic, "freedom" consists in the liberty to kill with impunity the arrested leaders of the proletariat. It will never be otherwise as long as capitalism is dominant, since the development of democracy does not weaken the class struggle, but, on the contrary, aggravates it, until, as the result of the war and its sequels, it has now reached boiling point.

Throughout the whole civilised world the deportation, persecution and internment of Bolsheviki are taking place, as, for instance, in Switzerland, one of the freest bourgeois republics. In America, too, there are even Bolsheviki pogroms. From the standpoint of "democracy pure and simple," it is simply ludicrous that civilised, advanced, democratic countries, armed to the teeth, should dread the presence of some few dozens of individuals from backward, starving, ruined Russia, which has been called savage and criminal in thousands of bourgeois papers. It is obvious that a social order which could produce such a crying contradiction is, in effect, a dictatorship of the capitalist class.

12. In such a state of things, Proletarian dictatorship is not only fully justified as a means of overthrowing the exploiters and of suppressing their resistance, but is also absolutely necessary for the mass of the workers as the only protection against capitalist dictatorship,

which led to the war, and will probably prepare a new war.

The main point which Socialists fail to understand, and which reveals their short-sightedness, their enslavement to bourgeois prejudices, their political treachery towards the proletariat, is that in capitalist society there can be no middle course between capitalist dictatorship and proletarian dictatorship. Any dream of a third course is merely the reactionary lament of the lower middle classes. This is plainly shown by the experience of the hundred years and more during which bourgeois democracy and the labour movement have been developing in all advanced countries. Especially is it shown by the experiences of the last five years. The entire science of political economy and the whole gist of Marxism are eloquent of this truth, clearly demonstrating the economic necessity of capitalist dictatorship under any system of production for profit—a dictatorship which can only be destroyed by that class which has been developed, increased, paid and strengthened by and with the development of capitalism itself—that is, the proletarian class.

13. The other theoretical and political mistake made by Socialists consists in not understanding that the forms of democracy have inevitably changed in the course of centuries, beginning with its embryo in ancient times, in proportion as one ruling class was replaced by another. In the republics of ancient Greece, in the mediæval towns, in the most developed capitalist States, democracy has had different forms, and has been of varied extent. It would be folly to assume that the greatest

revolution in history, the first transfer of power from the hands of a minority of exploiters to the hands of the impoverished majority, could take place within the framework of the old bourgeois parliamentary democracy, without the most abrupt changes, or the creation of new forms and institutions for democracy, embodying the new social conditions of its existence.

14. Proletarian dictatorship is like the dictatorship of other classes in that it arises from the necessity of suppressing the armed resistance of the class that loses its political supremacy. The fundamental difference between proletarian dictatorship and that of other classes, such as the dictatorship of the great landowners of the Middle Ages and that of the capitalist class in all civilised capitalist countries is simply that the two last-named dictatorships were a forcible suppression of the resistance of the majority of the population, the working masses, whereas proletarian dictatorship is a forcible suppression of the resistance of the exploiters, *i.e.*, of an insignificant minority of the population—the landlords and capitalists. Hence it follows that proletarian dictatorship must inevitably bring with it not only a change in the forms and institutions of democracy, generally speaking, but also precisely such a change as will bring a hitherto undreamt-of extension *in practice* of the use made of democracy by those who have been oppressed by capitalism, *i.e.*, by the working classes.

And, in fact, those forms of proletarian dictatorship already worked out in practice, *e.g.*, the Soviet power in Russia, the Räte system in Germany, the Shop Stewards' Committees, and similar Soviet institutions

in other countries, all signify, and *in practice* realise, for the working classes, *i.e.*, for the enormous majority of the population, the practical possibility of democratic liberty and privileges to an extent never before known, even approximately, in the best democratic bourgeois republics.

The essence of the Soviet power consists in the fact that the continuous and unique basis of all State machinery and public authority is constituted by the mass organisations of exactly those classes which were oppressed by capitalism—the workers and semi-proletarians, peasants not exploiting hired labour and forced to sell at least a fraction of their own labour-power. These very masses, which even in the most democratic bourgeois republics, though enjoying equal rights in law, are still kept *in practice* from all participation in political life and from the enjoyment of all democratic liberties and rights—are now brought into permanent, unavoidable, and, therefore, decisive, touch with the democratic administration of the State.

15. The equality of all citizens, irrespective of sex, religion, race or nationality, which was always and everywhere promised, but never carried out, by the bourgeois democracy, and indeed never could be carried out under capitalism, is immediately and amply realised * by the Soviet power, or, in other words, by proletarian dictatorship. Only the dictatorship of the workers can achieve this equality, because they have no private property interest either in production or in the struggle for distribution and redistribution.

16. The old bourgeois democracy and the parliamentary system were so organised as to keep the working classes at the greatest distance from the administrative machinery. But the Soviet power, *i.e.*, proletarian dictatorship, on the contrary, is so organised that it brings the masses of the working class in close touch with the administration. The same purpose is attained by the legislative and executive functions under the Soviet organisation of the State, and by substituting industrial units, such as works and factories, for territorial constituencies.

17. Not only under the monarchy, but even in the most democratic bourgeois republics, the army was an organ for oppression. Only Soviet Government, as the established State organisation of the classes oppressed by capitalism, is capable of abolishing the dependence of the army on bourgeois leadership, and of really amalgamating the proletariat with the army, of arming the proletariat and disarming the bourgeoisie, without which conditions the victory of Socialism would be impossible.

18. The Soviet organisation of the State is adapted for the leading part played by the proletariat as the class which has been most concentrated and united by capitalism. Experience gained from all revolutions and all movements of the enslaved classes, the experience of the world Socialist movement, teaches us that it is only the proletariat that is able to unite and carry with it the scattered and backward sections of the toiling and exploited population.

19. Only the Soviet organisation of the State is

able completely to break up and destroy the old, *i.e.*, bourgeois, bureaucratic, and judicial apparatus which, under capitalism, existed, and was bound to exist, in the most democratic republics, and formed for the masses of the workers the greatest practical obstacle in the way of realising democracy. The Paris Commune took the first historic step along this path; the Soviet has taken the second.

20. The annihilation of the power of the State is the aim all Socialists have had in view, first and foremost amongst them Marx. Without the realisation of this aim, true democracy, that is, liberty and equality, is unattainable. It can only be achieved by the Soviet or proletarian democracy, for this system prepares at the very outset for the "withering away" of any form of the State by bringing forward the mass organisations of the working people into a constant and absolute participation in State administration.

21. The complete bankruptcy, the complete failure of the Socialists assembled at Berne to understand the new, *i.e.*, proletarian democracy, is especially manifested by the following incident. On February 10th, 1919, M. Branting stated at Berne that the Conference of the Yellow International was at an end. On February 11th, its members in Berlin published in *Die Freiheit* an appeal from the Independents to the proletariat. In this appeal the bourgeois character of the Scheidemann Government is admitted; it is reproached with wishing to abolish the Soviets, which are called "Träger und Schützer der Revolution" (the supporters and protectors

of the revolution); and a proposal is made to legalise them, to give them State powers, to give them a suspensive veto against the decisions of the National Assembly, and the power to take a referendum.

Such a proposal as this proves the utter mental bankruptcy of the theorists who defended democracy and failed to understand its bourgeois character. The absurd attempt to combine the Soviet system, that is, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, with the Constituent Assembly or Dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, discloses the spiritual poverty of the Yellow Socialists and Social-Democrats, their middle-class reactionary mentality, and their cowardly concessions to the irresistably growing power of the new proletarian democracy.

22. The majority of the Yellow International at Berne, who condemned Bolshevism, but, dreading the mass of the workers, dared not formally vote for a condemnatory resolution, has acted quite correctly from the class standpoint. That majority is in complete agreement with the Russian Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries and the Scheidemann party in Germany. The Russian Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, who complain of being persecuted by the Bolsheviks seek to conceal the fact that the persecutions are due to their taking part in the civil war on the side of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. In Germany, in precisely the same way, the Scheidemann party has joined in the civil war on the side of the bourgeoisie, *i.e.*, against the working men.

It is therefore only natural that the majority of the

participants in the Berne International should have voiced their condemnation of the Bolsheviks. In this was expressed, not the defence of "democracy pure and simple," but the self-defence of men who know that, in the civil war, they are on the side of the capitalist against the proletariat.

Seen from the standpoint of class, the decision arrived at by the majority is quite justified : but the proletariat ought not to be intimidated by this fact, but rather face it openly and meet the consequences.

On the basis of these theses, and accepting the reports from representatives of widely different countries the Congress of the Communist International declares the chief task of the Communist parties in countries where the Soviet system does not yet exist, to be as follows :

1. To enlighten the working class as to the historical significance of the political and practical necessity of creating a new proletarian democracy to take the place of bourgeois democracy and parliamentarianism.
2. To spread and extend the Soviet system in all industrial concerns, in the army and the navy, as well as amongst the workers on the land and smaller peasants; and
3. To secure a firm, reliable Communist majority in the Soviet.