

1870



1960

IN COMMEMORATION OF  
THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE BIRTH OF LENIN

**LENIN**  
**ON THE**  
**NATIONAL**  
**LIBERATION**  
**MOVEMENT**

Michael  
Hammer  
1970

THE BELLMAN BOOKSHOP,  
155, PORTICO ROAD,  
TUFTELL PARK,  
LONDON, N.W.5.

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**WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!**

**LENIN  
ON THE  
NATIONAL LIBERATION  
MOVEMENT**

**FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS  
PEKING 1960**

First Edition September 1960  
Second Edition October 1960

Published in conformity with the  
Chinese edition prepared by the Peo-  
ple's Publishing House, Peking, 1960.

*Printed in the People's Republic of China*

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I. THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS OF OPPRESSED NATIONS ARE PART OF THE WORLD PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

A DISTINCTION MUST BE MADE BETWEEN OPPRESSING AND OPPRESSED NATIONS

Imperialism is the highest stage in the development of capitalism, one that has been reached only in the twentieth century. Capitalism began to feel cramped within the old national states, without the formation of which it could not overthrow feudalism. Capitalism has brought about such economic concentration that entire branches of industry are in the hands of syndicates, trusts, or corporations of billionaires; almost the entire globe has been parcelled out among the "giants of capital," either in the form of colonies, or through the entangling of foreign countries by thousands of threads of financial exploitation. Free trade and competi-

tion have been superseded by tendencies towards monopoly, towards seizure of lands for the investment of capital, for the export of raw materials, etc. Capitalism, formerly a liberator of nations, has now, in its imperialist stage, become the greatest oppressor of nations. Formerly progressive, it has become a reactionary force. It has developed the productive forces to such an extent that humanity must either pass over to Socialism, or for years, nay, decades, witness armed conflicts of the "great" nations for an artificial maintenance of capitalism by means of colonies, monopolies, privileges, and all sorts of national oppression.

.....

It is evident that the peoples who, between 1789 and 1871, were usually the foremost fighters for freedom, have become, after 1876, under highly-developed and "over-ripe" capitalism, the oppressors and subjugators of the majority of the populations and nations of the entire globe. Between 1876 and 1914, the six "great" nations grabbed 25,000,000 square kilometres, i.e., a territory two and a half times the size of Europe. The six nations hold enslaved *more than a half-billion* (523,000,000) of colonial peoples. For every four inhabitants of the

"great" nations, there are five inhabitants in "their" colonies. Everybody knows that the colonies were conquered by fire and sword, that the colonial populations are treated in a barbarous fashion, that they are exploited in a thousand ways, such as exportation of capital, concessions, etc., deceptions in selling commodities, submission to the authorities of the "ruling" nation, and so on, and so forth.

From "Socialism and War"  
(July-August 1915).

This is precisely why the central point in the Social-Democratic programme must be the distinction between oppressing and oppressed nations, which is the *essence* of imperialism, which is *falsely* evaded by the social-chauvinists, and by Kautsky.

From "The Revolutionary Proletariat and  
the Right of Nations to Self-Determination"  
(after October 16, 1915).

#### **THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS OF OPPRESSED NATIONS ARE AN ACTIVE FACTOR IN OVERTHROWING INTERNATIONAL IMPERIALISM**

The undeveloped and oppressed nations are not waiting, they are not ceasing to live, they are not

disappearing, while the proletariat of the advanced countries is overthrowing the bourgeoisie and repelling its attempts at counter-revolution. If, to rise in rebellion, they (the colonies, Ireland) take advantage of an imperialist bourgeois crisis like the war of 1915-16, which is only a minor crisis compared with social revolution, we can be quite sure that they, all the more so, will take advantage of the *great crisis* of civil war in the advanced countries.

The social revolution cannot come about except in the form of an epoch of proletarian civil war against the bourgeoisie in the advanced countries combined with a *whole series* of democratic and revolutionary movements, including movements for national liberation, in the undeveloped, backward and oppressed nations.

Why? Because capitalism develops unevenly, and objective reality gives us highly developed capitalist nations side by side with a number of nations only slightly developed economically, or totally undeveloped.

From "A Caricature of Marxism and  
'Imperialist Economism'" (August-  
October 1916).

The masses of the working people in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, who constitute the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe, were roused to political life as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly by the revolutions in Russia, Turkey, Persia and China. The imperialist war of 1914-18 and the Soviet regime in Russia are completing the process of converting these masses into active factors in world politics and in the revolutionary destruction of imperialism, although the educated philistines of Europe and America, including the leaders of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals, stubbornly refuse to see this.

From "Theses of Report on the Tactics of  
the Russian Communist Party to the Third  
Congress of the Communist International  
(Preliminary Draft)" (June 13, 1921).

The dialectics of history is such that small nations, powerless as an *independent* factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which help the *real* power against imperialism to come on the scene, namely, the socialist proletariat.

From "Discussion on Self-Determi-  
nation Summed Up" (July 1916).



I must say that if the Russian Bolsheviks have succeeded in forcing a breach in the old imperialism, in undertaking the exceedingly difficult, but also exceedingly noble, task of blazing new paths of revolution, you, the representatives of the toiling masses of the East, have a still greater and still more novel task before you. It is becoming quite clear that the socialist revolution which is impending for the whole world will not be merely the victory of the proletariat of each country over its own bourgeoisie. That would be possible if revolutions came easily and swiftly. We know that the imperialists will not allow this, that every country is armed against its own internal Bolshevism and that its one thought is how to vanquish Bolshevism at home. That is why in every country a civil war is brewing, in which the old compromising Socialists are enlisted on the side of the bourgeoisie. Hence, the socialist revolution will not be solely, or chiefly, a struggle of the revolutionary proletarians in each country against their bourgeoisie — no, it will be a struggle of all the imperialism-oppressed colonies and countries, of all dependent countries against international imperialism. Characterizing the approach of the world social revolution in the programme of our Party which we

adopted in March of last year, we said that the civil war of the toilers against the imperialists and exploiters in all the advanced countries is beginning to be combined with national wars against international imperialism. That is confirmed by the course of the revolution, and will be more and more confirmed as time goes on. It will be the same in the East.

We know that the popular masses of the East will rise as independent actors, as builders of a new life, because hundreds of millions of people in the East belong to dependent, subject nations, which until now were objects of international imperialist policy, and which for capitalist culture and civilization existed only as manure. And when they talk of handing out mandates for the administration of colonies, we know very well that it means handing out mandates for spoliation and plunder — handing out to an insignificant section of the world's population the right to exploit the majority of the population of the globe. That majority, which before had been completely outside the orbit of historical progress, because it could not represent an independent revolutionary force, ceased, as we know, to play that passive role at the beginning of the twentieth century. We know that 1905 was followed by revolutions

in Turkey, Persia and China, and that a revolutionary movement developed in India. The imperialist war likewise contributed to the growth of the revolutionary movement, because the European imperialists had to enlist whole colonial regiments in their struggle. The imperialist war aroused the East also and drew its peoples into international politics. Britain and France armed colonial peoples and helped them to familiarize themselves with military technique and up-to-date machines. That knowledge they will use against the imperialist gentry. The period of awakening of the East in the contemporary revolution is being succeeded by a period in which all the Eastern peoples will participate in deciding the destiny of the whole world, so as not to be simply an object of enrichment of others. The peoples of the East are becoming alive to the need for practical action, for every nation to take part in shaping the destiny of all mankind.

That is why I think that in the history of development of the world revolution—which, judging by its beginning, will continue for many years and will demand much effort—that in the revolutionary struggle, in the revolutionary movement, you will

be called upon to play a big part and in this struggle merge with our struggle against international imperialism. Your participation in the international revolution will confront you with a complicated and difficult task, the accomplishment of which will serve as the foundation for our common success, because here the majority of the people are for the first time stirring into independent motion and will be an active factor in the struggle for the overthrow of international imperialism.

From "Address to the Second All-Russian Congress of Communist Organizations of the Peoples of the East" (November 22, 1919).

#### **THE INTERNATIONAL PROLETARIAT IS A RELIABLE ALLY OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS**

All commanding Europe, all the European bourgeoisie is *in alliance* with all the forces of reaction and medievalism in China.

But on the other hand, all young Asia, that is, the hundreds of millions of toilers in Asia, have a reliable ally in the proletariat of all the civilized countries. No force on earth can prevent its victory,

which will liberate both the peoples of Europe and the peoples of Asia.

From "Backward Europe and Advanced Asia" (published in *Pravda*, No. 113, May 18, 1913).

It is self-evident that final victory can be won only by the proletariat of all the advanced countries of the world, and we, the Russians, are beginning the work which the British, the French or the German proletariat will seal. But we see that they will not be victorious without the aid of the toiling masses of all the oppressed colonial peoples, and of the Eastern peoples in the first place. We must realize that the transition to Communism cannot be accomplished by the vanguard alone. The task is to arouse the toiling masses to revolutionary activity, to independent action and organization, regardless of the level on which they may happen to be; to translate the true communist doctrine, which was intended for the Communists of the more advanced countries, into the language of every people; to carry out those practical tasks which must be carried out immediately, and to merge with the proletarians of other countries in a common struggle.

Such are the problems the solution of which you will not find in any communist book, but which you will find in the common struggle that Russia has begun. You will have to tackle these problems and solve them by your own independent experience. In that you will be assisted, on the one hand, by close alliance with the vanguard of all the toilers of other countries, and, on the other, by ability to find the right approach to the peoples of the East whom you here represent. You will have to base yourselves on that bourgeois nationalism which is awakening, and cannot but awaken, among those peoples, and which has its historical justification. At the same time, you must find your way to the toiling and exploited masses of every country and tell them in the language they understand that their only reliable hope of emancipation lies in the victory of the international revolution, and that the international proletariat is the only ally of all the hundreds of millions of toiling and exploited peoples of the East.

From "Address to the Second All-Russian Congress of Communist Organizations of the Peoples of the East" (November 22, 1919).

The subject of my address is current affairs, and it seems to me that the most essential aspect of this question just now is the attitude of the peoples of the East to imperialism, and the revolutionary movement among those peoples. It is self-evident that this revolutionary movement of the peoples of the East can now develop effectively, can reach a successful issue, only in direct association with the revolutionary struggle of our Soviet Republic against international imperialism. Owing to a number of circumstances — among them, the backwardness of Russia and its boundless area, and the fact that it is a border-line between Europe and Asia, between the West and the East — we were called upon — and we regard that as a great honour — to bear the whole brunt, to be the pioneers, of the world struggle against imperialism. Consequently, the whole course of development in the immediate future presages a still broader and more strenuous struggle against international imperialism, and will inevitably be linked with the struggle of the Soviet Republic against the united forces of imperialism — of Germany, France, Britain and America.

Ibid.

## II. THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS AND LIBERATION WARS OF OPPRESSED NATIONS ARE INEVITABLE, PROGRESSIVE AND REVOLUTIONARY

The principle of nationality is historically inevitable in bourgeois society and, taking this society into account, the Marxist fully recognizes the historical legitimacy of national movements. But to prevent this recognition from becoming an apology for nationalism it must be most strictly limited only to what is progressive in these movements — so that this recognition shall not lead to the blunting of proletarian consciousness by bourgeois ideology.

Rousing the masses from feudal slumber, their struggle against all national oppression, for the sovereignty of the people, for the sovereignty of nations, is progressive. Hence, it is the *bounden* duty of a Marxist to uphold the most resolute and most consistent democratism in all parts of the national

question. This task is mainly a negative one. But the proletariat cannot go beyond this in supporting nationalism, for beyond begins the "positive" activity of the *bourgeoisie*, which is striving to *fortify* nationalism.

From "Critical Remarks on the National Question" (October-December 1913).

National struggle, national revolt, national secession are quite "feasible" and may actually be observed *under* imperialism; they even increase in intensity, for imperialism does not check the development of capitalism and the growth of democratic tendencies among the masses of population, but causes the antagonism between these democratic tendencies and the anti-democratic tendency of the trusts to become *more acute*.

From "A Caricature of Marxism and 'Imperialist Economism'" (August-October 1916).

National wars waged by colonial and semi-colonial countries are not only possible but *inevitable* in the epoch of imperialism. The colonies and semi-colonies (China, Turkey, Persia) have a population

of nearly one billion, i.e., *more than half* the population of the earth. In these countries the movements for national liberation are either very strong already or are growing and maturing. Every war is a continuation of politics by other means. The national liberation politics of the colonies will *inevitably* be continued by national wars of the colonies *against* imperialism.

From "The Pamphlet by Junius" (July 1916).

National wars *against* the imperialist powers are not only possible and probable, they are inevitable, they are *progressive* and *revolutionary*, *although*, of course, what is needed for their *success* is either the combined efforts of an enormous number of the inhabitants of the oppressed countries (hundreds of millions in the example we have taken of India and China), or a *particularly* favourable combination of circumstances in the international situation (for example, when the intervention of the imperialist powers is paralysed by exhaustion, by war, by their mutual antagonisms, etc.), or a *simultaneous* uprising of the proletariat of one of the Great Powers against the bourgeoisie (this

latter case stands first in order from the standpoint of what is desirable and advantageous for the victory of the proletariat).

Ibid.

The history of the twentieth century, this century of "unbridled imperialism," is replete with colonial wars. But what we Europeans, the imperialist oppressors of the majority of the peoples of the world, with our habitual, despicable European chauvinism, call "colonial wars" are often national wars, or national rebellions of those oppressed peoples. One of the main features of imperialism is that it accelerates the development of capitalism in the most backward countries, and thereby widens and intensifies the struggle against national oppression. This is a fact. It inevitably follows from this that imperialism must often give rise to national wars. *Junius*, who in her pamphlet defends the above-quoted "theses," says that in the imperialist epoch every national war against one of the imperialist Great Powers leads to the intervention of another competing imperialist Great Power and thus, every national war is converted into an imperialist war. But this argument is also wrong. This *may* happen,

but it does not always happen. Many colonial wars in the period between 1900 and 1914 did not follow this road. And it would be simply ridiculous if we declared, for instance, that after the present war, if it ends in the extreme exhaustion of all the belligerents, "there can be no" national, progressive, revolutionary wars "whatever," waged, say, by China in alliance with India, Persia, Siam, etc., against the Great Powers.

To deny all possibility of national wars under imperialism is wrong in theory, obviously mistaken historically, and in practice is tantamount to European chauvinism: we who belong to nations that oppress hundreds of millions of people in Europe, Africa, Asia, etc., must tell the oppressed peoples that it is "impossible" for them to wage war against "our" nations!

From "The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution" (September 1916).

I think that what the Red Army has accomplished, its struggle and the history of its victory, will be of colossal and epochal significance for all the peoples of the East. It will show the peoples of the East that, weak as they may be, and invincible as

may seem the power of the European oppressors, who employ in the struggle all the marvels of technology and the art of war — nevertheless, a revolutionary war waged by oppressed peoples, if it really succeeds in arousing the millions of toilers and exploited, harbours within it such potentialities, such miracles, that the emancipation of the peoples of the East is now quite practicable in terms not only of the prospects of the international revolution, but also of the direct military experience in Asia, in Siberia, the experience of the Soviet Republic which had suffered the armed invasion of all the powerful imperialist countries.

From "Address to the Second All-Russian Congress of Communist Organizations of the Peoples of the East" (November 22, 1919).

### **III. THE PROLETARIAT SHOULD UNDERTAKE THE ROLE OF LEADER IN THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT**

#### **THE PROLETARIAT SHOULD LEAD THE PEASANT MOVEMENT**

In regard to more backward states and nations in which feudal or patriarchal, or patriarchal-peasant relations predominate, it is particularly important to bear in mind:

First, that all the Communist Parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in these countries, and that the primary duty of rendering the most active assistance rests upon the workers in those countries upon which the backward nation is dependent as a colony or financially;

Second, that it is necessary to fight against the clergy and other influential reactionary and mediaeval elements in backward countries;

Third, that it is necessary to combat Pan-Islamism and similar trends, which strive to combine the

liberation movement against European and American imperialism with the strengthening of the positions of the Khans, the landlords, the mullahs, etc.;

Fourth, that it is necessary to render special assistance to the peasant movement in the backward countries against the landlords, against large land-ownership, against all manifestations or survivals of feudalism; to strive to give the peasant movement the most revolutionary character and to establish the closest possible alliance between the West European communist proletariat and the revolutionary peasant movement in the East, in the colonies and in the backward countries, generally; particularly necessary to exert all efforts to apply the fundamental principles of the Soviet system to countries in which pre-capitalist relations predominate by creating "Toilers' Soviets";

.....

From "Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Questions" (published in June 1920).

The majority of the Eastern peoples are in a worse position than the most backward country in Europe — Russia. But in our struggle against feu-

dal survivals and capitalism, we succeeded in uniting the peasants and workers of Russia; and our struggle proceeded so easily because the peasants and workers united against capitalism and feudalism. Here contact with the peoples of the East is particularly important, because the majority of the Eastern peoples are typical representatives of the toiling masses — not the workers who have passed through the school of the capitalist mills and factories, but typical representatives of the toiling, exploited peasant masses who are victims of mediaeval oppression. The Russian revolution was an example of how the proletarians, having defeated capitalism and united with the vast diffuse mass of peasant toilers, rose up victoriously against mediaeval oppression. Now our Soviet Republic has to group around it all the awakening peoples of the East and, together with them, wage a struggle against international imperialism.

Here you are confronted with a task which until now did not confront the Communists anywhere in the world: relying upon the general theory and practice of Communism, you must adapt yourselves to peculiar conditions which do not exist in the European countries and be able to apply that theory and practice to conditions in which the bulk of the population are peasants, and in which the task is



to wage a struggle not against capitalism, but against mediaeval survivals. That is a difficult and unique task, but a very thankful one, because those masses are being drawn into the struggle which until now have taken no part in it, and, on the other hand, because the organization of communist units in the East gives you the opportunity to maintain the closest contact with the Third International. You must find specific forms for this alliance of the foremost proletarians of the world with the toiling and exploited masses of the East whose conditions are in many cases mediaeval. We have accomplished on a small scale in our country that which you will accomplish on a big scale in big countries. And that latter task you will, I hope, perform with success. Thanks to the communist organizations in the East, of which you here are the representatives, you have contact with the advanced revolutionary proletariat. Your task is to continue to see to it that communist propaganda is carried on in every country in the language intelligible to its people.

From "Address to the Second All-Russian Congress of Communist Organizations of the Peoples of the East" (November 22, 1919).

. . . I would like particularly to emphasize the question of the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. It was this question that gave rise to some disagreement. We argued about whether it would be correct, in principle and in theory, to declare that the Communist International and the Communist Parties should support the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. As a result of this discussion we unanimously decided to speak of the nationalist-revolutionary movement instead of the "bourgeois-democratic" movement. There is not the slightest doubt that every nationalist movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement, for the bulk of the population in backward countries are peasants who represent bourgeois-capitalist relations. It would be utopian to think that proletarian parties, if indeed they can arise in such countries, could pursue communist tactics and a communist policy in these backward countries without having definite relations with the peasant movement and without effectively supporting it. . . .

I would like next to make a few remarks concerning Peasants' Soviets. The practical work carried on by the Russian Communists in the colonies

which formerly belonged to tsarism, in backward countries like Turkestan and others, confronted us with the question of how to apply communist tactics and policy amidst pre-capitalist conditions; for the most important characteristic feature of these countries is that pre-capitalist relations still predominate in them, and, therefore, a purely proletarian movement is out of the question in them. In those countries there is almost no industrial proletariat. Nevertheless, even there we have undertaken and had to undertake the role of leader. Our work revealed to us that in those countries we have to overcome colossal difficulties; but the practical results of our work also revealed to us that, notwithstanding these difficulties, it is possible to rouse among the masses a striving for independent political thought and independent political activity, even where there is almost no proletariat. This work was more difficult for us than for the comrades in West European countries, because the proletariat in Russia is overwhelmed with state work. It is quite understandable that peasants who are in a state of semi-feudal dependence can fully appreciate the idea of Soviet organization and put it into practice. It is also clear that the oppressed masses, who are not only exploited by merchant capital, but also by feudal rulers, and by the state, on a feudal basis,

can wield this weapon, this form of organization, even in the conditions under which they live. The idea of Soviet organization is a simple one and can be applied, not only to proletarian, but also to peasant, feudal and semi-feudal relations. Our experience in this sphere is not yet very considerable; but the debates which took place in the commission, in which several representatives of colonial countries participated, proved irrefutably that it is necessary to indicate in the theses of the Communist International that Peasants' Soviets, Soviets of the exploited, are a useful weapon, not only in capitalist countries, but also for countries in which pre-capitalist relations exist; and we must say that it is the bounden duty of the Communist Parties, and of those elements which are ready to create Communist Parties, to carry on propaganda in favour of the idea of Peasants' Soviets, of Toilers' Soviets everywhere, in backward countries and in colonies; in those countries, also, they must strive to create Soviets of the Toiling People as far as conditions will allow.

From "The Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions at the Second Congress of the Communist International" (July 26, 1920).

**THE PROLETARIAT MUST UNITE WITH THE  
BOURGEOISIE WHICH SUPPORTS THE NATIONAL  
MOVEMENT AND OPPOSE ITS TENDENCY  
TO COMPROMISE**

The bourgeoisie, which naturally exercises hegemony (leadership) in the beginning of every national movement, calls the support of all the national aspirations a practical matter. But the policy of the proletariat in the national question (as in other questions) supports the bourgeoisie only in a definite direction; it never coincides with the policy of the bourgeoisie. The working class supports the bourgeoisie only for the sake of peace between nationalities (which the bourgeoisie cannot give to the full extent and which can be achieved only in so far as there is *complete* democratization), for the sake of equal rights, for the sake of creating better conditions for the class struggle. Therefore it is precisely *against the practicalness* of the bourgeoisie that the proletarians advance their *principles* in the national question, and always give the bourgeoisie *only conditional* support. In matters of nationality the bourgeoisie of every country wants either privileges for *its own* nation, or exceptional advantages for it; this is called "practical." The proletariat is

opposed to all privileges, to all exceptions. To demand "practicalness" of it means dragging it in the wake of the bourgeoisie, falling into opportunism.

.....

*To the extent* that the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation struggles against the oppressing one, *to that extent*, we are always, in every case, and more resolutely than anyone else, *for it*, because we are the staunchest and the most consistent enemies of oppression. In so far as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for *its own* bourgeois nationalism we are against it. A struggle against the privileges and violence of the oppressing nation and no toleration of the strivings for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation.

From "On the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (February-May 1914).

Fifth, that it is necessary to wage a determined struggle against painting the bourgeois-democratic liberation trend in backward countries in communist colours; the Communist International must support the bourgeois-democratic national movements in colonial and backward countries only on the condition that the elements of future proletarian parties

existing in all backward countries, which are not merely Communist in name, shall be grouped together and trained to appreciate their special tasks, viz., the tasks of fighting the bourgeois-democratic movements within their own nations; the Communist International must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in colonial and backward countries, but must not merge with it, and must unconditionally preserve the independence of the proletarian movement even in its most rudimentary form;

.....

From "Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Questions" (published in June 1920).

But it was argued that if we speak about the bourgeois-democratic movement all distinction between reformist and revolutionary movements will be obliterated; whereas in recent times this distinction has been fully and clearly revealed in the backward and colonial countries, for the imperialist bourgeoisie is trying with all its might to implant the reformist movement also among the oppressed nations. A certain rapprochement has been brought about between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting

countries and those of the colonial countries, so that very often, even in the majority of cases, perhaps, where the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries does support the national movement, it simultaneously works in harmony with the imperialist bourgeoisie, i.e., it joins the latter in fighting against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes. In the commission this was proved irrefutably, and we came to the conclusion that the only correct thing to do was to take this distinction into consideration and nearly everywhere to substitute the term "nationalist-revolutionary" for the term "bourgeois-democratic." The meaning of this change is that we Communists should, and will, support bourgeois liberation movements in the colonial countries only when these movements are really revolutionary, when the representatives of these movements do not hinder us in training and organizing the peasants and the broad masses of the exploited in a revolutionary spirit. Even if these conditions do not exist, the Communists in these countries must fight against the reformist bourgeoisie, among which we include the heroes of the Second International. Reformist parties already exist in colonial countries, and sometimes their representatives call them-

selves Social-Democrats and Socialists. The above-mentioned distinction has now been drawn in all the theses, and I think that, thanks to this, our point of view has been formulated much more precisely.

From "The Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions at the Second Congress of the Communist International" (July 26, 1920).

All national oppression calls forth the resistance of the *broad masses* of the people; and the resistance of a nationally oppressed population always *tends* towards national revolt. Frequently (particularly in Austria and Russia), the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations *merely* talks about national revolt, while in actual practice it enters into reactionary agreements with the bourgeoisie of the oppressing nations behind the backs of, *and against*, its own people. In such cases the criticism of revolutionary Marxists must be directed, not against the national movement, but against its being degraded, vulgarized and reduced to a petty squabble.

From "A Caricature of Marxism and 'Imperialist Economism'" (August-October 1916).

. . . For the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations always converts the slogan of national liberation into a means for deceiving the workers; in internal politics it utilizes these slogans as a means for concluding reactionary agreements with the bourgeoisie of the ruling nation (for instance, the Poles in Austria and Russia, who entered into pacts with reaction in order to oppress the Jews and the Ukrainians); in the realm of foreign politics it strives to enter into pacts with one of the rival imperialist powers for the purpose of achieving its own predatory aims (the policies of the small states in the Balkans, etc.).

From "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination (Theses)" (January-February 1916).

The P.P.S. view is that the problem of nationality is *exhausted* by the contrast — "we" (Poles) and "they" (Germans, Russians, etc.). The Social-Democrat puts in the forefront the contrast — "we," the proletarians, and "they," the bourgeoisie. "We," the proletarians, have seen dozens of times how the bourgeoisie *betrays* the interests of freedom, country, language and nationality when it is confronted with the revolutionary proletariat. We

have seen the French bourgeoisie, at the moment of the greatest humiliation and oppression of the French nation, surrender to the Prussians, we have seen the government of national defence become a government of treason to the people, we have seen the bourgeoisie of an oppressed nation asking for the help of soldiers of the oppressing nation to crush its proletarian countrymen who had dared to stretch out a hand for power.

From "The National Question in Our Programme" (published in *Iskra*, No. 44, July 15, 1903).

A militant, sincere spirit of democracy pervades every line of Sun Yat-sen's platform. It reveals a thorough appreciation of the inadequacy of a "racial" revolution. It does not betray a trace of the non-political spirit, or of indifference towards political liberty, or any admission of the idea that Chinese autocracy is compatible with Chinese "social reform," with Chinese constitutional reforms, etc. It is the expression of complete democracy and the demand for a republic. It directly presents the question of the conditions of the masses, of the mass struggle; it expresses warm sympathy

for the toilers and the exploited, belief in the justice of their cause and in their strength.

What we have before us is a really great ideology of a really great people, which is able not only to bemoan its age-long slavery, not only to dream of liberty and equality, but is able also to *fight* the age-long oppressors of China.

A comparison naturally suggests itself between the provisional President of the Republic in wild, dead Asiatic China and the various presidents of the republics in Europe and America, in countries of progressive culture. The presidents in *those* republics are all businessmen, agents or tools in the hands of the bourgeoisie, which is rotten to the core and besmirched from head to foot with mud and blood, not with the blood of emperors and potentates, but with the blood of workers shot down in strikes in the name of progress and civilization. The presidents in those countries are the representatives of the bourgeoisie, which very long ago renounced all the ideals of its youth, which has utterly prostituted itself, sold itself body and soul to the millionaires and billionaires, to the feudal rulers turned bourgeois, and others.

In China, the Asiatic provisional President of the Republic is a revolutionary democrat imbued with the nobility and heroism that is inherent in a class that is in the ascendancy and not on the decline, which does not fear the future, but believes in it and bravely fights for it — a class which, instead of striving to preserve and restore the past in order to safeguard its privileges, hates the past and knows how to discard its deadening decay, which strangles every living thing.

Well, does this mean that the materialist West is utterly decayed, that light shines only from the mystic, religious East? No, just the opposite. It means that the East has finally struck the path of the West, that new *hundreds and hundreds of millions* of people will henceforth take part in the struggle for the ideals which the West has worked out. The Western bourgeoisie has decayed and is already being confronted by its grave-diggers — the proletariat. But in Asia there *still* exists a bourgeoisie capable of representing sincere, militant, consistent democracy, a worthy companion of the great preachers and great public men of the end of the eighteenth century in France.

The chief representative or the main social support of this Asiatic bourgeoisie, which is still capable of performing historically progressive deeds, is the peasant. By his side there already exists a liberal bourgeoisie, whose politicians, like Yuan Shih-kai, are, above all, capable of treachery: yesterday they feared the emperor, cringed before him; then, when they saw the strength and sensed the victory of revolutionary democracy, they betrayed the emperor; tomorrow they will betray the democrats in order to strike a bargain with some old or new "constitutional" emperor.

The real liberation of the Chinese people from age-long slavery would be impossible were it not for the great, sincere democratic enthusiasm which is stirring the toiling masses and rendering them capable of performing miracles, an enthusiasm such as is manifested in every phrase of Sun Yat-sen's platform.

.....

This theory, if it is to be considered from the standpoint of a doctrine, is the theory of a petty-bourgeois "socialist" reactionary. Because the dream of the possibility of "preventing" capitalism in China, of greater facilities for a "social revolu-

tion" in China because of her backwardness, etc., is altogether reactionary. And Sun Yat-sen himself with inimitable, one might say, virgin naïveté, utterly smashes his own reactionary Narodnik theory when he admits what life forces him to admit, namely, that "China is on the eve of a gigantic industrial" (i.e., capitalist) "development," that in China "trade" (i.e., capitalism) "will develop to an enormous extent," that "in fifty years we shall have many Shanghais," i.e., teeming centres with capitalist riches and proletarian need and poverty.

.....

The more China lagged behind Europe and Japan, the more it was threatened with disintegration and national decay. It could only be "regenerated" by the heroism of the revolutionary masses of the people, by a heroism capable of creating a Chinese republic in the sphere of politics, and of ensuring the most rapid capitalist progress by means of land nationalization in the agrarian sphere.

Whether and to what extent this will succeed is another question. Various countries in their bourgeois revolutions have achieved various degrees of political and agrarian democracy, and in the most diverse combinations. The deciding factors will be

the international situation and the relation of social forces in China. The emperor will surely unite the feudal rulers, the bureaucracy and the Chinese clergy and prepare for restoration. Yuan Shih-kai, the representative of the bourgeoisie, which has only just changed from liberal monarchist to liberal republican (for how long?), will pursue a policy of manoeuvring between monarchy and revolution. Revolutionary bourgeois democracy represented by Sun Yat-sen is correctly seeking the path to the "regeneration" of China in the development of the maximum of initiative, resoluteness and boldness of the peasant masses in the matter of political and agrarian reforms.

Finally, to the extent that the number of Shanghais increases in China, the Chinese proletariat will increase as well. It will probably form some sort of Chinese Social-Democratic Labour Party, which, while criticizing the petty-bourgeois utopias and reactionary views of Sun Yat-sen, will certainly take care to single out, defend and develop the revolutionary-democratic core of his political and agrarian programme.

From "Democracy and Narodism in China"  
(published in *Nevskaya Zvezda*, No. 17,  
July 15, 1912).



#### **IV. THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL PROLETARIAT MUST ASSIST THE LIBERATION MOVE- MENTS OF OPPRESSED NATIONS**

##### **THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES MUST DO THEIR BEST TO HELP THE OPPRESSED NATIONS**

Only the Russian Socialist Republic has raised aloft the banner of struggle for genuine emancipation, and it is winning sympathy the world over. Through these small states we have won the sympathy of all the peoples of the world, and they comprise hundreds and hundreds of millions. At present they are oppressed and benighted, they represent the most underdeveloped section of the population, but the war has provided a clearer vision of things. The imperialist war involved a huge mass of people. England brought over regiments from India to fight the Germans. France

put millions of Negroes under arms for the same purpose. They made up the shock troops that were sent to the most dangerous places, where they were mowed down like grass by machine-guns. And they learned a thing or two. Just as in the tsarist days, Russian soldiers had said: if we are to die, better to die fighting the landlords — these men said: if we are to die, then it won't be to help the French bloodsuckers get the best of the German capitalist bloodsuckers, but to win freedom from both the German and the French capitalists. In every country, even in India where 300 millions live in British bondage, an awakening of political consciousness and the revolutionary movement grow from day to day. All these people have their eyes fixed on one star, the star of the Soviet Republic, for they know that the Soviet Republic has made the greatest sacrifices in the struggle against the imperialists and has withstood the severest trials.

From "Report to the First All-Russian Congress of Toiling Cossacks" (March 1, 1920).

5. The world political situation has now placed on the order of the day the dictatorship of the proletariat, and all events in world politics are in-

evitably concentrating around one central point, viz., the struggle of the world bourgeoisie against the Soviet Russian Republic, which is inevitably grouping around itself the Soviet movement of the advanced workers of all countries, as well as all the national liberation movements in the colonies and among the oppressed nationalities which have become convinced by their bitter experience that there is no salvation for them except the victory of the Soviet power over world imperialism.

6. Consequently, one must not confine oneself at the present time to the bare recognition, or proclamation, of the need for bringing together the toilers of the various nations; it is necessary to pursue a policy that will bring about the closest alliance of all the national and colonial liberation movements with Soviet Russia; the form of this alliance is to be determined by the degree of development of the communist movement among the proletariat of each country, or of the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement of the workers and peasants in backward countries or among backward nationalities.

From "Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Questions" (published in June 1920).

We shall exert every effort to become friendly and to amalgamate with the Mongolians, the Persians, the Indians and Egyptians; we deem it our duty and in *our interest* to do so, for otherwise Socialism in Europe will *not be durable*. We shall strive to give these nations, which are more backward and more oppressed than we are, "unselfish cultural aid," to use the happy expression of the Polish Social-Democrats, i.e., we shall help them to introduce machinery in order to ease their toil; we shall help them on towards democracy and Socialism.

From "A Caricature of Marxism and 'Imperialist Economism'" (August-October 1916).

**THE PROLETARIAT IN IMPERIALIST COUNTRIES  
MUST RENDER DIRECT AID TO THE LIBERATION  
MOVEMENTS OF OPPRESSED NATIONS**

8. Parties in countries whose bourgeoisie possess colonies and oppress other nations must pursue a particularly distinct and clear policy in respect to the colonial and oppressed nations. Every party wishing to join the Third International must ruthlessly expose the colonial machinations of the

imperialists of its "own" country; must support — by actions and not merely by words — every colonial liberation movement, demand expulsion of the imperialists from the colonies, educate the workers in a spirit of brotherhood with the labouring population of colonial and oppressed nations, and conduct systematic agitation among the armed forces against all colonial oppression.

From "Conditions for Affiliation to the Communist International" (published in July 1920).

9. In the sphere of internal state relations, the national policy of the Communist International cannot limit itself to the bare, formal, purely rhetorical and non-committal recognition of the equality of nations to which the bourgeois democrats confine themselves — no matter whether they frankly call themselves democrats or whether they go under the cloak of Socialism, as for example, the Socialists of the Second International.

Not only must the constant violation of the equality of nations and of the guaranteed rights of the national minorities that takes place in all capitalist countries in spite of their "democratic" constitutions be steadily exposed in the whole of the

propaganda and agitation of the Communist Parties — in parliament and out of it — but it is necessary also, first, to explain constantly that the Soviet system alone is capable of granting real equality of nations by uniting first the proletariat and then the whole mass of the toilers in the struggle against the bourgeoisie; second, it is necessary for the Communist Parties to render direct aid to the revolutionary movements in the dependent and subject nations (for example, in Ireland, the Negroes in America, etc.) and in the colonies.

Without the latter particularly important condition, the struggle against the oppression of the dependent nations and colonies and also the recognition of their rights to state separation remains a false signboard, as we see in the case of the parties affiliated to the Second International.

10. The recognition of internationalism in words, and substituting for it in deeds, in all propaganda, agitation and practical work, petty-bourgeois nationalism and pacifism, is a common occurrence, not only among the parties affiliated to the Second International, but also among those which have withdrawn from that International, and not infrequently, even among those which now call

themselves Communist Parties. The struggle against this evil, against these most deep-rooted petty-bourgeois national prejudices, comes more and more to the forefront in proportion as the task of transforming the dictatorship of the proletariat from a national one (i.e., existing in one country and incapable of determining world politics) into an international one (i.e., the dictatorship of the proletariat covering at least several advanced countries and capable of exercising decisive influence upon the whole of world politics) becomes the question of the day. Petty-bourgeois nationalism declares the recognition of the equality of nations, and nothing else, to be internationalism, while preserving intact national egoism (quite apart from the purely verbal character of this recognition), whereas proletarian internationalism demands, firstly, the subordination of the interests of the proletarian struggle in one country to the interests of the struggle on a world scale; and secondly, it calls for the ability and readiness on the part of the nations which are achieving victory over the bourgeoisie to make the greatest national sacrifices for the sake of overthrowing international capital.

From "Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Questions" (published in June 1920).

If we do not want to betray Socialism, we *must* support *every* rebellion against our main enemy, the bourgeoisie of the big states, provided it is not the rebellion of a reactionary class. By refusing to support rebellions of annexed territories we objectively become annexationists. Precisely "in the era of imperialism," which is the era of the incipient social revolution, the proletariat makes special efforts to support the rebellion of annexed territories today, in order that tomorrow, or simultaneously with the rebellion, it may attack the bourgeoisie of the "Great" Power which is weakened by that rebellion.

From "Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up" (July 1916).

. . . The semi-colonial countries, like China, Persia, Turkey and all colonies, which have a combined population amounting to a billion. In these countries the bourgeois-democratic movements have either hardly begun, or are far from having been completed. Socialists must not only demand the unconditional and immediate liberation of the colonies without compensation — and this demand in its political expression signifies nothing more nor

less than the recognition of the right to self-determination — but they must render determined support to the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements for national liberation in these countries and assist their rebellion — and if need be, their revolutionary war — *against* the imperialist powers that oppress them.

From "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination (Theses)" (January-February 1916).

Our Party is not afraid to declare publicly that it will sympathize with wars or uprisings which Ireland might start against Britain; Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia against France; Tripoli against Italy; the Ukraine, Persia and China against Russia, etc.

From "An Open Letter to Boris Souvarine" (second half of December 1916).

Communist groups and Parties in the East, in the colonial and backward countries, which are so brutally robbed, oppressed and enslaved by the "civilized" alliance of the predatory nations, were likewise represented at the Congress. The revolutionary movement in the advanced countries would

actually be a sheer fraud if, in their struggle against capital, the workers of Europe and America were not closely and completely united with the hundreds upon hundreds of millions of "colonial" slaves who are oppressed by capital.

From "The Second Congress of the Communist International" (published in *Komunistka*, No. 3-4, August-September 1920).

**V. THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS OF OPPRESSED NATIONS PLAY A VERY BIG REVOLUTIONARY ROLE IN THE WORLD REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT**

I should also like to emphasize here the importance of the movement in the colonies. In this respect we witness in all the old parties, in all the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois labour parties of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals the survivals of old sentimental conceptions — there is much sympathy for the oppressed peoples of the colonies and semi-colonies. The movement in the colonies is still regarded as an insignificant national and completely peaceful movement. However, that is not the case. For great changes have taken place in this respect since the beginning of the twentieth century, namely, millions and hundreds of millions — actually the overwhelming majority of the world's population — are now coming out as an independent and active revolutionary factor. And it should

be perfectly clear that in the coming decisive battles of the world revolution, this movement of the majority of the world's population, originally aimed at national liberation, will turn against capitalism and imperialism and will, perhaps, play a much more revolutionary role than we have been led to expect. It is important to stress that, for the first time in our International, we are discussing the preparation of that struggle. Certainly, in this vast sphere the difficulties are much greater, but at any rate the movement is advancing and the mass of the toiling people, the peasants in the colonial countries, despite the fact that they are still backward, will play a very big revolutionary role in the coming phases of the world revolution.

From "Tactics of the Russian Communist Party, Report to the Third Congress of the Communist International" (July 5, 1921).

But the opportunists have scarcely congratulated themselves on the inauguration of "social peace," and on the fact that storms were needless under "democracy," when a new source of great world storms opened up in Asia. The Russian Revolution was followed by the Turkish, the Persian and the

Chinese revolutions. It is in this era of storms and their "repercussions" in Europe that we are now living. Whatever may be the fate of the Great Chinese Republic, against which the various "civilized" hyenas are now gnashing their teeth, no power on earth can restore the old serfdom in Asia, or wipe out the heroic democracy of the masses of the people in the Asiatic and semi-Asiatic countries.

Certain people who were inattentive to the conditions of preparation and development of the mass struggle, were driven to despair and to anarchism by the prolonged postponements of the decisive struggle against capitalism in Europe. We can now see how short-sighted and craven this anarchist despair is.

The fact that Asia, with its population of eight hundred million, has been drawn into the struggle for these same European ideals should inspire us with the courage and not despair.

From "The Historical Destiny of the Doctrine of Karl Marx" (published in *Pravda*, No. 50, March 1, 1913).

Was it so long ago that China was considered a typical land of unmitigated stagnation? Now China

is a land of seething political activity, the scene of a virile public movement and of a democratic upsurge. Following the 1905 movement in Russia, the democratic revolution spread to the whole of Asia — to Turkey, Persia, China. Ferment is growing in British India.

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World capitalism and the 1905 movement in Russia have finally awakened Asia. Hundreds of millions of the downtrodden and benighted have awakened from mediaeval stagnation to a new life and are rising to fight for elementary human rights and democracy.

The workers of the advanced countries follow with interest and inspiration this powerful growth of the liberation movement, in all its various forms, in every part of the world. The bourgeoisie of Europe, fearing the might of the labour movement, is looking for assistance from the forces of reaction, militarism, clericalism and obscurantism. But the proletariat of the European countries and the young democracy of Asia, fully confident of its strength and with abiding faith in the masses, are advancing to take the place of this decadent and moribund bourgeoisie.

The awakening of Asia and the beginning of the struggle for power by the advanced proletariat of Europe are a symbol of the new phase in world history that began early this century.

From "The Awakening of Asia" (published in *Pravda*, No. 103, May 7, 1913).

In view of the campaign of the government and liberal press (*Rech*) to take advantage of the revolutionary movement in China in order to sever the areas bordering on Russia in the interests of the Russian capitalists, the conference emphasizes the international significance of the revolutionary struggle of the Chinese people as one that brings liberation to Asia and undermines the domination of the European bourgeoisie. The conference salutes the revolutionary republicans of China. It states that the Russian proletariat follows the successes of the revolutionary people of China with deep inspiration and whole-hearted sympathy, and denounces the Russian liberals for supporting the tsarist policy of aggrandizement.

From "The Resolutions of the Sixth ('Prague') All-Russian Conference of the R.S.D.L.P." (January 1912).

I am glad to hear that the principles of self-determination and liberation of oppressed nations from exploitation by foreign and native capitalists, proclaimed by the Workers' and Peasants' Republic, have found such a ready response among progressive Indians, who are waging a heroic fight for freedom. The toiling masses of Russia follow the awakening of the Indian worker and peasant with unabating attention. The organization and discipline of the working people and their perseverance and solidarity with the workers of the world are an earnest of ultimate success. We welcome the close alliance of Moslem and non-Moslem elements. We sincerely want to see this alliance extended to all the toilers of the East. For only when the Indian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Persian, Turkish workers and peasants join hands and march together in the common cause of liberation — only then will decisive victory over the exploiters be ensured. Long live free Asia!

From "To the Indian Revolutionary Association" (published in *Pravda*, No. 108, May 20, 1920).

The basic reason for this tremendous acceleration of world development is that new hundreds of mil-



lions have been drawn into it. The old bourgeois and imperialist Europe, which was accustomed to look upon itself as the centre of the universe, rotted and burst like a putrid ulcer in the first imperialist holocaust. No matter how the Spenglers, and all the enlightened philistines who are capable of admiring (or even studying) Spengler may lament it, this decline of the old Europe is but an episode in the history of the downfall of the world bourgeoisie, oversatiated by imperialist rapine and oppression of the majority of the world's population.

That majority has now awakened and has begun a movement which even the "mightiest" powers cannot stem. They stand no chance. For the present "victors" in the first imperialist slaughter have not the strength to score victory over small — tiny, I might say — Ireland, nor can they emerge victorious from the financial confusion that reigns in their own midst. Meanwhile, India and China are seething. They represent over 700 million people, and together with the neighbouring Asian countries, that are in all ways similar to them, over half of the world's inhabitants. Inexorably and with mounting momentum they are approaching their 1905, with the essential and important difference that in 1905

the revolution in Russia could still proceed (at any rate at the beginning) in isolation, that is, without other countries being immediately drawn in. But the revolutions that are maturing in India and China are being drawn into — have already been drawn into — the revolutionary struggle, the revolutionary movement, the world revolution.

From "On the Tenth Anniversary of *Pravda*" (May 2, 1922).

In the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China, etc., account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe. And it is precisely this majority that, during the past few years, has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest shadow of doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this sense, the complete victory of Socialism is fully and absolutely assured.

From "Better Fewer, But Better" (March 2, 1923).

## VI. WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES AND OPPRESSED NATIONS, UNITE!

. . . The cornerstone of the whole policy of the Communist International in the national and colonial question must be to bring together the proletarians and the masses of the toilers of all nations and countries for the joint revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the landlords and the bourgeoisie; for this alone guarantees victory over capitalism, without which the abolition of national oppression and inequality is impossible.

From "Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Questions" (published in June 1920).

At the Congress of the Third, Communist International, I said that the whole world is divided into oppressed nations and dominant nations. The oppressed nations comprise no less than seventy per cent of the whole population of the earth. The Peace

of Versailles added a hundred or a hundred and fifty million people to this number.

Today we speak not only as representatives of the proletarians of all countries, but also as representatives of the oppressed nations. The Communist International recently issued a magazine called *The Peoples of the East*, in which it advanced this slogan for the Eastern peoples: "Workers of All Countries and Oppressed Nations, Unite!" One comrade asked: "When did the Executive Committee decide on a change of slogans?" Indeed, I cannot remember any such decision. And, of course, from the standpoint of the *Communist Manifesto* this is wrong, but then the *Communist Manifesto* was written under totally different conditions. From the standpoint of present-day politics, this slogan is correct. Relations are more acute. The whole of Germany is in a state of ferment, and so is Asia. You read the report of how the revolutionary movement is taking shape in India. In China there is a furious hatred of the Japanese and of the Americans. In Germany there is a seething hatred of the Entente, which can be appreciated only when compared with the German workers' hatred of their capitalists. The result has been to make Russia the direct spokesman of all the oppressed of the world. Developments are teaching

the peoples to regard Russia as the centre of attraction.

From "Speech at a Meeting of Activists of the Moscow Organization of the R.C.P. (B.)" (December 6, 1920).

The amalgamation of the revolutionary proletarians of capitalist, advanced countries with the revolutionary masses of those countries where there is no proletariat, or hardly any, with the oppressed masses of colonial, Eastern countries, is taking place at this congress. The riveting of the bonds of unity depends upon us, and I am sure that we shall do that. World imperialism must fall when the revolutionary onslaught of the exploited and oppressed workers in each country, overcoming the resistance of the petty-bourgeois elements and the influence of the small upper stratum of the labour aristocracy, will unite with the revolutionary onslaught of hundreds of millions of people who up to now have stood outside of history and have been regarded merely as the object of history.

From "The International Situation and the Fundamental Tasks of the Communist International, Report Delivered at the Second Congress of the Communist International" (July 19, 1920).

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外文出版社出版(北京)

1960年9月第一版 1960年10月第二版

编号: (英)1050—371



