

# Lenin

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## *On Religion*



*PROGRESS Publishers*

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*Workers of All Countries, Unite!*

# Lenin

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*On Religion*



*PROGRESS Publishers · Moscow*

Translated from the Russian

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### **Preface to the Russian Edition**

In the writings and speeches included in this collection Lenin defines the tasks of the proletarian party in respect of religion; he reveals in full the social roots of religion, demonstrates the incompatibility of religion and scientific world outlook, and shows how religious prejudices are to be overcome.

One of the basic demands of the proletarian party in the struggle for democracy, says Lenin, is that of freedom of conscience, the separation of the church from the state and the school from the church. As far as the state is concerned, religion must be declared the private matter of the individual.

This, however, does not mean that the party of the proletariat may be indifferent to religion. Lenin developed the Marxist postulate that religion cannot be a private matter for the party of the proletariat. The strictly scientific world outlook of the proletarian party requires an implacable and consistent ideological struggle against religion.

"So far as the party of the socialist proletariat is concerned," wrote Lenin, "religion is not a private affair. Our Party is an association of class-conscious, advanced fighters for the emancipation of the working class. Such an association cannot and must not be indifferent to lack of class-consciousness, ignorance or obscurantism in the shape of religious beliefs. We demand complete disestablishment of the church so as to be able to combat the religious fog with purely ideological and solely ideological weapons, by means of our press and by word of mouth. But we founded our association, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, precisely for such a struggle against every religious bamboozling of the workers. And to us the ideological struggle

is not a private affair, but the affair of the whole Party, of the whole proletariat."

The victory of socialism and the liquidation of the exploiting classes in the U.S.S.R. have destroyed the social roots of religion and the main support of the church. Soviet people, brought up on the great ideas of Marxism-Leninism, are spiritually of an entirely new mould. Nevertheless, remnants of capitalism, remnants of religious ideology, prejudices and superstitions have remained in the minds of some people and prevent their cultural growth and their active participation in the building of communism. These prejudices are tenacious, they will not die of their own accord, and a persistent struggle must be waged against them. The Communist Party inculcates upon Soviet people a scientific world outlook and carries on an ideological war against religion as being unscientific in principle. Overcoming religious prejudices is an important part of the communist training of the people.

Those writings of Lenin, in which he lays bare the roots of religion and shows how religion is to be conquered, are a sharp ideological weapon in the struggle against religious prejudice, in scientific atheist propaganda. Lenin showed that religious survivals could be overcome only by patient and persistent ideological training, by the extensive propaganda of the Marxist scientific world outlook. He stressed the impermissibility of insulting peoples' religious feelings since this can only serve to strengthen their prejudices.

The material in this booklet is arranged in chronological order.

*Institute of Marxism-Leninism,  
Central Committee of the C.P.S.U.*

## **Socialism and Religion**

Present-day society is wholly based on the exploitation of the vast masses of the working class by a tiny minority of the population, the class of the landowners and that of the capitalists. It is a slave society, since the "free" workers, who all their life work for the capitalists, are "entitled" only to such means of subsistence as are essential for the maintenance of slaves who produce profit, for the safeguarding and perpetuation of capitalist slavery.

The economic oppression of the workers inevitably calls forth and engenders every kind of political oppression and social humiliation, the coarsening and darkening of the spiritual and moral life of the masses. The workers may secure a greater or lesser degree of political liberty to fight for their economic emancipation, but no amount of liberty will rid them of poverty, unemployment, and oppression until the power of capital is overthrown. Religion is one of the forms of spiritual oppression which everywhere weighs down heavily upon the masses of the people, overburdened by their perpetual work for others, by want and isolation. Impotence of the exploited classes in their struggle against the exploiters just as inevitably gives rise to the belief in a better life after death as impotence of the savage in his battle with nature gives rise to belief in gods, devils, miracles, and the like. Those who toil and live in want all their lives are taught by religion to be submissive and patient while here on earth, and to take comfort in the hope of a heavenly reward. But those who live by the labour of others are taught by religion to practise charity while on earth, thus offering them a very cheap way of justifying their entire existence as exploiters and selling them at a moderate price tickets to well-being in heaven. Religion is opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capital drown their

human image, their demand for a life more or less worthy of man.

But a slave who has become conscious of his slavery and has risen to struggle for his emancipation has already half ceased to be a slave. The modern class-conscious worker, reared by large-scale factory industry and enlightened by urban life, contemptuously casts aside religious prejudices, leaves heaven to the priests and bourgeois bigots, and tries to win a better life for himself here on earth. The proletariat of today takes the side of socialism, which enlists science in the battle against the fog of religion, and frees the workers from their belief in life after death by welding them together to fight in the present for a better life on earth.

Religion must be declared a private affair. In these words socialists usually express their attitude towards religion. But the meaning of these words should be accurately defined to prevent any misunderstanding. We demand that religion be held a private affair so far as the state is concerned. But by no means can we consider religion a private affair so far as our Party is concerned. Religion must be of no concern to the state, and religious societies must have no connection with governmental authority. Everyone must be absolutely free to profess any religion he pleases, or no religion whatever, i.e., to be an atheist, which every socialist is, as a rule. Discrimination among citizens on account of their religious convictions is wholly intolerable. Even the bare mention of a citizen's religion in official documents should unquestionably be eliminated. No subsidies should be granted to the established church nor state allowances made to ecclesiastical and religious societies. These should become absolutely free associations of like-minded citizens, associations independent of the state. Only the complete fulfilment of these demands can put an end to the shameful and accursed past when the church lived in feudal dependence on the state, and Russian citizens lived in feudal dependence on the established church, when medieval, inquisitorial laws (to this day remaining in our criminal codes and on our statute-books) were in existence and were applied, persecuting men for their belief or disbelief, violating men's consciences, and linking cosy government jobs and government-derived incomes with the dispensation of this or that dope by the established church.

Complete separation of church and state is what the socialist proletariat demands of the modern state and the modern church.

The Russian revolution must put this demand into effect as a necessary component of political freedom. In this respect, the Russian revolution is in a particularly favourable position, since the revolting officialism of the police-ridden feudal autocracy has called forth discontent, unrest and indignation even among the clergy. However abject, however ignorant Russian Orthodox clergymen may have been, even they have now been awakened by the thunder of the downfall of the old, medieval order in Russia. Even they are joining in the demand for freedom, are protesting against bureaucratic practices and officialism, against the spying for the police imposed on the "servants of God". We socialists must lend this movement our support, carrying the demands of honest and sincere members of the clergy to their conclusion, making them stick to their words about freedom, demanding that they should resolutely break all ties between religion and the police. Either you are sincere, in which case you must stand for the complete separation of church and state and of school and church, for religion to be declared wholly and absolutely a private affair. Or you do not accept these consistent demands for freedom, in which case you evidently are still held captive by the traditions of the inquisition, in which case you evidently still cling to your cosy government jobs and government-derived incomes, in which case you evidently do not believe in the spiritual power of your weapon and continue to take bribes from the state. And in that case the class-conscious workers of all Russia declare merciless war on you.

So far as the party of the socialist proletariat is concerned, religion is not a private affair. Our Party is an association of class-conscious, advanced fighters for the emancipation of the working class. Such an association cannot and must not be indifferent to lack of class-consciousness, ignorance or obscurantism in the shape of religious beliefs. We demand complete disestablishment of the church so as to be able to combat the religious fog with purely ideological and solely ideological weapons, by means of our press and by word of mouth. But we founded our associa-

tion, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, precisely for such a struggle against every religious bamboozling of the workers. And to us the ideological struggle is not a private affair, but the affair of the whole Party, of the whole proletariat.

If that is so, why do we not declare in our Programme that we are atheists? Why do we not forbid Christians and other believers in God to join our Party?

The answer to this question will serve to explain the very important difference in the way the question of religion is presented by the bourgeois democrats and the Social-Democrats.

Our Programme is based entirely on the scientific, and moreover the materialist, world outlook. An explanation of our Programme, therefore, necessarily includes an explanation of the true historical and economic roots of the religious fog. Our propaganda necessarily includes the propaganda of atheism; the publication of the appropriate scientific literature, which the autocratic feudal government has hitherto strictly forbidden and persecuted, must now form one of the fields of our Party work. We shall now probably have to follow the advice Engels once gave to the German Socialists: to translate and widely disseminate the literature of the eighteenth-century French Enlighteners and atheists.<sup>1</sup>

But under no circumstances ought we to fall into the error of posing the religious question in an abstract, idealistic fashion, as an "intellectual" question unconnected with the class struggle, as is not infrequently done by the radical-democrats from among the bourgeoisie. It would be stupid to think that, in a society based on the endless oppression and coarsening of the worker masses, religious prejudices could be dispelled by purely propaganda methods. It would be bourgeois narrow-mindedness to forget that the yoke of religion that weighs upon mankind is merely a product and reflection of the economic yoke within society. No number of pamphlets and no amount of preaching can enlighten the proletariat, if it is not enlightened by its own struggle against the dark forces of capitalism. Unity in this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for the creation of a paradise on earth is more important to us than unity of proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven.

That is the reason why we do not and should not set forth our atheism in our Programme; that is why we do not and should not prohibit proletarians who still retain vestiges of their old prejudices from associating themselves with our Party. We shall always preach the scientific world outlook, and it is essential for us to combat the inconsistency of various "Christians". But that does not mean in the least that the religious question ought to be advanced to first place, where it does not belong at all; nor does it mean that we should allow the forces of the really revolutionary economic and political struggle to be split up on account of third-rate opinions or senseless ideas; rapidly losing all political importance, rapidly being swept out as rubbish by the very course of economic development.

Everywhere the reactionary bourgeoisie has concerned itself, and is now beginning to concern itself in Russia, with the fomenting of religious strife—in order thereby to divert the attention of the masses from the really important and fundamental economic and political problems, now being solved in practice by the all-Russia proletariat uniting in revolutionary struggle. This reactionary policy of splitting up the proletarian forces, which today manifests itself mainly in Black-Hundred pogroms, may tomorrow conceive some more subtle forms. We, at any rate, shall oppose it by calmly, consistently and patiently preaching proletarian solidarity and the scientific world-outlook—a preaching alien to any stirring up of secondary differences.

The revolutionary proletariat will succeed in making religion a really private affair, so far as the state is concerned. And in this political system, cleansed of medieval mildew, the proletariat will wage a broad and open struggle for the elimination of economic slavery, the true source of the religious humbugging of mankind.

*Novaya Zhizn* No. 28,  
December 3, 1905  
Signed: *N. Lenin*

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## Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution

To identify the great artist with the revolution which he has obviously failed to understand, and from which he obviously stands aloof, may at first sight seem strange and artificial. A mirror which does not reflect things correctly could hardly be called a mirror. Our revolution, however, is an extremely complicated thing. Among the mass of those who are directly making and participating in it there are many social elements which have also obviously not understood what is taking place and which also stand aloof from the real historical tasks with which the course of events has confronted them. And if we have before us a really great artist, he must have reflected in his work at least some of the essential aspects of the revolution.

The legal Russian press, though its pages teem with articles, letters and comments on Tolstoy's eightieth birthday, is least of all interested in analysing his works from the standpoint of the character of the Russian revolution and its motive forces. The whole of this press is steeped to nausea in hypocrisy, hypocrisy of a double kind: official and liberal. The former is the crude hypocrisy of the venal hack who was ordered yesterday to hound Leo Tolstoy, and today to show that Tolstoy is a patriot, and to try to observe the decencies before the eyes of Europe. That the hacks of this kind have been paid for their screeds is common knowledge and they cannot deceive anybody. Much more refined and, therefore, much more pernicious and dangerous is liberal hypocrisy. To listen to the Cadet<sup>2</sup> Balalaikins<sup>3</sup> of *Rech*,<sup>4</sup> one would think that their sympathy for Tolstoy is of the most complete and ardent kind. Actually, their calculated declamations and pompous phrases about the "great seeker after God" are false from beginning to end, for no Russian liberal believes in Tolstoy's

God, or sympathises with Tolstoy's criticism of the existing social order. He associates himself with a popular name in order to increase his political capital, in order to pose as a leader of the nation-wide opposition; he seeks, with the din and thunder of claptrap, to *drown* the demand for a straight and clear answer to the question: what are the glaring contradictions of "Tolstoyism" due to, and what shortcomings and weaknesses of our revolution do they express?

The contradictions in Tolstoy's works, views, doctrines, in his school, are indeed glaring. On the one hand, we have the great artist, the genius who has not only drawn incomparable pictures of Russian life but has made first-class contributions to world literature. On the other hand we have the landlord obsessed with Christ. On the one hand, the remarkably powerful, forthright and sincere protest against social falsehood and hypocrisy; and on the other, the "Tolstoyan", i.e., the jaded, hysterical sniveller called the Russian intellectual, who publicly beats his breast and wails: "I am a bad wicked man, but I am practising moral self-perfection; I don't eat meat any more, I now eat rice cutlets." On the one hand, merciless criticism of capitalist exploitation, exposure of government outrages, the farcical courts and the state administration, and unmasking of the profound contradictions between the growth of wealth and achievements of civilisation and the growth of poverty, degradation and misery among the working masses. On the other, the crackpot preaching of submission, "resist not evil" with violence. On the one hand, the most sober realism, the tearing away of all and sundry masks; on the other, the preaching of one of the most odious things on earth, namely, religion, the striving to replace officially appointed priests by priests who will serve from moral conviction, i.e., to cultivate the most refined and, therefore, particularly disgusting clericalism. Verily:

*Thou art a pauper, yet thou art abundant,  
Thou art mighty, yet thou art impotent—  
Mother Russia!*<sup>5</sup>

That Tolstoy, owing to these contradictions, could not possibly understand either the working-class movement and its role in the struggle for socialism, or the Russian revolution, goes without saying. But the contradictions in Tol-



stoy's views and doctrines are not accidental; they express the contradictory conditions of Russian life in the last third of the nineteenth century. The patriarchal countryside, only recently emancipated from serfdom, was literally given over to the capitalist and the tax-collector to be fleeced and plundered. The ancient foundations of peasant economy and peasant life, foundations that had really held for centuries, were broken up for scrap with extraordinary rapidity. And the contradictions in Tolstoy's views must be appraised not from the standpoint of the present-day working-class movement and present-day socialism (such an appraisal is, of course, needed, but it is not enough), but from the standpoint of protest against advancing capitalism, against the ruining of the masses, who are being dispossessed of their land—a protest which had to arise from the patriarchal Russian countryside. Tolstoy is absurd as a prophet who has discovered new nostrums for the salvation of mankind—and therefore the foreign and Russian "Tolstoyans" who have sought to convert the weakest side of his doctrine into a dogma, are not worth speaking of. Tolstoy is great as the spokesman of the ideas and sentiments that emerged among the millions of Russian peasants at the time the bourgeois revolution was approaching in Russia. Tolstoy is original, because the sum total of his views, taken as a whole, happens to express the specific features of our revolution as a *peasant* bourgeois revolution. From this point of view, the contradictions in Tolstoy's views are indeed a mirror of those contradictory conditions in which the peasantry had to play their historical part in our revolution. On the one hand, centuries of feudal oppression and decades of accelerated post-Reform pauperisation piled up mountains of hate, resentment, and desperate determination. The striving to sweep away completely the official church, the landlords and the landlord government, to destroy all the old forms and ways of landownership, to clear the land, to replace the police-class state by a community of free and equal small peasants—this striving is the keynote of every historical step the peasantry has taken in our revolution; and, undoubtedly, the message of Tolstoy's writings conforms to this peasant striving far more than it does to abstract "Christian Anarchism", as his "system" of views is sometimes appraised.

On the other hand the peasantry, striving towards new ways of life, had a very crude, patriarchal, semi-religious idea of what kind of life this should be, by what struggle could liberty be won, what leaders it could have in this struggle, what was the attitude of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois intelligentsia towards the interests of peasant revolution, why the forcible overthrow of tsarist rule was needed in order to abolish landlordism. The whole past life of the peasantry had taught it to hate the landowner and the official, but it did not, and could not, teach it where to seek an answer to all these questions. In our revolution a minor part of the peasantry really did fight, did organise to some extent for this purpose; and a very small part indeed rose up in arms to exterminate its enemies, to destroy the tsar's servants and protectors of the landowners. Most of the peasantry wept and prayed, moralised and dreamed, wrote petitions and sent "pleaders"—quite in the vein of Leo Tolstoy! And, as always happens in such cases, the effect of this Tolstoyan abstention from politics, this Tolstoyan renunciation of politics, this lack of interest in and understanding of politics, was that only a minority followed the lead of the class-conscious revolutionary proletariat, while the majority became the prey of those unprincipled, servile, bourgeois intellectuals who under the name of Cadets hastened from a meeting of Trudoviks<sup>6</sup> to Stolypin's anteroom, and begged, haggled, reconciled and promised to reconcile—until they were kicked out with a military jackboot. Tolstoy's ideas are a mirror of the weakness, the shortcomings of our peasant revolt, a reflection of the flabbiness of the patriarchal countryside and of the hidebound cowardice of the "enterprising muzhik".

Take the soldiers' insurrections in 1905-06. In social composition these men who fought in our revolution were partly peasants and partly proletarians. The proletarians were in the minority; therefore the movement in the armed forces does not even approximately show the same nationwide solidarity, the same party consciousness, as were displayed by the proletariat, which became Social-Democratic as if by the wave of a hand. Yet there is nothing more mistaken than the view that the insurrections in the armed forces failed because no officers had led them. On the con-

trary, the enormous progress the revolution had made since the time of the Narodnaya Volya<sup>7</sup> was shown precisely by the fact that the "grey herd" rose in arms against their superiors, and it was this self-dependency of theirs that so frightened the liberal landowners and the liberal officers. The common soldier fully sympathised with the peasants' cause; his eyes lit up at the very mention of land. There was more than one case when authority in the armed forces passed to the mass of the rank and file, but determined use of this authority was hardly made at all; the soldiers wavered; after a couple of days, in some cases a few hours, after killing some hated officer, they released the others who had been arrested, parleyed with the authorities and then faced the firing squad, or bared their backs for the birch, or put on the yoke again—quite in the vein of Leo Tolstoy!

Tolstoy reflected the pent-up hatred, the ripened striving for a better lot, the desire to get rid of the past—and also the immature dreaming, the political inexperience, the revolutionary flabbiness. Historical and economic conditions explain both the inevitable beginning of the revolutionary struggle of the masses and their unpreparedness for the struggle, their Tolstoyan non-resistance to evil, which was a most serious cause of the defeat of the first revolutionary campaign.

It is said that beaten armies learn well. Of course, revolutionary classes can be compared with armies only in a very limited sense. The development of capitalism is hourly changing and intensifying the conditions which roused the millions of peasants—united by their hatred for the feudal-ist landlords and their government—for the revolutionary-democratic struggle. Among the peasantry themselves the growth of exchange, of the rule of the market and the power of money is steadily ousting old-fashioned patriarchalism and the patriarchal Tolstoyan ideology. But there is one gain from the first years of the revolution and the first reverses in mass revolutionary struggle about which there can be no doubt. It is the mortal blow struck at the former softness and flabbiness of the masses. The lines of demarcation have become more distinct. The cleavage of classes and parties has taken place. Under the hammer blows of the lessons taught by Stolypin, and with undeviat-

ing and consistent agitation by the revolutionary Social-Democrats not only the socialist proletariat but also the democratic masses of the peasantry will inevitably advance from their midst more and more steeled fighters who will be less capable of falling into our historical sin of Tolstoyism!

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## The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion

Deputy Surkov's speech in the Duma<sup>8</sup> during the debate on the Synod<sup>9</sup> estimates, and the discussion that arose within our Duma group when it considered the draft of this speech (both printed in this issue) have raised a question which is of extreme importance and urgency at this particular moment. An interest in everything connected with religion is undoubtedly being shown today by wide circles of "society", and has penetrated into the ranks of intellectuals standing close to the working-class movement, as well as into certain circles of the workers. It is the absolute duty of Social-Democrats to make a public statement of their attitude towards religion.

Social-Democracy bases its whole world-outlook on scientific socialism, i.e., Marxism. The philosophical basis of Marxism, as Marx and Engels repeatedly declared, is dialectical materialism, which has fully taken over the historical traditions of eighteenth-century materialism in France and of Feuerbach (first half of the nineteenth century) in Germany—a materialism which is absolutely atheistic and positively hostile to all religion. Let us recall that the whole of Engels's *Anti-Dühring*, which Marx read in manuscript, is an indictment of the materialist and atheist Dühring for not being a consistent materialist and for leaving loopholes for religion and religious philosophy. Let us recall that in his essay on Ludwig Feuerbach,<sup>10</sup> Engels reproaches Feuerbach for combating religion not in order to destroy it, but in order to renovate it, to invent a new, "exalted" religion, and so forth. Religion is the opium of the people<sup>11</sup>—this dictum by Marx is the corner-stone of the whole Marxist outlook on religion. Marxism has always regarded all modern religions and churches, and each and every religious organisation, as instruments of bourgeois reaction

that serve to defend exploitation and to befuddle the working class.

At the same time Engels frequently condemned the efforts of people who desired to be "more left" or "more revolutionary" than the Social-Democrats, to introduce into the programme of the workers' party an explicit proclamation of atheism, in the sense of declaring war on religion. Commenting in 1874 on the famous manifesto of the Blanquist<sup>12</sup> fugitive Communards who were living in exile in London, Engels called their vociferous proclamation of war on religion a piece of stupidity, and stated that such a declaration of war was the best way to revive interest in religion and to prevent it from really dying out. Engels blamed the Blanquists for being unable to understand that only the class struggle of the working masses could, by comprehensively drawing the widest strata of the proletariat into conscious and revolutionary social *practice*, really free the oppressed masses from the yoke of religion, whereas to proclaim that war on religion was a political task of the workers' party was just anarchistic phrasemongering.<sup>13</sup> And in 1877, too, in his *Anti-Dühring*, while ruthlessly attacking the slightest concessions made by Dühring the philosopher to idealism and religion, Engels no less resolutely condemns Dühring's pseudo-revolutionary idea that religion should be prohibited in socialist society. To declare such a war on religion, Engels says, is to "out-Bismarck Bismarck", i.e., to repeat the folly of Bismarck's struggle against the clericals (the notorious "Struggle for Culture", *Kulturkampf*, i.e., the struggle Bismarck waged in the 1870s against the German Catholic party, the "Centre" party, by means of a police persecution of Catholicism). By this struggle Bismarck only *stimulated* the militant clericalism of the Catholics, and only injured the work of real culture, because he gave prominence to religious divisions rather than political divisions, and diverted the attention of some sections of the working class and of the other democratic elements away from the urgent tasks of the class and revolutionary struggle to the most superficial and false bourgeois anti-clericalism. Accusing the would-be ultra-revolutionary Dühring of wanting to repeat Bismarck's folly in another form, Engels insisted that the workers' party should have the ability to work patiently at

the task of organising and educating the proletariat, which would lead to the dying out of religion, and not throw itself into the gamble of a political war on religion. This view has become part of the very essence of German Social-Democracy, which, for example, advocated freedom for the Jesuits, their admission into Germany, and the complete abandonment of police methods of combating any particular religion. "Religion is a private matter": this celebrated point in the Erfurt Programme (1891) <sup>14</sup> summed up these political tactics of Social-Democracy.

These tactics have by now become a matter of routine; they have managed to give rise to a new distortion of Marxism in the opposite direction, in the direction of opportunism. This point in the Erfurt Programme has come to be interpreted as meaning that we Social-Democrats, our Party, *consider* religion to be a private matter, that religion is a private matter for us as Social-Democrats, for us as a party. Without entering into a direct controversy with this opportunist view, Engels in the nineties deemed it necessary to oppose it resolutely in a positive, and not a polemical form. To wit: Engels did this in the form of a statement, which he deliberately underlined, that Social-Democrats regard religion as a private matter *in relation to the state*, but not in relation to themselves, not in relation to Marxism, and not in relation to the workers' party. <sup>15</sup>

Such is the external history of the utterances of Marx and Engels on the question of religion. To people with a slapdash attitude towards Marxism, to people who cannot or will not think, this history is a skein of meaningless Marxist contradictions and waverings, a hodge-podge of "consistent" atheism and "sops" to religion, "unprincipled" wavering between a r-r-revolutionary war on God and a cowardly desire to "play up to" religious workers, a fear of scaring them away, etc., etc. The literature of the anarchist phrasemongers contains plenty of attacks on Marxism in this vein.

But anybody who is able to treat Marxism at all seriously, to ponder over its philosophical principles and the experience of international Social-Democracy, will readily see that the Marxist tactics in regard to religion are thoroughly consistent, and were carefully thought out by Marx and Engels; and that what dilettantes or ignoramus regard as

wavering is but a direct and inevitable deduction from dialectical materialism. It would be a profound mistake to think that the seeming "moderation" of Marxism in regard to religion is due to supposed "tactical" considerations, the desire "not to scare away" anybody, and so forth. On the contrary, in this question, too, the political line of Marxism is inseparably bound up with its philosophical principles.

Marxism is materialism. As such, it is as relentlessly hostile to religion as was the materialism of the eighteenth-century Encyclopaedists or the materialism of Feuerbach. This is beyond doubt. But the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels goes further than the Encyclopaedists and Feuerbach, for it applies the materialist philosophy to the domain of history, to the domain of the social sciences. We must combat religion—that is the ABC of *all* materialism, and consequently of Marxism. But Marxism is not a materialism which has stopped at the ABC. Marxism goes further. It says: We must *know how* to combat religion, and in order to do so we must explain the source of faith and religion among the masses *in a materialist way*. The combating of religion cannot be confined to abstract ideological preaching, and it must not be reduced to such preaching. It must be linked up with the concrete practice of the class movement, which aims at eliminating the social roots of religion. Why does religion retain its hold on the backward sections of the town proletariat, on broad sections of the semi-proletariat, and on the mass of the peasantry? Because of the ignorance of the people, replies the bourgeois progressist, the radical or the bourgeois materialist. And so: "Down with religion and long live atheism; the dissemination of atheist views is our chief task!" The Marxist says that this is not true, that it is a superficial view, the view of narrow bourgeois uplifters. It does not explain the roots of religion profoundly enough; it explains them, not in a materialist, but in an idealist way. In modern capitalist countries these roots are mainly *social*. The deepest root of religion today is the socially downtrodden condition of the working masses and their apparently complete helplessness in face of the blind forces of capitalism, which every day and every hour inflicts upon ordinary working people the most horrible suffering and the most savage torment, a thousand times more severe than those inflicted by extraor-

dinary events, such as wars, earthquakes, etc. "Fear made the gods." Fear of the blind force of capital—blind because it cannot be foreseen by the masses of the people—a force which at every step in the life of the proletarian and small proprietor threatens to inflict, and does inflict "sudden", "unexpected", "accidental" ruin, destruction, pauperism, prostitution, death from starvation—such is *the root* of modern religion which the materialist must bear in mind first and foremost, if he does not want to remain an infant-school materialist. No educational book can eradicate religion from the minds of masses who are crushed by capitalist hard labour, and who are at the mercy of the blind destructive forces of capitalism, until those masses themselves learn to fight this *root* of religion, fight *the rule of capital* in all its forms, in a united, organised, planned and conscious way.

Does this mean that educational books against religion are harmful or unnecessary? No, nothing of the kind. It means that Social-Democracy's atheist propaganda must be *subordinated* to its basic task—the development of the class struggle of the exploited *masses* against the exploiters.

This proposition may not be understood (or at least not immediately understood) by one who has not pondered over the principles of dialectical materialism, i.e., the philosophy of Marx and Engels. How is that?—he will say. Is ideological propaganda, the preaching of definite ideas, the struggle against that enemy of culture and progress which has persisted for thousands of years (i.e., religion) to be subordinated to the class struggle, i.e., the struggle for definite practical aims in the economic and political field?

This is one of those current objections to Marxism which testify to a complete misunderstanding of Marxian dialectics. The contradiction which perplexes these objectors is a real contradiction in real life, i.e., a dialectical contradiction, and not a verbal or invented one. To draw a hard-and-fast line between the theoretical propaganda of atheism, i.e., the destruction of religious beliefs among certain sections of the proletariat, and the success, the progress and the conditions of the class struggle of these sections, is to reason undialectically, to transform a shifting and relative boundary into an absolute boundary; it is forcibly to disconnect what is indissolubly connected in real life. Let us

take an example. The proletariat in a particular region and in a particular industry is divided, let us assume, into an advanced section of fairly class-conscious Social-Democrats, who are of course atheists, and rather backward workers who are still connected with the countryside and with the peasantry, and who believe in God, go to church, or are even under the direct influence of the local priest—who, let us suppose, is organising a Christian labour union. Let us assume furthermore that the economic struggle in this locality has resulted in a strike. It is the duty of a Marxist to place the success of the strike movement above everything else, vigorously to counteract the division of the workers in this struggle into atheists and Christians, vigorously to oppose any such division. Atheist propaganda in such circumstances may be both unnecessary and harmful—not from the philistine fear of scaring away the backward sections, of losing a seat in the elections, and so on, but out of consideration for the real progress of the class struggle, which in the conditions of modern capitalist society will convert Christian workers to Social-Democracy and to atheism a hundred times better than bald atheist propaganda. To preach atheism at such a moment and in such circumstances would only be playing *into the hands* of the priest and the priests, who desire nothing better than that the division of the workers according to their participation in the strike movement should be replaced by their division according to their belief in God. An anarchist who preached war against God at all costs would in effect be helping the priests and the bourgeoisie (as the anarchists always do help the bourgeoisie *in practice*). A Marxist must be a materialist, i.e., an enemy of religion, but a dialectical materialist, i.e., one who treats the struggle against religion not in an abstract way, not on the basis of remote, purely theoretical, never varying preaching, but in a concrete way, on the basis of the class struggle which is going on *in practice* and is educating the masses more and better than anything else could. A Marxist must be able to view the concrete situation as a whole, he must always be able to find the boundary between anarchism and opportunism (this boundary is relative, shifting and changeable, but it exists). And he must not succumb either to the abstract, verbal, but in reality empty "revolutionism" of the anarchist,

or to the philistinism and opportunism of the petty bourgeois or liberal intellectual, who boggles at the struggle against religion, forgets that this is his duty, reconciles himself to belief in God, and is guided not by the interests of the class struggle but by the petty and mean consideration of offending nobody, repelling nobody and scaring nobody—by the sage rule: "live and let live", etc., etc.

It is from this angle that all side issues bearing on the attitude of Social-Democrats to religion should be dealt with. For example, the question is often brought up whether a priest can be a member of the Social-Democratic Party or not, and this question is usually answered in an unqualified affirmative, the experience of the European Social-Democratic parties being cited as evidence. But this experience was the result, not only of the application of the Marxist doctrine to the workers' movement, but also of the special historical conditions in Western Europe which are absent in Russia (we will say more about these conditions later), so that an unqualified affirmative answer in this case is incorrect. It cannot be asserted once and for all that priests cannot be members of the Social-Democratic Party; but neither can the reverse rule be laid down. If a priest comes to us to take part in our common political work and conscientiously performs Party duties, without opposing the programme of the Party, he may be allowed to join the ranks of the Social-Democrats; for the contradiction between the spirit and principles of our programme and the religious convictions of the priest would in such circumstances be something that concerned him alone, his own private contradiction; and a political organisation cannot put its members through an examination to see if there is no contradiction between their views and the Party programme. But, of course, such a case might be a rare exception even in Western Europe, while in Russia it is altogether improbable. And if, for example, a priest joined the Social-Democratic Party and made it his chief and almost sole work actively to propagate religious views in the Party, it would unquestionably have to expel him from its ranks. We must not only admit workers who preserve their belief in God into the Social-Democratic Party, but must deliberately set out to recruit them; we are absolutely opposed to giving the slightest offence to their religious convictions,

but we recruit them in order to educate them in the spirit of our programme, and not in order to permit an active struggle against it. We allow freedom of opinion *within* the Party, but to certain limits, determined by freedom of grouping; we are not obliged to go hand in hand with active preachers of views that are repudiated by the majority of the Party.

Another example. Should members of the Social-Democratic Party be censured all alike under all circumstances for declaring "socialism is my religion", and for advocating views in keeping with this declaration? No! The deviation from Marxism (and consequently from socialism) is here indisputable; but the significance of the deviation, its relative importance, so to speak, may vary with circumstances. It is one thing when an agitator or a person addressing the workers speaks in this way in order to make himself better understood, as an introduction to his subject, in order to present his views more vividly in terms to which the backward masses are most accustomed. It is another thing when a writer begins to preach "God-building",<sup>16</sup> or God-building socialism (in the spirit, for example, of our Lunacharsky and Co.). While in the first case censure would be mere carping, or even inappropriate restriction of the freedom of the agitator, of his freedom in choosing "pedagogical" methods, in the second case party censure is necessary and essential. For some the statement "socialism is a religion" is a form of transition from religion to socialism; for others, it is a form of transition *from* socialism to religion.

Let us now pass to the conditions which in the West gave rise to the opportunist interpretation of the thesis: "religion is a private matter". Of course, a contributing influence are those general factors which give rise to opportunism as a whole, like sacrificing the fundamental interests of the working-class movement for the sake of momentary advantages. The party of the proletariat demands that *the state* should declare religion a private matter, but does not regard the fight against the opium of the people, the fight against religious superstitions, etc., as a "private matter". The opportunists distort the question to mean that the *Social-Democratic Party regards* religion as a private matter!

But in addition to the usual opportunist distortion (which was not made clear at all in the discussion within our Duma

group when it was considering the speech on religion), there are special historical conditions which have given rise to the present-day, and, if one may so express it, excessive, indifference on the part of the European Social-Democrats to the question of religion. These conditions are of a twofold nature. First, the task of combating religion is historically the task of the revolutionary bourgeoisie, and in the West this task was to a large extent performed (or tackled) by bourgeois democracy, in the epoch of its revolutions or its assaults upon feudalism and medievalism. Both in France and in Germany there is a tradition of bourgeois war on religion, and it began long before socialism (the Encyclopaedists, Feuerbach). In Russia, because of the conditions of our bourgeois-democratic revolution, this task too falls almost entirely on the shoulders of the working class. Petty-bourgeois (Narodnik) democracy in our country has not done too much in this respect (as the new-fledged Black-Hundred Cadets, or Cadet Black Hundreds, of *Vekhi*<sup>17</sup> think) but rather *too little*, in comparison with what has been done in Europe.

On the other hand, the tradition of bourgeois war on religion has given rise in Europe to a specifically bourgeois *distortion* of this war by anarchism—which, as the Marxists have long explained time and again, takes its stand on the bourgeois world-outlook, in spite of all the “fury” of its attacks on the bourgeoisie. The anarchists and Blanquists in the Latin countries, Most (who incidentally, was a pupil of Dühring) and his ilk in Germany, the anarchists in Austria in the eighties, all carried revolutionary phrasemongering in the struggle against religion to a *nec plus ultra*. It is not surprising that, compared with the anarchists, the European Social-Democrats now *go to the other extreme*. This is quite understandable and to a certain extent legitimate, but it would be wrong for us Russian Social-Democrats to forget the special historical conditions of the West.

Secondly, in the West, *after* the national bourgeois revolutions were over, *after* more or less complete religious liberty had been introduced, the problem of the democratic struggle against religion had been pushed, historically, so far into the background by the struggle of bourgeois democracy against socialism that the bourgeois governments *deliberately* tried to draw the attention of the masses away

from socialism by organising a quasi-liberal “offensive” against clericalism. Such was the character of the *Kulturkampf* in Germany and of the struggle of the bourgeois republicans against clericalism in France. Bourgeois anti-clericalism, as a means of drawing the attention of the working-class masses away from socialism—this is what preceded the spread of the modern spirit of “indifference” to the struggle against religion among the Social-Democrats in the West. And this again is quite understandable and legitimate, because Social-Democrats had to counteract bourgeois and Bismarckian anti-clericalism by *subordinating* the struggle against religion to the struggle for socialism.

In Russia conditions are quite different. The proletariat is the leader of our bourgeois-democratic revolution. Its party must be the ideological leader in the struggle against all attributes of medievalism, including the old official religion and every attempt to refurbish it or make out a new or different case for it, etc. Therefore, while Engels was comparatively mild in correcting the opportunism of the German Social-Democrats who were substituting, for the demand of the workers’ party that the *state* should declare religion a private matter, the *declaration* that religion is a private matter for the Social-Democrats themselves, and for the Social-Democratic Party, it is clear that the importation of this German distortion by the Russian opportunists would have merited a rebuke a *hundred times* more severe by Engels.

By declaring from the Duma rostrum that religion is the opium of the people, our Duma group acted quite correctly, and thus created a precedent which should serve as a basis for all utterances by Russian Social-Democrats on the question of religion. Should they have gone further and developed the atheist argument in greater detail? We think not. This might have brought the risk of the political party of the proletariat exaggerating the struggle against religion; it might have resulted in obliterating the distinction between the bourgeois and the socialist struggle against religion. The first duty of the Social-Democratic group in the Black-Hundred Duma has been discharged with honour.

The second duty—and perhaps the most important for Social-Democrats—namely, to explain the class role of the

church and the clergy in supporting the Black-Hundred government and the bourgeoisie in its fight against the working class, has also been discharged with honour. Of course, very much more might be said on this subject, and the Social-Democrats in their future utterances will know how to amplify Comrade Surkov's speech; but still his speech was excellent, and its circulation by all Party organisations is the direct duty of our Party.

The third duty was to explain in full detail the *correct* meaning of the proposition, so often distorted by the German opportunists, that "religion is a private matter". This, unfortunately, Comrade Surkov did not do. It is all the more regrettable because in the earlier activity of the Duma group a mistake had been committed on this question by Comrade Belousov,<sup>18</sup> and was pointed out at the time by *Proletary*.<sup>19</sup> The discussion in the Duma group shows that the dispute about atheism has screened from it the question of the proper interpretation of the celebrated demand that religion should be proclaimed a private matter. We shall not blame Comrade Surkov alone for this error of the entire Duma group. More, we shall frankly admit that the whole Party is at fault here, for not having sufficiently elucidated this question and not having sufficiently prepared the minds of Social-Democrats to understand Engels's remark levelled against the German opportunists. The discussion in the Duma group proves that there was in fact a confused understanding of the question, and not at all any desire to ignore the teachings of Marx; and we are sure that the error will be corrected in future utterances of the group.

We repeat that on the whole Comrade Surkov's speech was excellent, and should be circulated by all the organisations. In its discussion of this speech the Duma group demonstrated that it is fulfilling its Social-Democratic duty conscientiously. It remains to express the wish that reports on discussions within the Duma group should appear more often in the Party press so as to bring the group and the Party closer together, to acquaint the Party with the difficult work being done within the group, and to establish ideological unity in the work of the Party and the Duma group.

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### Classes and Parties in Their Attitude to Religion and the Church

The debates in the Duma on the Synod estimates, then on the restoration of rights to persons who have left holy orders and, finally, on the Old-Believer<sup>20</sup> communities, have provided very instructive material characterising the attitude of the Russian political parties towards religion and the Church. Let us make a general survey of this material, dwelling mainly on the debates on the Synod estimates (we have not yet received the verbatim reports of the debates on the other questions mentioned above).

The first and most obvious conclusion that emerges from the Duma debates is that militant clericalism in Russia not only exists, but is clearly gaining ground and becoming more organised. On April 16, Bishop Metrophanes stated: "The first steps in our Duma activities pursued the explicit end that we who have been honoured by the votes of the people, should here in the Duma stand above party divisions, and form a single group of the clergy, which should throw light on all sides from its ethical point of view... What is the reason why we have failed to achieve this ideal situation?... The fault for this lies with those who are sharing these benches with you [i.e., with the Cadets and the "Left"], namely, those clerical deputies who belong to the opposition. They were the first to lift their voice and say that this was neither more nor less than the emergence of a clerical party, and that this was extremely undesirable. Of course, there is no such thing as clericalism among the Russian Orthodox clergy—we never had a tendency of that kind, and in seeking to form a separate group we were pursuing purely ethical and moral ends. But now, gentlemen, when, as a result of this discord introduced in our brotherly midst by the Left deputies, there followed disun-



ity and division, now you [i.e., the Cadets] blame it on us."

Bishop Metrophanes in his illiterate speech let the cat out of the bag: the Left, don't you see, are guilty of having dissuaded some of the Duma priests from forming a special "moral" (this term is obviously more suitable for hoodwinking the people than the word "clerical") group!

Almost a month later, on May 13, Bishop Eulogius read in the Duma "the resolution of the Duma clergy": "The overwhelming majority of the Duma Orthodox clergy considers" . . . that in the interests of the "leading and dominant position of the Orthodox Church" neither freedom of preaching for the Old-Believers, nor the unauthorised functioning of Old-Believer communities, nor the using of the title of priest by Old-Believer clergymen, are permissible. "The purely moral point of view" of the Russian priests stands fully revealed as clericalism pure and simple. "The overwhelming majority" of the Duma clergy, in whose name Bishop Eulogius spoke, probably consisted of 29 Right and moderately Right priests in the Third Duma, and possibly also included 8 priests belonging to the Octobrists.<sup>21</sup> The opposition had probably been joined by 4 priests belonging to the Progressist<sup>22</sup> and Peaceful Renovation<sup>23</sup> groups and one belonging to the Polish-Lithuanian group.

What is then the "purely moral and ethical point of view of the overwhelming majority of the clergy in the Duma" (the June-the-Third Duma,<sup>24</sup> one should add)? Here are a few excerpts from the speeches: "All I say is that the initiative for these [i.e., Church] reforms must come from within the Church, not from without, not from the state and, of course, not from the Budget Commission. After all, the Church is a divine and eternal institution, its laws are immutable, whereas the ideals of state life, as we know, are subject to constant modifications" (Bishop Eulogius, April 14). The orator recalled "a disturbing historical parallel": the secularisation of Church property under Catherine II. "Who can vouch that the Budget Commission, which this year expressed the desire to put them [the Church funds] under state control, will not express next year the desire to deposit them in the State Treasury, and then fully to transfer their management from the Church

authorities to the civil or state authorities? . . . The Church statutes say that since a bishop is entrusted with Christian souls, then all the more should Church property be entrusted to him. . . . Today before you [deputies of the Duma] stands your spiritual mother, the holy Orthodox Church, not merely as before representatives of the people, but also as before its spiritual children" (ibid.).

This is pure clericalism. The Church is above the state as the eternal and divine is above the temporal and earthly. The Church cannot forgive the state for secularising Church property. The Church demands a leading and dominant position. In its eyes the Duma deputies are not only—or rather not so much—representatives of the people as "spiritual children".

These are not officials in cassocks, as the Social-Democrat Surkov called them, but *feudalists* in cassocks. Defence of the Church's feudal privileges, outspoken support of medievalism—that is the essence of the policy pursued by the majority of the Third Duma clergy. Bishop Eulogius is by no means an exception. Gepetsky also vociferates against "secularisation" which he calls an intolerable "wrong" (April 14). The priest Mashkevich fulminates against the *Octobrist* report for seeking "to undermine the historic and canonical foundations on which our Church life has rested and must rest. . . to push the life and activities of the Russian Orthodox Church off the canonical path on to the path where. . . the true princes of the Church—the bishops—will be obliged to give up almost all their rights, inherited from the apostles, to secular princes. . . . This is nothing but. . . an encroachment on somebody else's property and on the rights and possessions of the Church. . . . The speaker is leading us towards the destruction of the canonical order of Church life; he seeks to subordinate the Orthodox Church and all its economic functions to the Duma, an institution composed of the most diverse elements in our country, of religious creeds both tolerated and not tolerated" (April 14).

The Russian Narodniks and liberals have long been comforting themselves, or rather deceiving themselves, with the "theory" that in Russia there is no basis for militant clericalism, for a struggle of "the princes of the Church" with the temporal power, and so forth. Our revolution<sup>25</sup> has

dispelled this illusion, as it did a number of other Narodnik and liberal illusions. Clericalism existed in a hidden form, so long as autocracy existed intact and inviolate. The all-powerful police and bureaucracy concealed from the gaze of "society" and the people the class struggle in general, and the struggle waged by the "feudalists in cassocks" against the "base rabble" in particular. But the first breach which the revolutionary proletariat and peasantry made in the feudal autocratic regime laid bare what had been hidden. As soon as the proletariat and the advanced elements of the democratic bourgeoisie began to make use of the political liberty, the freedom to organise the masses, which they had won at the end of 1905, the reactionary classes, too, reached out for independent and open organisations. Under absolute autocracy they did not organise, and did not come out too much in the open, not because they were weak, but because they were strong; not because they were incapable of organisation and political struggle, but because at that time they did not yet feel any real need for independent class organisation. They did not believe in the possibility of a mass movement against the autocracy and the feudalists in Russia. They fully relied on the knout being sufficient to keep the rabble down. But the first wounds inflicted on autocracy compelled the social elements which supported it and needed it to come out into the open. It was no longer possible to use *only* the old knout in fighting masses that had been capable of causing the events of January 9,<sup>26</sup> the strike movement in 1905, and the October-December revolution.<sup>27</sup> It became necessary to build up independent political organisations; it became necessary for the Council of the United Nobility<sup>28</sup> to organise Black Hundreds<sup>29</sup> and engage in the most irresponsible demagoguery; it became necessary for "the princes of the Church—the bishops"—to organise the reactionary clergy into an independent force.

A typical feature of the Third Duma, and of the Third-Duma period of the Russian counter-revolution is, indeed, that this organisation of the reactionary forces has come out into the open, has begun to develop on a nation-wide scale, and has demanded a special Black-Hundred bourgeois "parliament". Militant clericalism has shown its true colours; and from now on Russian Social-Democracy will

have to act again and again as an observer of, and participant in, the clashes between the clerical and the anti-clerical bourgeoisie. If our general task is to assist the proletariat to unite into a special class, capable of separating from bourgeois democracy, one component of this task is the use of every means of propaganda and agitation, including the rostrum of the Duma, to explain to the masses the distinctions between socialist and bourgeois anti-clericalism.

The Octobrists and Cadets who have come out in the Third Duma against the extreme Right, the clericals, and the government, have eased this task for us immensely by providing an object-lesson of the attitude of the bourgeoisie towards the Church and religion. The legal press of the Cadets and the so-called Progressists is at present devoting special attention to the question of the Old-Believers, to the fact that the Octobrists as well as the Cadets have taken a stand against the government, and to the fact that they have, albeit in a small way, "adopted the course of reform" promised on October 17.<sup>30</sup> What interests us most is the principle involved in this question, i.e., the attitude of the bourgeoisie in general, including the elements who claim the title of Democratic Cadets, towards religion and the Church. We must not allow a relatively minor question—the Old-Believers' conflict with the dominant Church, and the conduct of the Octobrists who are tied up with the Old-Believers, and are partly even dependent on them financially (*Golos Moskvy* is said to be financed by the Old-Believers)—make us lose sight of the root question, that of the interests and policy of the bourgeoisie as a class.

Take a look at the speech delivered by Count Uvarov, an Octobrist in his general views, but who has left the Octobrist group. Speaking after the Social-Democrat Surkov, he started by refusing to deal with this question from the standpoint of principle, as the workers' deputy had done. Uvarov merely attacks the Synod and the Procurator-General<sup>31</sup> for their unwillingness to give the Duma any information on certain Church revenues and on the expenditure of parish funds. Kamensky, the official spokesman of the Octobrists, approaches the question from the same standpoint (April 16), and demands that parishes should be

revived "for the purpose of strengthening the Orthodox faith". Kapustin, the so-called "Left-wing Octobrist", elaborates on this idea. "If we turn to the life of the people," he exclaims, "to the life of the rural population, we observe today, here and now, a sad fact: religious life is tottering, the greatest and sole foundation of the people's moral principles is tottering. . . . What can replace the concept of sin, what can replace the dictates of conscience? Surely, they cannot be replaced by the concept of class struggle and the rights of this or that class. That is a tragic concept which has taken root in our everyday life. Therefore, if religion is to survive as a foundation of morality, if it is to be within reach of the whole population, it is necessary that the bearers of this religion should enjoy the proper authority. . . ."

The spokesman of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie wishes to strengthen religion, he wishes to enhance the influence of religion on the masses, realising that it is inadequate and out of date, realising even the harm caused to the ruling classes by "officials in cassocks", who are lowering the authority of the Church. The Octobrist is fighting against the excesses of clericalism and of police tutelage *in order to strengthen* the influence of the Church on the masses, in order to replace at least some means of addling the wits of the people, which are too crude, too out of date, too threadbare to achieve their object, by more refined and improved means. Police religion is no longer adequate for befuddling the masses: give us a more cultured, more up-to-date, more skilful religion, one that will be effective in a self-governing parish—that is what capital is demanding of the autocracy.

And the Cadet Karaulov *fully* subscribes to this same point of view. This "liberal" renegade (who gradually "evolved" from the Narodnaya Volya\* to the Right-wing Cadets) screams his protest against the "denationalisation of the Church, understanding this to mean the exclusion of the masses of the people, of the laity, from the building of the Church". He finds it "*shocking*" (literally so!) that the masses are "losing faith". He raises an outcry, quite in the style of Menshikov, because the "immense intrinsic

value of the Church is being depreciated . . . to the great detriment not only of the cause of the Church, but of that of the state as well". He qualifies as "words of gold" the loathsome hypocrisy of the zealot Eulogius on the theme that "the task of the Church is eternal, immutable, hence, it is not possible to link up the Church with politics". He protests against the alliance of the Church with the Black Hundreds *for the sole reason* that the Church may, "with greater might and glory than today, fulfil its grand and holy mission in a Christian spirit of love and freedom".

Comrade Belousov did well to have a good laugh at these "lyrical words" of Karaulov's from the Duma rostrum. However, such ridicule is very far from being adequate. It had to be made clear—and at the first convenient opportunity this should be done from the Duma rostrum—that the standpoint of the Cadets is absolutely identical with that of the Octobrists, and merely expresses the efforts of "cultured" capital to bamboozle the people with religious narcotics by more refined methods of Church deception than the ones now practised by the rank-and-file Russian priests who are still living in the past.

To keep the people in spiritual bondage, there must be the closest possible alliance of the Church and the Black Hundreds, said the "wild landlórd" and the old Derzhimorda through their spokesman Purishkevich. You are wrong, gentlemen, retorts the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie through their spokesman Karaulov: with such methods you will only make the people turn away from religion for good. Now let us go about it in a more clever, more artful, more ingenious way: let us remove the too stupid and crude agent of the Black Hundreds, declare war on "denationalisation of the Church", and inscribe on our banner Bishop Eulogius's "words of gold" to the effect that the Church is above politics. Only in this way shall we be able to fool at least some of the backward workers, and especially of the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry, and be able to help the renovated Church to fulfil its "grand and holy mission" of retaining the masses of the people in spiritual bondage.

Our liberal press, not excluding the newspaper *Rech*, has concentrated of late on censuring Struve and Co. for their

\* See Note 7.—Ed.

authorship of the symposium *Vekhi*. But Karaulov, the official spokesman of the Cadets in the Duma, has done a superlative job of exposing all the vile hypocrisy of these remonstrances, and these repudiations of Struve and Co. What Karaulov and Milyukov conceal, Struve reveals. The liberals blame Struve *only* for having imprudently blurted out the truth, for showing his hand too openly. The liberals, who censure *Vekhi* and go on supporting the Cadet Party, are most shamelessly deceiving the people—condemning imprudently outspoken *words*, and going on *doing* the very *things* that go with those words.

There is little to say about the conduct of the Trudoviks in the Duma during the debate on the questions under review. As always, a noticeable difference was revealed between the peasant Trudoviks and the intellectual Trudoviks to the disadvantage of the latter, because of their excessive readiness to follow the Cadets. True, Rozhkov, a peasant, revealed in his speech his complete lack of political consciousness; he, too, repeated the Cadet platitudes about the Union of the Russian People<sup>32</sup> helping not to reinforce but to destroy faith. He was unable to suggest any programme. On the other hand, when he began in his artless manner to tell the naked, unvarnished truth about the levies collected by the clergy, about the extortions of the priests, about how, in addition to charging money for conducting a marriage ceremony, they demand “a bottle of vodka, snacks, and a pound of tea, *and sometimes things that I am even afraid to talk about from this rostrum*” (April 16, verbatim report, p. 2259)—this was more than the Black-Hundred Duma could stand. A wild howl arose from the benches of the Right. “This is scandalous, this is outrageous!” shouted the Black Hundreds, realising that this simple peasant’s speech about extortions, listing the scale of “fees” charged for religious rites, was more likely to revolutionise the masses than any amount of theoretical or tactical anti-religious and anti-Church declarations. Thereupon the band of diehard defenders of autocracy in the Third Duma intimidated their flunkey—the Duma Chairman Meyendorff—and compelled him to rule that Rozhkov must sit down (the Social-Democrats, joined by some Trudoviks, Cadets and others, handed in a protest against this action of the Chairman).

Although the speech delivered by the peasant Trudovik Rozhkov was extremely unsophisticated, it provided an excellent demonstration of the abyss dividing the hypocritical, deliberately reactionary defence of religion by the Cadets, and the primitive, unconscious, matter-of-fact religiousness of the peasant, whose living conditions give rise—against his will and unconsciously—to a truly revolutionary resentment against extortions, and to readiness for a resolute fight against medievalism. The Cadets are the representatives of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, which is intent on renovating and strengthening religion against the people. The Rozhkovs are the representatives of revolutionary bourgeois democracy, a democracy that is undeveloped, lacking political consciousness, downtrodden, lacking independence, disunited—yet fraught with an all but inexhaustible reservoir of revolutionary energy in the fight against the landlords, the priests, and the autocracy.

Rozanov, a Trudovik intellectual, came close to the Cadets far less unconsciously than Rozhkov. Rozanov could mention disestablishment of the Church as a demand of the “Left”, but could not refrain from reactionary, petty-bourgeois phrases about “amending the electoral law in the sense that the clergy should be excluded from participation in the political struggle”. The revolutionary spirit, which finds a spontaneous outlet in a typical, average peasant when he begins to tell the truth about how he lives, vanishes in the case of a Trudovik intellectual, to be replaced by hazy and sometimes actually vile phrases. For the hundredth and thousandth time we see the truth confirmed that only if they follow the proletariat’s lead will the Russian peasant masses be able to overthrow the oppressive and killing yoke of the feudal-minded landlords, the feudalists in cassocks, the feudal-minded supporters of the autocracy.

The Social-Democrat Surkov, representing the workers’ party and the working class, was the only person in the Duma to raise the debates to the truly high level of principle, and said without beating about the bush what the attitude of the proletariat is towards the Church and religion, and what should be the attitude in this matter of all consistent and vigorous democrats. “Religion is the opium of the people. . . . Not a farthing of the people’s money to

these murderous enemies of the people who are drugging the people's minds"—this straightforward, bold and outspoken battlecry of a socialist resounded like a challenge to the Black-Hundred Duma, and met with the response of millions of proletarians, who will spread it among the masses and who will know how to translate it into revolutionary action when the time comes.

*Sotsial-Demokrat* No. 6, June 4  
(17), 1909

*Collected Works*, Vol. 15,  
pp. 414-23

### To Maxim Gorky

Dear A. M.,

Whatever are you doing? This is simply terrible, it really is!

Yesterday I read your reply in *Rech* to the "howling" over Dostoyevsky,<sup>33</sup> and was preparing to rejoice, but today the liquidators' paper arrives, and *in it there is a paragraph of your article* which was not in *Rech*.

This paragraph runs as follows:

"And 'God-seeking' should be *for the time being*" (only for the time being?) "put aside—it is a useless occupation: it's no use seeking where there is nothing to be found. Unless you sow, you cannot reap. You have no God, you have not *yet*" (yet!) "created him. Gods are not sought—*they are created*; people do not invent life, they create it."

So it turns out that you are against "God-seeking" only "for the time being"!! It turns out that you are against God-seeking *only* in order to replace it by God-building!!

Well, isn't it horrible that such a thing should *appear* in your article?

God-seeking differs from God-building or God-creating or God-making, etc., no more than a yellow devil differs from a blue devil. To talk about God-seeking, not in order to declare against *all* devils and gods, against every ideological necrophily (all worship of a divinity is necrophily—be it the cleanest, most ideal, not sought-out but built-up divinity, it's all the same), but to prefer a blue devil to a yellow one is a hundred times worse than not saying anything about it at all.

In the freest countries, in countries where it is *quite* out of place to appeal "to democracy, to the people, to public

opinion and science", in such countries (America, Switzerland and so forth) particular zeal is applied to render the people and the workers obtuse with just this very idea of a clean, spiritual, built-up God. Just because any religious idea, any idea of any God at all, any flirtation even with a God, is the most inexpressible foulness, particularly tolerantly (and often even favourably) accepted by the *democratic* bourgeoisie—for that very reason it is the most dangerous foulness, the most shameful "infection". A million *physical* sins, dirty tricks, acts of violence and infections are much more easily discovered by the crowd, and therefore are much less dangerous, than the *subtle*, spiritual idea of God, dressed up in the most attractive "ideological" costumes. The Catholic priest corrupting young girls (about whom I have just read by chance in a German newspaper) is *much less* dangerous, precisely to "democracy", than a priest without his robes, a priest without crude religion, an ideologically equipped and democratic priest preaching the creation and the invention of a God. For it is *easy* to expose, condemn and expel the first priest, while the second *cannot* be expelled so simply; to expose the latter is 1,000 times more difficult, and not a single "frail and pitifully wavering" philistine will agree to "condemn" him.

And you, knowing the "frailty and pitiful wavering" of the (Russian: why Russian? Is the Italian any better??) *philistine* soul, confuse that soul with the sweetest of poisons, most effectively disguised in lollipops and all kinds of gaily-coloured wrappings!!

Really, it is terrible.

"Enough of self-humiliation, which is our substitute for self-criticism."

And isn't God-building the *worst* form of self-humiliation?? Everyone who sets about building up a *God*, or who even merely tolerates such activity, *humiliates* himself in the worst possible way, because instead of "deeds" he is *actually* engaged in self-contemplation, self-admiration and, moreover, such a man "contemplates" the dirtiest, most stupid, most slavish features or traits of his "ego", deified by God-building.

From the point of view, not of the individual, but of

society, *all* God-building is precisely the *fond self-contemplation* of the thick-witted philistine, the frail man in the street, the dreamy "self-humiliation" of the vulgar petty bourgeois, "exhausted and in despair" (as you condescended to say very truly about the *soul*: only you should have said, not "the Russian", but the *petty-bourgeois*, for the Jewish, the Italian, the English varieties are all *one and the same devil*; stinking philistinism everywhere is equally disgusting—but "democratic philistinism", occupied in ideological necrophily, is particularly disgusting).

Reading your article over and over again, and *trying to discover* where this *slip* of your tongue could come from, I am at a loss. What does it mean? A relic of the "Confession", which *you yourself* did not approve?? Or its echo??

Or something different: for example, an unsuccessful attempt to *bend back* to the viewpoint of *democracy in general*, instead of the viewpoint of the *proletariat*? Perhaps it was in order to talk with "democracy in general" that you decided (excuse the expression) to indulge in baby-talk? Perhaps it was "for a popular exposition" to the *philistines* that you decided to accept for a moment *their*, the philistines', prejudices??

But then that is a *wrong* approach, in all senses and in all respects!

I wrote above that in *democratic* countries it would be *quite* out of place for a proletarian writer to appeal "to democracy, to the people, to public opinion and science". Well, but what about us in Russia?? Such an appeal is *not quite* appropriate, because it also in some ways flatters the prejudices of the philistines. A kind of general appeal, general to the point of vagueness—even Izgoyev of *Russkaya Mysl*<sup>34</sup> will sign it with *both hands*. Why then select watchwords which *you* distinguish perfectly well from those of Izgoyev, but which the *reader* will not be able to distinguish?? Why throw a democratic veil over the question for the reader, instead of *clearly* distinguishing the *petty bourgeois* (frail, pitifully wavering, exhausted, despairing, self-contemplating, God-contemplating, God-building, God-indulging, self-humiliating, *uncomprehendingly-anarchistic*—wonderful word!!—et cetera, et cetera) from the *proletarians* (who know how to be of good cheer not only in words,

and who are able to distinguish the "science and public opinion" of the *bourgeoisie* from their own, bourgeois democracy from proletarian democracy)?

Why do you do this?

It's damnably disappointing.

Yours,  
V. I.

P.S. We sent you the novel by registered book post. Did you receive it?

P.P.S. Get as good *medical* treatment as you can, please, so that you can travel in the winter, *without colds* (it's dangerous in the winter).

Yours,  
V. Ulyanov

Written November 13 or 14,  
1913  
Sent from Cracow to Capri  
First printed March 2, 1924  
in *Pravda* No. 51

*Collected Works*, Vol. 35,  
pp. 121-24

### To Maxim Gorky

... \* On the question of God, the God-like and everything connected with it, there is a contradiction in your position—the same, I think, which I used to point out in our talks when we last met in Capri. You broke (or appeared to break) with the *Vperiyod* people,<sup>35</sup> without having noticed the ideological basis of "Vperiyodism".

The same has happened now. You are "most vexed", you "cannot understand how the words 'for the time being' crept in"—that is how you write—and yet at the same time you defend the idea of God and God-building.

"God is the complex of those ideas, worked out by the tribe, the nation, mankind, which awaken and organise social feelings, having as their object to link the individual with society and to bridle zoological individualism."

This theory is obviously connected with the theory or theories of Bogdanov and Lunacharsky.

And it is clearly wrong and clearly reactionary. Like the Christian socialists (the worst variety of "socialism", and its worst distortion), you make use of a method which (despite your best intentions) repeats the hocus-pocus of the priests: you eliminate from the idea of God everything about it that is *historical and drawn from real life* (filth, prejudices, sanctified ignorance and degradation, on the one hand, serfdom and monarchy, on the other), and instead of the reality of history and life there is substituted in the idea of God a gentle petty-bourgeois phrase (God = "ideas which awaken and organise social feelings").

Your wish in so doing is to say something "good and kind", to point out "truth and justice" and the like. But your good wish remains your personal affair, a subjective "innocent desire".

\* The beginning of the letter has never been found.—Ed.

Once you have written it down, it goes out among the masses, and its *significance* is determined not by your good wishes, but by the *relationship of social forces*, the objective relationship of classes. By virtue of that relationship it turns out (irrespective of your will and independently of your consciousness) that you have put a good colour and a sugary coating on the idea of the clericals, the Purishkeviches, Nicholas II and the Struves, since *in practice* the idea of God helps them keep the people in slavery. By beautifying the idea of God, you have beautified the chains with which they fetter ignorant workers and peasants. There—the priests and Co. will say—what a good and profound idea this is (the idea of God), as even “*your*” leaders recognise, Messers. democrats: and we (the priests and Co.) serve that idea.

It is untrue that God is the complex of ideas which awaken and organise social feelings. That is Bogdanov *idealism*, which suppresses the material origin of ideas. God is (in history and in real life) first of all the complex of ideas generated by the brutish subjection of man both by external nature and by the class yoke—ideas which *consolidate* that subjection, *lull to sleep* the class struggle. There was a time in history when, in spite of such an origin and such a real meaning of the idea of God, the struggle of democracy and of the proletariat went on in the form of a struggle of *one religious* idea against another.

But that time, too, is long past.

Nowadays both in Europe and in Russia *any*, even the most refined and best-intentioned defence or justification of the idea of God is a justification of reaction.

Your entire definition is reactionary and bourgeois, through and through. God—the complex of ideas which “awaken and organise social feelings, having as their object to link the individual with society and to bridle zoological individualism”.

Why is this reactionary? Because it falsely colours the idea of “bridling” zoology preached by priests and feudals. In reality, “zoological individualism” was bridled not by the idea of God, it was bridled both by the primitive herd and the primitive community. The idea of God *always* put to sleep and blunted the “social feelings”, replacing the living by the dead, being *always* the idea of slavery (the

worst, hopeless slavery). Never has the idea of God “linked the individual with society”: it has always *tied* the oppressed classes *hand and foot* with faith in the *divinity* of the oppressors.

Your definition is bourgeois (and not scientific, not historical) because it operates with sweeping general, “Robinson Crusoe” conceptions in general, not with definite *classes* in a definite historical epoch.

The idea of God among the Zyryane savages, etc. (including semi-savages) is one thing. With Struve and Co. it is something quite different. In both cases class domination supports this idea (and this idea supports it). The “popular” conception of God and the divine is “popular” ignorance, degradation, darkness, just like the “popular conception” of the tsar, the devil and dragging wives by the hair. I completely fail to understand how you can call the “popular conception” of God “democratic”.

It is untrue that philosophical idealism “always has in view only the interests of the individual”. Did Descartes have the interests of the individual more in mind than Gassendi? Or Fichte and Hegel as compared with Feuerbach?

That “God-building is the process of the further development and accumulation of social elements in the individual and society” is simply terrible! If there were freedom in Russia, the entire bourgeoisie would praise you to the skies for such things, for such sociology and theology of a purely bourgeois type and character.

Well, that’s enough for the time being: this letter is too long as it is. Once again, I shake your hand and wish you good health.

Yours,  
V. I.

Written in the second half of  
November 1913  
Sent from Cracow to Capri  
First printed in 1924 in  
*Lenin Miscellany I*

*Collected Works*, Vol. 35,  
pp. 127-29



## Speech at the First All-Russia Congress of Working Women

November 19, 1918<sup>36</sup>

Comrades, in a certain sense this congress of the women's section of the workers' army has a special significance, because one of the hardest things in every country has been to stir the women into action. There can be no socialist revolution unless very many working women take a big part in it.

In all civilised countries, even the most advanced, women are actually no more than domestic slaves. Women do not enjoy full equality in any capitalist state, not even in the freest of republics.

One of the primary tasks of the Soviet Republic is to abolish all restrictions on women's rights. The Soviet government has completely abolished divorce proceedings, that source of bourgeois degradation, repression and humiliation.

It will soon be a year now since complete freedom of divorce was legislated. We have passed a decree annulling all distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children and removing political restrictions. Nowhere else in the world have equality and freedom for working women been so fully established.

We know that it is the working-class woman who has to bear the full brunt of antiquated codes.

For the first time in history, our law has removed everything that denied women rights. But the important thing is not the law. In the cities and industrial areas this law on complete freedom of marriage is doing all right, but in the countryside it all too frequently remains a dead letter. There the religious marriage still predominates. This is due to the influence of the priests, an evil that is harder to combat than the old legislation.

We must be extremely careful in fighting religious prejudices; some people cause a lot of harm in this struggle by offending religious feelings. We must use propaganda and education. By lending too sharp an edge to the struggle we may only arouse popular resentment; such methods of struggle tend to perpetuate the division of the people along religious lines, whereas our strength lies in unity. The deepest source of religious prejudice is poverty and ignorance; and that is the evil we have to combat.

The status of women up to now has been compared to that of a slave; women have been tied to the home, and only socialism can save them from this. They will only be completely emancipated when we change from small-scale individual farming to collective farming and collective working of the land. That is a difficult task. But now that Poor Peasants' Committees are being formed, the time has come when the socialist revolution is being consolidated.

The poorest part of the rural population is only now beginning to organise, and socialism is acquiring a firm foundation in these organisations of poor peasants.

Before, often the town became revolutionary and then the countryside.

But the present revolution relies on the countryside, and therein lie its significance and strength. The experience of all liberation movements has shown that the success of a revolution depends on how much the women take part in it. The Soviet government is doing everything in its power to enable women to carry on independent proletarian socialist work.

The Soviet government is in a difficult position because the imperialists of all countries hate Soviet Russia and are preparing to go to war with her for kindling the fire of revolution in a number of countries and for taking determined steps towards socialism.

Now that they are out to destroy revolutionary Russia, the ground is beginning to burn under their own feet. You know how the revolutionary movement is spreading in Germany. In Denmark the workers are fighting their government. In Switzerland and Holland the revolutionary movement is getting stronger. The revolutionary movement in these small countries has no importance in itself, but it is particularly significant because there was no war in

these countries and they had the most "constitutional" democratic system. If countries like these are stirring into action, it makes us sure the revolutionary movement is gaining ground all over the world.

No other republic has so far been able to emancipate woman. The Soviet government is helping her. Our cause is invincible because the invincible working class is rising in all countries. This movement signifies the spread of the invincible socialist revolution.

Newspaper report published  
November 20, 1918 in *Izvestia*  
No. 253

*Collected Works*, Vol. 28,  
pp. 180-82

### **From the Draft Programme of the R.C.P.(B).**

#### Section of the Programme Dealing with Religion

As regards religion, the policy of the R.C.P. is not to be confined to decreeing the separation of the church from the state and the school from the church, that is, to measures promised by bourgeois democrats but never fully carried out anywhere in the world because of the many and varied connections actually existing between capital and religious propaganda.

The Party's object is to completely destroy the connection between the exploiting classes and organised religious propaganda and really liberate the working people from religious prejudices. For this purpose it must organise the most widespread scientific education and anti-religious propaganda. It is necessary, however, to take care to avoid hurting the religious sentiments of believers, for this only serves to increase religious fanaticism.

*Collected Works*, Vol. 29,  
p. 134

## The Tasks of the Youth Leagues

Speech Delivered at the Third All-Russia Congress  
of the Russian Young Communist League

October 2, 1920<sup>37</sup>

*(The Congress greets Lenin with a tremendous ovation.)*  
Comrades, today I would like to talk on the fundamental tasks of the Young Communist League and, in this connection, on what the youth organisations in a socialist republic should be like in general.

It is all the more necessary to dwell on this question because in a certain sense it may be said that it is the youth that will be faced with the actual task of creating a communist society. For it is clear that the generation of working people brought up in capitalist society can, at best, accomplish the task of destroying the foundations of the old, the capitalist way of life, which was built on exploitation. At best it will be able to accomplish the tasks of creating a social system that will help the proletariat and the working classes retain power and lay a firm foundation, which can be built on only by a generation that is starting to work under the new conditions, in a situation in which relations based on the exploitation of man by man no longer exist.

And so, in dealing from this angle with the tasks confronting the youth, I must say that the tasks of the youth in general, and of the Young Communist Leagues and all other organisations in particular, might be summed up in a single word: learn.

Of course, this is only a "single word". It does not reply to the principal and most essential questions: what to learn,

and how to learn? And the whole point here is that, with the transformation of the old, capitalist society, the upbringing, training and education of the new generations that will create the communist society cannot be conducted on the old lines. The teaching, training and education of the youth must proceed from the material that has been left to us by the old society. We can build communism only on the basis of the totality of knowledge, organisations and institutions, only by using the stock of human forces and means that have been left to us by the old society. Only by radically remoulding the teaching, organisation and training of the youth shall we be able to ensure that the efforts of the younger generation will result in the creation of a society that will be unlike the old society, i.e., in the creation of a communist society. That is why we must deal in detail with the question of what we should teach the youth and how the youth should learn if it really wants to justify the name of communist youth, and how it should be trained so as to be able to complete and consummate what we have started.

I must say that the first and most natural reply would seem to be that the Youth League, and the youth in general, who want to advance to communism, should learn communism.

But this reply—"learn communism"—is too general. What do we need in order to learn communism? What must be singled out from the sum of general knowledge so as to acquire a knowledge of communism? Here a number of dangers arise, which very often manifest themselves whenever the task of learning communism is presented incorrectly, or when it is interpreted in too one-sided a manner.

Naturally, the first thought that enters one's mind is that learning communism means assimilating the sum of knowledge that is contained in communist manuals, pamphlets and books. But such a definition of the study of communism would be too crude and inadequate. If the study of communism consisted solely in assimilating what is contained in communist books and pamphlets, we might all too easily obtain communist text-jugglers or braggarts, and this would very often do us harm, because such people, after learning by rote what is set forth in communist books and pamph-

lets, would prove incapable of combining the various branches of knowledge, and would be unable to act in the way communism really demands.

One of the greatest evils and misfortunes left to us by the old, capitalist society is the complete rift between books and practical life; we have had books explaining everything in the best possible manner, yet in most cases these books contained the most pernicious and hypocritical lies, a false description of capitalist society.

That is why it would be most mistaken merely to assimilate book knowledge about communism. No longer do our speeches and articles merely reiterate what used to be said about communism, because our speeches and articles are connected with our daily work in all fields. Without work and without struggle, book knowledge of communism obtained from communist pamphlets and works is absolutely worthless, for it would continue the old separation of theory and practice, the old rift which was the most pernicious feature of the old, bourgeois society.

It would be still more dangerous to set about assimilating only communist slogans. Had we not realised this danger in time, and had we not directed all our efforts to averting this danger, the half million or million young men and women who would have called themselves Communists after studying communism in this way would only greatly prejudice the cause of communism.

The question arises: how is all this to be blended for the study of communism? What must we take from the old schools, from the old kind of science? It was the declared aim of the old type of school to produce men with an all-round education, to teach the sciences in general. We know that this was utterly false, since the whole of society was based and maintained on the division of people into classes, into exploiters and oppressed. Since they were thoroughly imbued with the class spirit, the old schools naturally gave knowledge only to the children of the bourgeoisie. Every word was falsified in the interests of the bourgeoisie. In these schools the younger generation of workers and peasants were not so much educated as drilled in the interests of that bourgeoisie. They were trained in such a way as to be useful servants of the bourgeoisie, able to create profits for it without disturbing its peace and

leisure. That is why, while rejecting the old type of schools, we have made it our task to take from it only what we require for genuine communist education.

This brings me to the reproaches and accusations which we constantly hear levelled at the old schools, and which often lead to wholly wrong conclusions. It is said that the old school was a school of purely book knowledge, of ceaseless drilling and grinding. That is true, but we must distinguish between what was bad in the old schools and what is useful to us, and we must be able to select from it what is necessary for communism.

The old schools provided purely book knowledge; they compelled their pupils to assimilate a mass of useless, superfluous and barren knowledge, which cluttered up the brain and turned the younger generation into bureaucrats regimented according to a single pattern. But it would mean falling into a grave error for you to try to draw the conclusion that one can become a Communist without assimilating the wealth of knowledge amassed by mankind. It would be mistaken to think it sufficient to learn communist slogans and the conclusions of communist science, without acquiring that sum of knowledge of which communism itself is a result. Marxism is an example which shows how communism arose out of the sum of human knowledge.

You have read and heard that communist theory—the science of communism created in the main by Marx, this doctrine of Marxism—has ceased to be the work of a single socialist of the nineteenth century, even though he was a genius, and that it has become the doctrine of millions and tens of millions of proletarians all over the world, who are applying it in their struggle against capitalism. If you were to ask why the teachings of Marx have been able to win the hearts and minds of millions and tens of millions of the most revolutionary class, you would receive only one answer: it was because Marx based his work on the firm foundation of the human knowledge acquired under capitalism. After making a study of the laws governing the development of human society, Marx realised the inevitability of capitalism developing towards communism. What is most important is that he proved this on the sole basis of a most precise, detailed and profound study of this capitalist so-

ciety, by fully assimilating all that earlier science had produced. He critically reshaped everything that had been created by human society, without ignoring a single detail. He reconsidered, subjected to criticism, and verified on the working-class movement everything that human thinking had created, and therefrom formulated conclusions which people hemmed in by bourgeois limitations or bound by bourgeois prejudices could not draw.

We must bear this in mind when, for example, we talk about proletarian culture. We shall be unable to solve this problem unless we clearly realise that only a precise knowledge and transformation of the culture created by the entire development of mankind will enable us to create a proletarian culture. The latter is not clutched out of thin air; it is not an invention of those who call themselves experts in proletarian culture. That is all nonsense. Proletarian culture must be the logical development of the store of knowledge mankind has accumulated under the yoke of capitalist, landowner and bureaucratic society. All these roads have been leading, and will continue to lead up to proletarian culture, in the same way as political economy, as reshaped by Marx, has shown us what human society must arrive at, shown us the passage to the class struggle, to the beginning of the proletarian revolution.

When we so often hear representatives of the youth, as well as certain advocates of a new system of education, attacking the old schools, claiming that they used the system of cramming, we say to them that we must take what was good in the old schools. We must not borrow the system of encumbering young people's minds with an immense amount of knowledge, nine-tenths of which was useless and one-tenth distorted. This, however, does not mean that we can restrict ourselves to communist conclusions and learn only communist slogans. You will not create communism that way. You can become a Communist only when you enrich your mind with a knowledge of all the treasures created by mankind.

We have no need of cramming, but we do need to develop and perfect the mind of every student with a knowledge of fundamental facts. Communism will become an empty word, a mere signboard, and a Communist a mere boaster, if all the knowledge he has acquired is not digested in his

mind. You should not merely assimilate this knowledge, but assimilate it critically, so as not to cram your mind with useless lumber, but enrich it with all those facts that are indispensable to the well-educated man of today. If a Communist took it into his head to boast about his communism because of the cut-and-dried conclusions he had acquired, without putting in a great deal of serious and hard work and without understanding facts he should examine critically, he would be a deplorable Communist indeed. Such superficiality would be decidedly fatal. If I know that I know little, I shall strive to learn more; but if a man says that he is a Communist and that he need not know anything thoroughly, he will never become anything like a Communist.

The old schools produced servants needed by the capitalists; the old schools turned men of science into men who had to write and say whatever pleased the capitalists. We must therefore abolish them. But does the fact that we must abolish them, destroy them, mean that we should not take from them everything mankind has accumulated that is essential to man? Does it mean that we do not have to distinguish between what was necessary to capitalism and what is necessary to communism?

We are replacing the old drill-sergeant methods practised in bourgeois society, against the will of the majority, with the class-conscious discipline of the workers and peasants, who combine hatred of the old society with a determination, ability and readiness to unite and organise their forces for this struggle so as to forge the wills of millions and hundreds of millions of people—disunited, and scattered over the territory of a huge country—into a single will, without which defeat is inevitable. Without this solidarity, without this conscious discipline of the workers and peasants, our cause is hopeless. Without this, we shall be unable to vanquish the capitalists and landowners of the whole world. We shall not even consolidate the foundation, let alone build a new, communist society on that foundation. Likewise, while condemning the old schools, while harbouring an absolutely justified and necessary hatred for the old schools, and appreciating the readiness to destroy them, we must realise that we must replace the old system of instruction, the old cramming and the old drill, with an

ability to acquire the sum total of human knowledge, and to acquire it in such a way that communism shall not be something to be learned by rote, but something that you yourselves have thought over, something that will embody conclusions inevitable from the standpoint of present-day education.

That is the way the main tasks should be presented when we speak of the aim: learn communism.

I shall take a practical example to make this clear to you, and to demonstrate the approach to the problem of how you must learn. You all know that, following the military problems, those of defending the republic, we are now confronted with economic tasks. Communist society, as we know, cannot be built unless we restore industry and agriculture, and that, not in the old way. They must be re-established on a modern basis, in accordance with the last word in science. You know that electricity is that basis, and that only after electrification of the entire country, of all branches of industry and agriculture, only when you have achieved that aim, will you be able to build for yourselves the communist society which the older generation will not be able to build. Confronting you is the task of economically reviving the whole country, of reorganising and restoring both agriculture and industry on modern technical lines, based on modern science and technology, on electricity. You realise perfectly well that illiterate people cannot tackle electrification, and that elementary literacy is not enough either. It is insufficient to understand what electricity is; what is needed is the knowledge of how to apply it technically in industry and agriculture, and in the individual branches of industry and agriculture. This has to be learnt for oneself, and it must be taught to the entire rising generation of working people. That is the task confronting every class-conscious Communist, every young person who regards himself a Communist and who clearly understands that, by joining the Young Communist League, he has pledged himself to help the Party build communism and to help the whole younger generation create a communist society. He must realise that he can create it only on the basis of modern education, and if he does not acquire this education communism will remain merely a pious wish.

It was the task of the older generation to overthrow the bourgeoisie. The main task then was to criticise the bourgeoisie, arouse hatred of the bourgeoisie among the masses, and foster class-consciousness and the ability to unite their forces. The new generation is confronted with a far more complex task. Your duty does not lie only in assembling your forces so as to uphold the workers' and peasants' government against an invasion instigated by the capitalists. Of course, you must do that; that is something you clearly realise, and is distinctly seen by the Communist. However, that is not enough. You have to build up a communist society. In many respects half of the work has been done. The old order has been destroyed, just as it deserved, it has been turned into a heap of ruins, just as it deserved. The ground has been cleared, and on this ground the younger communist generation must build a communist society. You are faced with the task of construction, and you can accomplish that task only by assimilating all modern knowledge, only if you are able to transform communism from cut-and-dried and memorised formulas, counsels, recipes, prescriptions and programmes into that living reality which gives unity to your immediate work, and only if you are able to make communism a guide in all your practical work.

That is the task you should pursue in educating, training and rousing the entire younger generation. You must be foremost among the millions of builders of a communist society in whose ranks every young man and young woman should be. You will not build a communist society unless you enlist the mass of young workers and peasants in the work of building communism.

This naturally brings me to the question of how we should teach communism and what the specific features of our methods should be.

I first of all shall deal here with the question of communist ethics.

You must train yourselves to be Communists. It is the task of the Youth League to organise its practical activities in such a way that, by learning, organising, uniting and fighting, its members shall train both themselves and all those who look to it for leadership; it should train Communists. The entire purpose of training, educating and

teaching the youth of today should be to imbue them with communist ethics.

But is there such a thing as communist ethics? Is there such a thing as communist morality? Of course, there is. It is often suggested that we have no ethics of our own; very often the bourgeoisie accuse us Communists of rejecting all morality. This is a method of confusing the issue, of throwing dust in the eyes of the workers and peasants.

In what sense do we reject ethics, reject morality?

In the sense given to it by the bourgeoisie, who based ethics on God's commandments. On this point we, of course, say that we do not believe in God, and that we know perfectly well that the clergy, the landowners and the bourgeoisie invoked the name of God so as to further their own interests as exploiters. Or, instead of basing ethics on the commandments of morality, on the commandments of God, they based it on idealist or semi-idealist phrases, which always amounted to something very similar to God's commandments.

We reject any morality based on extra-human and extra-class concepts. We say that this is deception, dupery, stultification of the workers and peasants in the interests of the landowners and capitalists.

We say that our morality is entirely subordinated to the interests of the proletariat's class struggle. Our morality stems from the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat.

The old society was based on the oppression of all the workers and peasants by the landowners and capitalists. We had to destroy all that and overthrow them, but to do that we had to create unity. That is something that God cannot create.

This unity could be provided only by the factories, only by a proletariat trained and roused from its long slumber. Only when that class was formed did a mass movement arise which has led to what we have now—the victory of the proletarian revolution in one of the weakest of countries, which for three years has been repelling the onslaught of the bourgeoisie of the whole world. We can see how the proletarian revolution is developing all over the world. On the basis of experience, we now say that only the proletariat could have created the solid force which

the disunited and scattered peasantry are following and which has withstood all onslaughts by the exploiters. Only this class can help the working masses unite, rally their ranks and conclusively defend, conclusively consolidate and conclusively build up a communist society.

That is why we say that to us there is no such thing as a morality that stands outside human society; that is a fraud. To us morality is subordinated to the interests of the proletariat's class struggle.

What does that class struggle consist in? It consists in overthrowing the tsar, overthrowing the capitalists, and abolishing the capitalist class.

What are classes in general? Classes are that which permits one section of society to appropriate the labour of another section. If one section of society appropriates all the land, we have a landowner class and a peasant class. If one section of society owns the factories, shares and capital, while another section works in these factories, we have a capitalist class and a proletarian class.

It was not difficult to drive out the tsar—that required only a few days. It was not very difficult to drive out the landowners—that was done in a few months. Nor was it very difficult to drive out the capitalists. But it is incomparably more difficult to abolish classes; we still have the division into workers and peasants. If the peasant is installed on his plot of land and appropriates his surplus grain, that is, grain that he does not need for himself or for his cattle, while the rest of the people have to go without bread, then the peasant becomes an exploiter. The more grain he clings to, the more profitable he finds it; as for the rest, let them starve: "The more they starve, the dearer I can sell this grain." All should work according to a single common plan, on common land, in common factories and in accordance with a common system. Is that easy to attain? You see that it is not as easy as driving out the tsar, the landowners and the capitalists. What is required is that the proletariat re-educate a section of the peasantry; it must win over the working peasants in order to crush the resistance of those peasants who are rich and are profiting from the poverty and want of the rest. Hence the task of the proletarian struggle is not quite completed after we have overthrown the tsar and driven out the landowners and

capitalists; to accomplish that is the task of the system we call the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The class struggle is continuing; it has merely changed its forms. It is the class struggle of the proletariat to prevent the return of the old exploiters, to unite in a single union the scattered masses of unenlightened peasants. The class struggle is continuing and it is our task to subordinate all interests to that struggle. Our communist morality is also subordinated to that task. We say: morality is what serves to destroy the old exploiting society and to unite all the working people around the proletariat, which is building up a new, a communist society.

Communist morality is that which serves this struggle and unites the working people against all exploitation, against all petty private property; for petty property puts into the hands of one person that which has been created by the labour of the whole of society. In our country the land is common property.

But suppose I take a piece of this common property and grow on it twice as much grain as I need, and profiteer on the surplus? Suppose I argue that the more starving people there are, the more they will pay? Would I then be behaving like a Communist? No, I would be behaving like an exploiter, like a proprietor. That must be combated. If that is allowed to go on, things will revert to the rule of the capitalists, to the rule of the bourgeoisie, as has more than once happened in previous revolutions. To prevent the restoration of the rule of the capitalists and the bourgeoisie, we must not allow profiteering; we must not allow individuals to enrich themselves at the expense of the rest; the working people must unite with the proletariat and form a communist society. This is the principal feature of the fundamental task of the League and the organisation of the communist youth.

The old society was based on the principle: rob or be robbed; work for others or make others work for you; be a slave-owner or a slave. Naturally, people brought up in such a society assimilate with their mother's milk, one might say, the psychology, the habit, the concept which says: you are either a slave-owner or a slave, or else, a small owner, a petty employee, a petty official, or an intellectual—in short, a man who is concerned

only with himself, and does not care a rap for anybody else.

If I work this plot of land, I do not care a rap for anybody else; if others starve, all the better, I shall get the more for my grain. If I have a job as a doctor, engineer, teacher, or clerk, I do not care a rap for anybody else. If I toady to and please the powers that be, I may be able to keep my job, and even get on in life and become a bourgeois. A Communist cannot harbour such a psychology and such sentiments. When the workers and peasants proved that they were able, by their own efforts, to defend themselves and create a new society—that was the beginning of the new and communist education, education in the struggle against the exploiters, education in alliance with the proletariat against the self-seekers and petty proprietors, against the psychology and habits which say: I seek my own profit and don't care a rap for anything else.

That is the reply to the question of how the young and rising generation should learn communism.

It can learn communism only by linking up every step in its studies, training and education with the continuous struggle the proletarians and the working people are waging against the old society of exploiters. When people tell us about morality, we say: to a Communist all morality lies in this united discipline and conscious mass struggle against the exploiters. We do not believe in an eternal morality, and we expose the falseness of all the fables about morality. Morality serves the purpose of helping human society rise to a higher level and rid itself of the exploitation of labour.

To achieve this we need that generation of young people who began to reach political maturity in the midst of a disciplined and desperate struggle against the bourgeoisie. In this struggle that generation is training genuine Communists; it must subordinate to this struggle, and link up with it, each step in its studies, education and training. The education of the communist youth must consist not in giving them suave talks and moral precepts. This is not what education consists in. When people have seen the way in which their fathers and mothers lived under the yoke of the landowners and capitalists; when they have themselves experienced the sufferings of those who began the struggle against the exploiters; when they have seen the sacrifices



made to keep what has been won, and seen what deadly enemies the landowners and capitalists are—they are taught by these conditions to become Communists. Communist morality is based on the struggle for the consolidation and completion of communism. That is also the basis of communist training, education, and teaching. That is the reply to the question of how communism should be learnt.

We could not believe in teaching, training and education if they were restricted only to the schoolroom and divorced from the ferment of life. As long as the workers and peasants are oppressed by the landowners and capitalists, and as long as the schools are controlled by the landowners and capitalists, the young generation will remain blind and ignorant. Our schools must provide the youth with the fundamentals of knowledge, the ability to evolve communist views independently; they must make educated people of the youth. While they are attending school, they must learn to become participants in the struggle for emancipation from the exploiters. The Young Communist League will justify its name as the League of the young communist generation only when every step in its teaching, training and education is linked up with participation in the common struggle of all working people against the exploiters. You are well aware that, as long as Russia remains the only workers' republic and the old, bourgeois system exists in the rest of the world, we shall be weaker than they are, and be constantly threatened with a new attack; and that only if we learn to be solidly united shall we win in the further struggle and—having gained strength—become really invincible. Thus, to be a Communist means that you must organise and unite the entire young generation and set an example of training and discipline in this struggle. Then you will be able to start building the edifice of communist society and bring it to completion.

To make this clearer to you, I shall quote an example. We call ourselves Communists. What is a Communist? Communist is a Latin word. *Communis* is the Latin for "common". Communist society is a society in which all things—the land, the factories—are owned in common and the people work in common. That is communism.

Is it possible to work in common if each one works separately on his own plot of land? Work in common can-

not be brought about all at once. That is impossible. It does not drop from the skies. It comes through toil and suffering; it is created in the course of struggle. The old books are of no use here; no one will believe them. One's own experience of life is needed. When Kolchak and Denikin were advancing from Siberia and the South, the peasants were on their side. They did not like Bolshevism because the Bolsheviks took their grain at a fixed price. But when the peasants in Siberia and the Ukraine experienced the rule of Kolchak and Denikin, they realised that they had only one alternative: either to go to the capitalists, who would at once hand them over into slavery under the landowners; or to follow the workers, who, it is true, did not promise a land flowing with milk and honey, and demanded iron discipline and firmness in an arduous struggle, but would lead them out of enslavement by the capitalists and landowners. When even the ignorant peasants saw and realised this from their own experience, they became conscious adherents of communism, who had gone through a severe school. It is such experience that must form the basis of all the activities of the Young Communist League.

I have replied to the questions of what we must learn, what we must take from the old schools and from the old science. I shall now try to answer the question of how this must be learnt. The answer is: only by inseparably linking each step in the activities of the schools, each step in training, education and teaching, with the struggle of all the working people against the exploiters.

I shall quote a few examples from the experience of the work of some of the youth organisations so as to illustrate how this training in communism should proceed. Everybody is talking about abolishing illiteracy. You know that a communist society cannot be built in an illiterate country. It is not enough for the Soviet government to issue an order, or for the Party to issue a particular slogan, or to assign a certain number of the best workers to this task. The young generation itself must take up this work. Communism means that the youth, the young men and women who belong to the Youth League, should say: this is our job; we shall unite and go into the rural districts to abolish illiteracy, so that there shall be no illiterates among our young people. We are trying to get the rising generation to

devote their activities to this work. You know that we cannot rapidly transform an ignorant and illiterate Russia into a literate country. But if the Youth League sets to work on the job, and if all young people work for the benefit of all, the League, with a membership of 400,000 young men and women, will be entitled to call itself a Young Communist League. It is also a task of the League, not only to acquire knowledge itself, but to help those young people who are unable to extricate themselves by their own efforts from the toils of illiteracy. Being a member of the Youth League means devoting one's labour and efforts to the common cause. That is what a communist education means. Only in the course of such work do young men and women become real Communists. Only if they achieve practical results in this work will they become Communists.

Take, for example, work in the suburban vegetable gardens. Is that not a real job of work? It is one of the tasks of the Young Communist League. People are starving; there is hunger in the factories. To save ourselves from starvation, vegetable gardens must be developed. But farming is being carried on in the old way. Therefore, more class-conscious elements should engage in this work, and then you will find that the number of vegetable gardens will increase, their acreage will grow, and the results will improve. The Young Communist League must take an active part in this work. Every League and League branch should regard this as its duty.

The Young Communist League must be a shock force, helping in every job and displaying initiative and enterprise. The League should be an organisation enabling any worker to see that it consists of people whose teachings he perhaps does not understand, and whose teachings he may not immediately believe, but from whose practical work and activity he can see that they are really people who are showing him the right road.

If the Young Communist League fails to organise its work in this way in all fields, it will mean that it is reverting to the old bourgeois path. We must combine our education with the struggle of the working people against the exploiters, so as to help the former accomplish the tasks set by the teachings of communism.

The members of the League should use every spare hour

to improve the vegetable gardens, or to organise the education of young people at some factory, and so on. We want to transform Russia from a poverty-stricken and wretched country into one that is wealthy. The Young Communist League must combine its education, learning and training with the labour of the workers and peasants, so as not to confine itself to schools or to reading communist books and pamphlets. Only by working side by side with the workers and peasants can one become a genuine Communist. It has to be generally realised that all members of the Youth League are literate people and at the same time are keen at their jobs. When everyone sees that we have ousted the old drill-ground methods from the old schools and have replaced them with conscious discipline, that all young men and women take part in subbotniks,<sup>38</sup> and utilise every suburban farm to help the population—people will cease to regard labour in the old way.

It is the task of the Young Communist League to organise assistance everywhere, in village or city block, in such matters as—and I shall take a small example—public hygiene or the distribution of food. How was this done in the old, capitalist society? Everybody worked only for himself and nobody cared a straw for the aged and the sick, or whether housework was the concern only of the women, who, in consequence, were in a condition of oppression and servitude. Whose business is it to combat this? It is the business of the Youth Leagues, which must say: we shall change all this; we shall organise detachments of young people who will help to assure public hygiene or distribute food, who will conduct systematic house-to-house inspections, and work in an organised way for the benefit of the whole of society, distributing their forces properly and demonstrating that labour must be organised.

The generation of people who are now at the age of fifty cannot expect to see a communist society. This generation will be gone before then. But the generation of those who are now fifteen will see a communist society, and will itself build this society. This generation should know that the entire purpose of their lives is to build a communist society. In the old society, each family worked separately and labour was not organised by anybody except the landowners and capitalists, who oppressed the masses of the people.

We must organise all labour, no matter how toilsome or messy it may be, in such a way that every worker and peasant will be able to say: I am part of the great army of free labour, and shall be able to build up my life without the landowners and capitalists, able to help establish a communist system. The Young Communist League should teach all young people to engage in conscious and disciplined labour from an early age. In this way we can be confident that the problems now confronting us will be solved. We must assume that no less than ten years will be required for the electrification of the country, so that our impoverished land may profit from the latest achievements of technology. And so, the generation of those who are now fifteen years old, and will be living in a communist society in ten or twenty years' time, should tackle all its educational tasks in such a way that every day, in every village and city, the young people shall engage in the practical solution of some problem of labour in common, even though the smallest or the simplest. The success of communist construction will be assured when this is done in every village, as communist emulation develops, and the youth prove that they can unite their labour. Only by regarding your every step from the standpoint of the success of that construction, and only by asking ourselves whether we have done all we can to be united and politically-conscious working people, will the Young Communist League succeed in uniting its half a million members into a single army of labour and win universal respect. (*Stormy applause.*)

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## **On The Significance of Militant Materialism**

### **Extract**

...One of the biggest and most dangerous mistakes made by Communists (as generally by revolutionaries who have successfully accomplished the beginning of a great revolution) is the idea that a revolution can be made by revolutionaries alone. On the contrary, to be successful, all serious revolutionary work requires that the idea that revolutionaries are capable of playing the part only of the vanguard of the truly virile and advanced class must be understood and translated into action. A vanguard performs its task as vanguard only when it is able to avoid being isolated from the mass of the people it leads and is able really to lead the whole mass forward. Without an alliance with non-Communists in the most diverse spheres of activity there can be no question of any successful communist construction.

This also applies to the defence of materialism and Marxism, which has been undertaken by *Pod Znamenem Marksizma*.<sup>39</sup> Fortunately, the main trends of advanced social thinking in Russia have a solid materialist tradition. Apart from G. V. Plekhanov, it will be enough to mention Chernyshevsky, from whom the modern Narodniks (the Popular Socialists, Socialist-Revolutionaries, etc.) have frequently retreated in quest of fashionable reactionary philosophical doctrines, captivated by the tinsel of the so-called "last word" in European science, and unable to discern beneath this tinsel some variety of servility to the bourgeoisie, to bourgeois prejudice and bourgeois reaction.

At any rate, in Russia we still have—and shall undoubtedly have for a fairly long time to come—materialists from the non-Communist camp, and it is our absolute duty to enlist all adherents of consistent and militant materialism in the joint work of combating philosophical reaction and

the philosophical prejudices of so-called educated society. Dietzgen senior—not to be confused with his writer son, who was as pretentious as he was unsuccessful—correctly, aptly and clearly expressed the fundamental Marxist view of the philosophical trends which prevail in bourgeois countries and enjoy the regard of their scientists and publicists, when he said that in effect the professors of philosophy in modern society are in the majority of cases nothing but “graduated flunkeys of clericalism”.

Our Russian intellectuals, who, like their brethren in all other countries, are fond of thinking themselves advanced, are very much averse to shifting the question to the level of the opinion expressed in Dietzgen’s words. But they are averse to it because they cannot look the truth in the face. One has only to give a little thought to the governmental and also the general economic, social and every other kind of dependence of modern educated people on the ruling bourgeoisie to realise that Dietzgen’s scathing description was absolutely true. One has only to recall the vast majority of the fashionable philosophical trends that arise so frequently in European countries, beginning for example with those connected with the discovery of radium and ending with those which are now seeking to clutch at the skirts of Einstein, to gain an idea of the connection between the class interests and the class position of the bourgeoisie and its support of all forms of religion on the one hand, and the ideological content of the fashionable philosophical trends on the other.

It will be seen from the above that a journal that sets out to be a militant materialist organ must be primarily a militant organ, in the sense of unflinchingly exposing and indicting all modern “graduated flunkeys of clericalism”, irrespective of whether they act as representatives of official science or as free lances calling themselves “democratic Left or ideologically socialist” publicists.

In the second place, such a journal must be a militant atheist organ. We have departments, or at least state institutions, which are in charge of this work. But the work is being carried on with extreme apathy and very unsatisfactorily, and is apparently suffering from the general conditions of our truly Russian (even though Soviet) bureaucratic ways. It is therefore highly essential that in addition to

the work of these state institutions, and in order to improve and infuse life into that work, a journal which sets out to propagandise militant materialism must carry on untiring atheist propaganda and an untiring atheist fight. The literature on the subject in all languages should be carefully followed and everything at all valuable in this sphere should be translated, or at least reviewed.

Engels long ago advised the contemporary leaders of the proletariat to translate the militant atheist literature of the late eighteenth century for mass distribution among the people. We have not done this up to the present, to our shame be it said (this is one of the numerous proofs that it is much easier to seize power in a revolutionary epoch than to know how to use this power properly). Our apathy, inactivity and incompetence are sometimes excused on all sorts of “lofty” grounds, as, for example, that the old atheist literature of the eighteenth century is antiquated, unscientific, naïve, etc. There is nothing worse than such pseudo-scientific sophistry, which serves as a screen either for pedantry or for a complete misunderstanding of Marxism. There is, of course, much that is unscientific and naïve in the atheist writings of the eighteenth-century revolutionaries. But nobody prevents the publishers of these writings from abridging them and providing them with brief postscripts pointing out the progress made by mankind in the scientific criticism of religions since the end of the eighteenth century, mentioning the latest writings on the subject, and so forth. It would be the biggest and most grievous mistake a Marxist could make to think that the millions of the people (especially the peasants and artisans), who have been condemned by all modern society to darkness, ignorance and superstition, can extricate themselves from this darkness only along the straight line of a purely Marxist education. These masses should be supplied with the most varied atheist propaganda material, they should be made familiar with facts from the most diverse spheres of life, they should be approached in every possible way, so as to interest them, rouse them from their religious torpor, stir them from the most varied angles and by the most varied methods, and so forth.

The keen, vivacious and talented writings of the old eighteenth-century atheists wittily and openly attacked the

prevailing clericalism and will very often prove a thousand times more suitable for arousing people from their religious torpor than the dull and dry paraphrases of Marxism, almost completely unillustrated by skilfully selected facts, which predominate in our literature and which (it is no use hiding the fact) frequently distort Marxism. We have translations of all the major works of Marx and Engels. There are absolutely no grounds for fearing that the old atheism and old materialism will remain unsupplemented by the corrections introduced by Marx and Engels. The most important thing—and it is this that is most frequently overlooked by those of our Communists who are supposedly Marxists, but who in fact mutilate Marxism—is to know how to awaken in the still undeveloped masses an intelligent attitude towards religious questions and an intelligent criticism of religions.

On the other hand, take a glance at modern scientific critics of religion. These educated bourgeois writers almost invariably “supplement” their own refutations of religious superstitions with arguments which immediately expose them as ideological slaves of the bourgeoisie, as “graduated flunkys of clericalism”.

Two examples. Professor R. Y. Wipper published in 1918 a little book entitled *Vozniknovenie Khristianstva* (The Origin of Christianity—Pharos Publishing House, Moscow). In his account of the principal results of modern science, the author not only refrains from combating the superstitions and deception which are the weapons of the church as a political organisation, not only evades these questions, but makes the simply ridiculous and most reactionary claim that he is above both “extremes”—the idealist and the materialist. This is toadying to the ruling bourgeoisie, which all over the world devotes to the support of religion hundreds of millions of rubles from the profits squeezed out of the working people.

The well-known German scientist, Arthur Drews, while refuting religious superstitions and fables in his book, *Die Christusmythe* (The Christ Myth), and while showing that Christ never existed, at the end of the book declares in favour of religion, albeit a renovated, purified and more subtle religion, one that would be capable of withstanding “the daily growing naturalist torrent” (fourth German edi-

tion, 1910, p. 238). Here we have an outspoken and deliberate reactionary, who is openly helping the exploiters to replace the old and decayed religious superstitions by new, more odious and vile superstitions.

This does not mean that Drews should not be translated. It means that while in a certain measure effecting an alliance with the progressive section of the bourgeoisie, Communists and all consistent materialists should unflinchingly expose that section when it is guilty of reaction. It means that to shun an alliance with the representatives of the bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century, i.e., the period when it was revolutionary, would be to betray Marxism and materialism; for an “alliance” with the Drewses, in one form or another and in one degree or another, is essential for our struggle against the predominating religious obscurantists.

*Pod Znamenem Marksizma*, which sets out to be an organ of militant materialism, should devote much of its space to atheist propaganda, to reviews of the literature on the subject and to correcting the immense shortcomings of our governmental work in this field. It is particularly important to utilise books and pamphlets which contain many concrete facts and comparisons showing how the class interests and class organisations of the modern bourgeoisie are connected with the organisations of religious institutions and religious propaganda.

All material relating to the United States of America, where the official, state connection between religion and capital is less manifest, is extremely important. But, on the other hand, it becomes all the clearer to us that so-called “modern democracy” (which the Mensheviks, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, partly also the anarchists, etc., so unreasonably worship) is nothing but the freedom to preach whatever is to the advantage of the bourgeoisie, to preach, namely, the most reactionary ideas, religion, obscurantism, defence of the exploiters, etc.

One would like to hope that a journal which sets out to be a militant materialist organ will provide our reading public with reviews of atheist literature, showing for which circle of readers any particular writing might be suitable and in what respect, and mentioning what literature has been published in our country (only decent translations

should be given notice, and they are not so many), and what is still to be published.

\* \* \*

In addition to the alliance with consistent materialists, who do not belong to the Communist Party, of no less and perhaps even of more importance for the work which militant materialism should perform is an alliance with those modern natural scientists who incline towards materialism and are not afraid to defend and preach it as against the modish philosophical wanderings into idealism and scepticism which are prevalent in so-called "educated society".

The article by A. Timiryazev on Einstein's theory of relativity published in *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* No. 1-2 permits us to hope that the journal will succeed in effecting this second alliance too. Greater attention should be paid to it. It should be remembered that the sharp upheaval which modern natural science is undergoing very often gives rise to reactionary philosophical schools and minor schools, trends and minor trends. Unless, therefore, the problems raised by the recent revolution in natural science are followed, and unless natural scientists are enlisted in the work of a philosophical journal, militant materialism can be neither militant nor materialism. Timiryazev was obliged to observe in the first issue of the journal that the theory of Einstein, who, according to Timiryazev, is himself not making any active attack on the foundations of materialism, has already been seized upon by a vast number of bourgeois intellectuals of all countries; it should be noted that this applies not only to Einstein, but to a number, if not to the majority, of the great reformers of natural science since the end of the nineteenth century.

For our attitude towards this phenomenon to be a politically conscious one, it must be realised that no natural science and no materialism can hold its own in the struggle against the onslaught of bourgeois ideas and the restoration of the bourgeois world outlook unless it stands on solid philosophical ground. In order to hold his own in this struggle and carry it to a victorious finish, the natural scientist must be a modern materialist, a conscious adherent of the materialism represented by Marx, i.e., he must be a

dialectical materialist. In order to attain this aim, the contributors to *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* must arrange for the systematic study of Hegelian dialectics from a materialist standpoint, i.e., the dialectics which Marx applied practically in his *Capital* and in his historical and political works, and applied so successfully that now every day of the awakening to life and struggle of new classes in the East (Japan, India, and China)—i.e., the hundreds of millions of human beings who form the greater part of the world population and whose historical passivity and historical torpor have hitherto conditioned the stagnation and decay of many advanced European countries—every day of the awakening to life of new peoples and new classes serves as a fresh confirmation of Marxism.

Of course, this study, this interpretation, this propaganda of Hegelian dialectics is extremely difficult, and the first experiments in this direction will undoubtedly be accompanied by errors. But only he who never does anything never makes mistakes. Taking as our basis Marx's method of applying materialistically conceived Hegelian dialectics, we can and should elaborate this dialectics from all aspects, print in the journal excerpts from Hegel's principal works, interpret them materialistically and comment on them with the help of examples of the way Marx applied dialectics, as well as of examples of dialectics in the sphere of economic and political relations, which recent history, especially modern imperialist war and revolution, provides in unusual abundance. In my opinion, the editors and contributors of *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* should be a kind of "Society of Materialist Friends of Hegelian Dialectics". Modern natural scientists (if they know how to seek, and if we learn to help them) will find in the Hegelian dialectics, materialistically interpreted, a series of answers to the philosophical problems which are being raised by the revolution in natural science and which make the intellectual admirers of bourgeois fashion "stumble" into reaction.

Unless it sets itself such a task and systematically fulfils it, materialism cannot be militant materialism. It will be not so much the fighter as the fought, to use an expression of Shchedrin's. Without this, eminent natural scientists will as often as hitherto be helpless in making their philosophical deductions and generalisations. For natural science

is progressing so fast and is undergoing such a profound revolutionary upheaval in all spheres that it cannot possibly dispense with philosophical deductions.

In conclusion, I will cite an example which has nothing to do with philosophy, but does at any rate concern social questions, to which *Pod Znamenem Marksizma* also desires to devote attention.

It is an example of the way in which modern pseudo-science actually serves as a vehicle for the grossest and most infamous reactionary views.

I was recently sent a copy of *Ekonomist* No. 1 (1922), published by the Eleventh Department of the Russian Technical Society. The young Communist who sent me this journal (he probably had no time to read it) rashly expressed considerable agreement with it. In reality the journal is—I do not know to what extent deliberately—an organ of the modern feudalists, disguised of course under a cloak of science, democracy and so forth.

A certain Mr. P. A. Sorokin publishes in this journal an extensive, so-called "sociological", inquiry on "The Influence of the War". This learned article abounds in learned references to the "sociological" works of the author and his numerous teachers and colleagues abroad. Here is an example of his learning.

On page 83, I read:

"For every 10,000 marriages in Petrograd there are now 92.2 divorces—a fantastic figure. Of every 100 annulled marriages, 51.1 had lasted less than one year, 11 per cent less than one month, 22 per cent less than two months, 41 per cent less than three to six months and only 26 per cent over six months. These figures show that modern legal marriage is a form which conceals what is in effect extramarital sexual intercourse, enabling lovers of 'strawberries' to satisfy their appetites in a 'legal' way" (*Ekonomist* No. 1, p. 83).

Both this gentleman and the Russian Technical Society, which publishes this journal and gives space to this kind of talk, no doubt regard themselves as adherents of democracy and would consider it a great insult to be called what they are in fact, namely, feudalists, reactionaries, "graduated flunkies of clericalism"

Even the slightest acquaintance with the legislation of bourgeois countries on marriage, divorce and illegitimate children, and with the actual state of affairs in this field,

is enough to show anyone interested in the subject that modern bourgeois democracy, even in all the most democratic bourgeois republics, exhibits a truly feudal attitude in this respect towards women and towards children born out of wedlock.

This, of course, does not prevent the Mensheviks, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, a part of the anarchists and all the corresponding parties in the West from shouting about democracy and how it is being violated by the Bolsheviks. But as a matter of fact the Bolshevik revolution is the only consistently democratic revolution in respect to such questions as marriage, divorce and the position of children born out of wedlock. And this is a question which most directly affects the interests of more than half the population of any country. Although a large number of bourgeois revolutions preceded it and called themselves democratic, the Bolshevik revolution was the first and only revolution to wage a resolute struggle in this respect both against reaction and feudalism and against the usual hypocrisy of the ruling and propertied classes.

If 92 divorces for every 10,000 marriages seem to Mr. Sorokin a fantastic figure, one can only suppose that either the author lived and was brought up in a monastery so entirely walled-off from life that hardly anyone will believe such a monastery ever existed, or that he is distorting the truth in the interest of reaction and the bourgeoisie. Anybody in the least acquainted with social conditions in bourgeois countries knows that the real number of actual divorces (of course, not sanctioned by church and law) is everywhere immeasurably greater. The only difference between Russia and other countries in this respect is that our laws do not sanctify hypocrisy and the debasement of the woman and her child, but openly and in the name of the government declare systematic war on all hypocrisy and all debasement.

The Marxist journal will have to wage war also on these modern "educated" feudalists. Not a few of them, very likely, are in receipt of government money and are employed by our government to educate our youth, although they are no more fitted for this than notorious perverts are fitted for the post of superintendents of educational establishments for the young.

The working class of Russia proved able to win power; but it has not yet learned to utilise it, for otherwise it would have long ago very politely dispatched such teachers and members of learned societies to countries with a bourgeois "democracy" That is the proper place for such feudalists.

But it will learn, given the will to learn.

March 12, 1922

*Pod Znamenem Marksizma*  
No. 3, March 1922  
Signed: N. Lenin

*Collected Works*, Vol. 33,  
pp. 227-36

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The article referred to is "Flüchtlings-Literatur", about the French materialist philosophers Diderot, Holbach, Helvétius and others. In this article Engels suggested that "care should be taken to distribute among the mass of workers the excellent French materialist literature of the previous century which is still the greatest achievement of the French spirit both in form and content and which, when the level of science at that time is considered, has a content that is still today at an infinitely high level and a form that remains incomparable". p. 10
- <sup>2</sup> *Cadets*—members of the Constitutional-Democratic Party, the chief party of the Russian liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie; after the victory of the October Socialist Revolution they helped the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie and landowners organise an armed struggle against Soviet power. p. 12
- <sup>3</sup> *Balalaikin*—a character in Saltykov-Shchedrin's *A Modern Idyll*; a liberal windbag, adventurer and liar. p. 12
- <sup>4</sup> *Rech (Speech)*—the central organ of the Constitutional-Democratic Party. p. 12
- <sup>5</sup> From the poem by N. A. Nekrasov "Who Lives Well in Russia". p. 12
- <sup>6</sup> *Trudoviks*—the Trudovik group of petty-bourgeois democrats formed from peasants and Narodnik intellectuals—deputies to the Duma. p. 15
- <sup>7</sup> *Narodnaya Volya (The People's Will)*—a party of Narodnik terrorists founded in 1879 with the object of overthrowing the autocracy. It existed up to the second half of the eighties. p. 16
- <sup>8</sup> *The State Duma*—the representative body which the tsarist government was forced to convene as a result of the revolutionary events of 1905. Formally it was a legislative body, but it possessed no real authority. Elections were indirect, unequal and were not universal. The working classes and the non-Russian peoples inhabiting Russia had a greatly curtailed franchise, and a considerable section of the workers and peasants had no vote at all. According to the election law of December 11 (24), 1905, one landowner's vote was equal to 3 votes of the urban bourgeoisie, 15 peasants' votes and 45 workers' votes.  
The First Duma (April-July 1906) and the Second Duma (February-June 1907) were dissolved by the tsarist government.



- After the coup d'état of June 3, 1907, the government issued a new election law which still further curtailed the franchise of the workers, peasants and urban petty bourgeoisie and ensured the domination of the reactionary bloc of landowners and big capitalists in the Third (1907-12) and Fourth (1912-17) Dumas. p. 18
- <sup>9</sup> *Synod*—the body governing the Orthodox Church in tsarist Russia. p. 18
- <sup>10</sup> This refers to Engels's *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1888). p. 18
- <sup>11</sup> See Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction* (Marx and Engels, *On Religion*, Moscow, 1957, p. 42). p. 18
- <sup>12</sup> *Blanquists*—French socialists, followers of Louis Auguste Blanqui. They expected that "mankind will be emancipated from wage slavery, not by the proletarian class struggle, but through a conspiracy hatched by a small minority of intellectuals" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 392). p. 19
- <sup>13</sup> See Engels, *Flüchtlings-Literatur II. Das Programme der Blanquisten*. p. 19
- <sup>14</sup> *Erfurt Programme*—the programme adopted at the Erfurt Congress of the German Social-Democratic Party in October 1891. p. 20
- <sup>15</sup> This refers to Engels's Introduction to Marx's pamphlet *The Civil War in France* (see Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1962, p. 479). p. 20
- <sup>16</sup> *God-building*—an ideological trend, hostile to Marxism, which arose among a section of the Bolshevik Party intellectuals after the defeat of the 1905-07 Revolution. The God-builders advocated the creation of a new, "socialist" religion. p. 25
- <sup>17</sup> *Vekhi (Landmarks)*—a collection of articles, published in 1909 by a group of counter-revolutionary Cadets. In their articles the writers tried to discredit the revolutionary-democratic traditions of the liberation movement in Russia and thanked the tsarist government for the suppression of the 1905-07 Revolution. p. 26
- <sup>18</sup> This refers to Belousov's speech in the Duma where he suggested that religion "should be considered the private matter of the individual". The erroneousness of his formulation was pointed out by *Proletary* No. 28, 1908. p. 28
- <sup>19</sup> *Proletary*—an illegal Bolshevik newspaper, published from 1906 to 1909. p. 28
- <sup>20</sup> *Old-Believers*—dissenters who broke away from the Russian Orthodox Church. p. 28
- <sup>21</sup> *Octobrists*—members of the *Union of October Seventeen*, a monarchist party of big capitalists founded in November 1905. The name indicated the party's support for the tsar's Manifesto of October 17, 1905, which promised to introduce civil liberties in Russia. All the activities of the Octobrists were inimical to the people and served to safeguard the selfish interests of the big capitalists, and landowners who ran their estates on capitalist lines. The Octobrists supported the reactionary home and foreign policy of the tsarist government. After the October Revolution the Octobrists, together with the Cadet Party and with the aid of foreign imperialists, organised an armed struggle against Soviet power. p. 30
- <sup>22</sup> *Progressists*—a group of Russian liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie; they occupied an intermediate position between the Octobrists and the Cadets. p. 30
- <sup>23</sup> *The Party of Peaceful Renovation*—an organisation of the big commercial and industrial bourgeoisie and big landowners. p. 30
- <sup>24</sup> The government effected a coup on June 3 (16), 1907, whereby the Second Duma was dissolved and the law on Duma elections changed. The Third Duma was convened in November 1907. The new law greatly reduced the already small representation of the workers and peasants. The Black Hundreds and Cadets predominated in the Duma. p. 30
- <sup>25</sup> The revolution referred to is that of 1905-07. p. 31
- <sup>26</sup> *January 9*. The workers of the St. Petersburg factories, with their wives and children, marched in procession to the Winter Palace on January 9, 1905, to present to the tsar a petition describing their downtrodden condition and complete lack of rights. On the orders of the tsar troops opened fire on the peaceful unarmed demonstration; over a thousand people were killed and about five thousand wounded. In answer to this brutal act a wave of demonstrations and strikes swept over the entire country under the slogan "Down with the Autocracy". The first Russian revolution had begun. p. 32
- <sup>27</sup> There was an all-Russia political strike in October 1905 and an armed uprising in Moscow in December 1905. p. 32
- <sup>28</sup> *Council of the United Nobility*—a counter-revolutionary organisation of feudal landowners established in 1906. p. 32
- <sup>29</sup> *Black Hundreds*—monarchist gangs set up by the tsarist police to combat the revolutionary movement. They murdered revolutionaries, assaulted progressive intellectuals, and organised anti-Jewish pogroms. p. 32
- <sup>30</sup> On October 17, 1905, the tsar, frightened by the revolution, issued a manifesto promising a constitution and civil liberties; it was nothing but a political stratagem meant to deceive the workers. p. 33
- <sup>31</sup> The *Procurator-General* of the Synod was the head of that body. p. 33
- <sup>32</sup> *Union of the Russian People*—a monarchist, Black-Hundred organisation. p. 36

- <sup>33</sup> Lenin refers to A. M. Gorky's protest in the press against the staging by the Moscow Art Theatre of Dostoyevsky's reactionary novel *Demons*. p. 39
- <sup>34</sup> *Russkaya Mysl (Russian Thought)*—a magazine, organ of the Cadet Right wing. p. 41
- <sup>35</sup> *Vperyod* group was organised in 1909 by Bogdanov and Alexinsky, former Bolsheviks who went over to the position of Left opportunism. The group included the "otzovists" (from the Russian "otzvat"—recall) who opposed Party work in legal organisations and demanded the recall of the Social-Democrat deputies from the Duma; the "God-builders" (see Note 16) also belonged to the group. The *Vperyod* group had no supporters among the workers of Russia and to all intents and purposes ceased to exist in 1913. p. 43
- <sup>36</sup> *The First All-Russia Congress of Working Women*, convened by the C.C. R.C.P.(B.) was held in Moscow, November 16-21, 1918. The Congress was attended by 1,147 delegates from factory workers and poor peasants. p. 46
- <sup>37</sup> *The Third All-Russia Congress of the Russian Young Communist League* was held in Moscow, October 2-10, 1920. The Congress was attended by nearly 600 delegates. p. 50
- <sup>38</sup> *Communist subbotniks* were unpaid, voluntary labour for the benefit of society in the people's spare time (Saturday afternoon, Sunday). p. 65
- <sup>39</sup> *Pod Znamenem Marksizma (Under the Banner of Marxism)*—a philosophical and socio-economic monthly, was issued in Moscow from January 1922 to June 1944. p. 67

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