

# Lenin

**THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL  
AND ITS PLACE IN HISTORY**



*Workers of All Countries, Unite!*

**V. I. Lenin**

**The Third International  
and Its Place in History**

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## THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL AND ITS PLACE IN HISTORY

The imperialists of the Entente<sup>1</sup> countries are blockading Russia in an effort to cut off the Soviet Republic, as a seat of infection, from the capitalist world. These people, who boast about their "democratic" institutions, are so blinded by their hatred of the Soviet Republic that they do not see how ridiculous they are making themselves. Just think of it, the advanced, most civilised and "democratic" countries, armed to the teeth and enjoying undivided military sway over the whole world, are mortally afraid of the *ideological* infection coming from a ruined, starving, backward, and even, they assert, semi-savage country!

This contradiction alone is opening the eyes of the working masses in all countries and helping to expose the hypocrisy of the imperialists Clemenceau, Lloyd George, Wilson and their governments.

We are being helped, however, not only by the capitalists' blind hatred of the Soviets, but also by their bickering among themselves, which induces them to put spokes in each other's wheels. They have entered into a veritable conspiracy of silence, for they are desperately afraid of the spread of true information about the Soviet Republic in general, and of its official documents in particular. Yet, *Le Temps*, the principal organ of the French bourgeoisie, has published a report on the foundation in Moscow of the Third, Communist International.

For this we express our most respectful thanks to the principal organ of the French bourgeoisie, to this leader of French chauvinism and imperialism. We are prepared to send an illuminated address to *Le Temps* in token of our

appreciation of the effective and able assistance it is giving us.

The manner in which *Le Temps* compiled its report on the basis of our wireless messages clearly and fully reveals the motive that prompted this organ of the money-bags. It wanted to have a dig at Wilson, as if to say, "Look at the people with whom you negotiate!" The wiseacres who write to the order of the money-bags do not see that their attempt to frighten Wilson with the Bolshevik bogey is becoming, in the eyes of the working people, an advertisement for the Bolsheviks. Once more, our most respectful thanks to the organ of the French millionaires!

The Third International has been founded in a world situation that does not allow prohibitions, petty and miserable devices of the Entente imperialists or of capitalist lackeys like the Scheidemanns in Germany and the Renners in Austria to prevent news of this International and sympathy for it spreading among the working class of the world. This situation has been brought about by the growth of the proletarian revolution, which is manifestly developing everywhere by leaps and bounds. It has been brought about by the *Soviet* movement among the working people, which has already achieved such strength as to become really *international*.

The First International (1864-72) laid the foundation of an international organisation of the workers for the preparation of their revolutionary attack on capital. The Second International (1889-1914) was an international organisation of the proletarian movement whose growth proceeded in *breadth*, at the cost of a temporary drop in the revolutionary level, a temporary strengthening of opportunism, which in the end led to the disgraceful collapse of this International.

The Third International actually emerged in 1918, when the long years of struggle against opportunism and social-chauvinism, especially during the war, led to the formation of Communist Parties in a number of countries. Officially, the Third International was founded at its First Congress, in March 1919, in Moscow. And the most characteristic feature of this International, its mission of fulfilling, of implementing the precepts of Marxism, and of achieving the age-old ideals of socialism and the working-class

movement—this most characteristic feature of the Third International has manifested itself immediately in the fact that the new, third, "International Working Men's Association" *has already begun to develop*, to a certain extent, into a *union of Soviet Socialist Republics*.

The First International laid the foundation of the proletarian, international struggle for socialism.

The Second International marked a period in which the soil was prepared for the broad, mass spread of the movement in a number of countries.

The Third International has gathered the fruits of the work of the Second International, discarded its opportunist, social-chauvinist, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois dross, and *has begun to implement* the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The international alliance of the parties which are leading the most revolutionary movement in the world, the movement of the proletariat for the overthrow of the yoke of capital, now rests on an unprecedentedly firm base, in the shape of several *Soviet republics*, which are implementing the dictatorship of the proletariat and are the embodiment of victory over capitalism on an international scale.

The epoch-making significance of the Third, Communist International lies in its having begun to give effect to Marx's cardinal slogan, the slogan which sums up the centuries-old development of socialism and the working-class movement, the slogan which is expressed in the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This prevision and this theory—the prevision and theory of a genius—are becoming a reality.

The Latin words have now been translated into the languages of all the peoples of contemporary Europe—more, into all the languages of the world.

A new era in world history has begun.

Mankind is throwing off the last form of slavery: capitalist, or wage, slavery.

By emancipating himself from slavery, man is for the first time advancing to real freedom.

How is it that one of the most backward countries of Europe was the first country to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, and to organise a Soviet republic? We shall hardly be wrong if we say that it is this contradiction between the backwardness of Russia and the "leap" she has

made over bourgeois democracy to the highest form of democracy, to Soviet, or proletarian, democracy—it is this contradiction that has been one of the reasons (apart from the dead weight of opportunist habits and philistine prejudices that burdened the majority of the socialist leaders) why people in the West have had particular difficulty or have been slow in understanding the role of the Soviets.

The working people all over the world have instinctively grasped the significance of the Soviets as an instrument in the proletarian struggle and as a form of the proletarian state. But the “leaders”, corrupted by opportunism, still continue to worship bourgeois democracy, which they call “democracy” in general.

Is it surprising that the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat has brought out primarily the “contradiction” between the backwardness of Russia and her “leap” *over* bourgeois democracy? It would have been surprising had history granted us the establishment of a *new* form of democracy *without* a number of contradictions.

If any Marxist, or any person, indeed, who has a general knowledge of modern science, were asked whether it is likely that the transition of the different capitalist countries to the dictatorship of the proletariat will take place in an identical or harmoniously proportionate way, his answer would undoubtedly be in the negative. There never has been and never could be even, harmonious, or proportionate development in the capitalist world. Each country has developed more strongly first one, then another aspect or feature or group of features of capitalism and of the working-class movement. The process of development has been uneven.

When France was carrying out her great bourgeois revolution and rousing the whole European continent to a historically new life, Britain proved to be at the head of the counter-revolutionary coalition, although at the same time she was much more developed capitalistically than France. The British working-class movement of that period, however, brilliantly anticipated much that was contained in the future Marxism.

When Britain gave the world Chartism, the first broad, truly mass and politically organised proletarian revolutionary

movement, bourgeois revolutions, most of them weak, were taking place on the European continent, and the first great civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie had broken out in France. The bourgeoisie defeated the various national contingents of the proletariat one by one, in different ways in different countries.

Britain was the model of a country in which, as Engels put it, the bourgeoisie had produced, alongside a bourgeois aristocracy, a very bourgeois upper stratum of the proletariat.<sup>2</sup> For several decades this advanced capitalist country lagged behind in the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. France seemed to have exhausted the strength of the proletariat in two heroic working-class revolts of 1848 and 1871 against the bourgeoisie that made very considerable contributions to world-historical development. Leadership in the International of the working-class movement then passed to Germany; that was in the seventies of the nineteenth century, when she lagged economically behind Britain and France. But when Germany had outstripped these two countries economically, i. e., by the second decade of the twentieth century, the Marxist workers' party of Germany, that model for the whole world, found itself headed by a handful of utter scoundrels, the most filthy blackguards—from Scheidemann and Noske to David and Legien—loathsome hangmen drawn from the workers' ranks who had sold themselves to the capitalists and were in the service of the monarchy and the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

World history is leading unswervingly towards the dictatorship of the proletariat, but is doing so by paths that are anything but smooth, simple and straight.

When Karl Kautsky was still a Marxist and not the renegade from Marxism he became when he began to champion unity with the Scheidemanns and to support bourgeois democracy against Soviet, or proletarian, democracy, he wrote an article—this was at the turn of the century—entitled “The Slavs and Revolution”. In this article he traced the historical conditions that pointed to the possibility of leadership in the world revolutionary movement passing to the Slavs.

And so it has. Leadership in the revolutionary proletarian International has passed for a time—for a short time, it goes without saying—to the Russians, just as at various

periods of the nineteenth century it was in the hands of the British, then of the French, then of the Germans.

I have had occasion more than once to say that it was easier for the Russians than for the advanced countries *to begin* the great proletarian revolution, but that it will be more difficult for them *to continue* it and carry it to final victory, in the sense of the complete organisation of a socialist society.

It was easier for us to begin, firstly, because the unusual—for twentieth-century Europe—political backwardness of the tsarist monarchy gave unusual strength to the revolutionary onslaught of the masses. Secondly, Russia's backwardness merged in a peculiar way the proletarian revolution against the bourgeoisie with the peasant revolution against the landowners. That is what we started from in October 1917, and we would not have achieved victory so easily then if we had not. As long ago as 1856, Marx spoke, in reference to Prussia, of the possibility of a peculiar combination of proletarian revolution and peasant war.<sup>3</sup> From the beginning of 1905 the Bolsheviks advocated the idea of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. Thirdly, the 1905 revolution contributed enormously to the political education of the worker and peasant masses, because it familiarised their vanguard with "the last word" of socialism in the West and also because of the revolutionary *action* of the masses. Without such a "dress rehearsal" as we had in 1905, the revolutions of 1917—both the bourgeois, February revolution, and the proletarian, October revolution—would have been impossible. Fourthly, Russia's geographical conditions permitted her to hold out longer than other countries could have done against the superior military strength of the capitalist, advanced countries. Fifthly, the specific attitude of the proletariat towards the peasantry facilitated the transition from the bourgeois revolution to the socialist revolution, made it easier for the urban proletarians to influence the semi-proletarian, poorer sections of the rural working people. Sixthly, long schooling in strike action and the experience of the European mass working-class movement facilitated the emergence—in a profound and rapidly intensifying revolutionary situation—of such a unique form of proletarian revolutionary organisation as the *Soviets*.

This list, of course, is incomplete; but it will suffice for the time being.

Soviet, or proletarian, democracy was born in Russia. Following the Paris Commune a second epoch-making step was taken. The proletarian and peasant Soviet Republic has proved to be the first stable socialist republic in the world. As a *new type of state* it cannot die. It no longer stands alone.

For the continuance and completion of the work of building socialism, much, very much is still required. Soviet republics in more developed countries, where the proletariat has greater weight and influence, have every chance of surpassing Russia once they take the path of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The bankrupt Second International is now dying and rotting alive. Actually, it is playing the role of lackey to the world bourgeoisie. It is a truly yellow International.<sup>4</sup> Its foremost ideological leaders, such as Kautsky, laud *bourgeois* democracy and call it "democracy" in general, or—what is still more stupid and still more crude—"pure democracy".

Bourgeois democracy has outlived its day, just as the Second International has, though the International performed historically necessary and useful work when the task of the moment was to train the working-class masses within the framework of this bourgeois democracy.

No bourgeois republic, however democratic, ever was or could have been anything but a machine for the suppression of the working people by capital, an instrument of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, the political rule of capital. The democratic bourgeois republic promised and proclaimed majority rule, but it could never put this into effect as long as private ownership of the land and other means of production existed.

"Freedom" in the bourgeois-democratic republic was actually freedom *for the rich*. The proletarians and working peasants could and should have utilised it for the purpose of preparing their forces to overthrow capital, to overcome bourgeois democracy, but *in fact* the working masses were, as a general rule, unable to enjoy democracy under capitalism.

Soviet, or proletarian, democracy has for the first time in

the world created *democracy* for the masses, for the working people, for the factory workers and small peasants.

Never yet has the world seen political power wielded by *majority* of the population, power *actually* wielded by this majority, as it is in the case of Soviet rule.

It suppresses the "freedom" of the exploiters and their accomplices; it deprives them of "freedom" to exploit, "freedom" to batten on starvation, "freedom" to fight for the restoration of the rule of capital, "freedom" to compact with the foreign bourgeoisie against the workers and peasants of their own country.

Let the Kautskys champion such freedom. Only a renegade from Marxism, a renegade from socialism can do so.

In nothing is the bankruptcy of the ideological leaders of the Second International, people like Hilferding and Kautsky, so strikingly expressed as in their utter inability to understand the significance of Soviet, or proletarian, democracy, its relation to the Paris Commune, its place in history, its necessity as a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The newspaper *Die Freiheit*, organ of the "Independent" (alias middle-class, philistine, petty-bourgeois) German Social-Democratic Party,<sup>5</sup> in its issue No. 74 of February 11, 1919, published a manifesto "To the Revolutionary Proletariat of Germany".

This manifesto is signed by the Party executive and by all its members in the National Assembly, the German variety of our Constituent Assembly.

This manifesto accuses the Scheidemanns of wanting to abolish the *Workers' Councils*, and proposes—don't laugh!--that the Councils be *combined* with the Assembly, that the Councils be granted certain political rights, a certain place in the Constitution.

To reconcile, to unite the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat! How simple! What a brilliantly philistine idea!

The only pity is that it was tried in Russia, under Kerensky, by the united Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries,<sup>6</sup> those petty-bourgeois democrats who imagine themselves socialists.

Anyone who has read Marx and failed to understand that in capitalist society, at every acute moment, in every serious

class conflict, the alternative is either the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat, has understood nothing of either the economic or the political doctrines of Marx.

But the brilliantly philistine idea of Hilferding, Kautsky and Co. of peacefully combining the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat requires special examination, if exhaustive treatment is to be given to the economic and political absurdities with which this most remarkable and comical manifesto of February 11 is packed. That will have to be put off for another article.\*

Moscow, April 15, 1919

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national No. 1*  
Signed: *N. Lenin*

Vol. 29, pp. 305-13

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\* See pp. 14-23 of this book.—*Ed.*



## THE HEROES OF THE BERNE INTERNATIONAL

In my article, "The Third International and Its Place in History"\* (*The Communist International* No. 1, May 1, 1919, p. 38 of the Russian edition), I pointed to one of the outstanding symptoms of the ideological bankruptcy of members of the old, putrid, Berne International. This bankruptcy of the theoreticians of the reactionary socialism which did not understand the dictatorship of the proletariat found expression in the proposal made by the German "independent" Social-Democrats to join, unite, combine the bourgeois parliament with a form of Soviet power.

Kautsky, Hilferding, Otto Bauer and Co., the most outstanding theoreticians of the old International, did not realise that they were proposing to combine the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the proletariat! The men who made names for themselves and won the sympathies of the workers by their advocacy of the class struggle and by the proofs they advanced of its necessity, failed to realise—at the crucial moment of the struggle for socialism—that they were betraying the whole doctrine of the class struggle, were renouncing it completely and actually deserting to the camp of the bourgeoisie by their attempt to combine the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the proletariat. This sounds incredible, but it is a fact.

By way of a rare exception, we have managed to receive in Moscow a fairly large number of foreign newspapers, although not of consecutive dates, so that we are now able to retrace in greater detail—although not in complete detail, of course—the history of the vacillation of those

\* See pp. 5-13 of this book.—*Ed.*

gentlemen, the "Independents", on the most important theoretical and practical question of the present day. This is the question of the relation between dictatorship (*of the proletariat*) and democracy (*bourgeois*), or between Soviet power and bourgeois parliamentarism.

In his pamphlet *Die Diktatur des Proletariats* (Wien, 1918) Herr Kautsky wrote that "the Soviet form of organisation is one of the most important phenomena of our time. It promises to acquire decisive importance in the great decisive battles between capital and labour towards which we are marching" (p. 33 of Kautsky's pamphlet). And he added that the Bolsheviks made a mistake in converting the Soviets from "a *combat organisation* of one *class*" into "a *state organisation*" and thereby "destroying democracy" (*ibid.*).

In my pamphlet *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (Petrograd and Moscow, 1918) I examined this argument of Kautsky's in detail and showed him to be completely oblivious of the fundamental tenets of Marxism on the state\*; for the state (every state, including the most democratic republic) is nothing more nor less than a machine in the hands of one class for the suppression of another. To describe the Soviets as the combat organisation of a *class*, and deny them the right to convert themselves into a "state organisation", is *actually* tantamount to renouncing the ABC of socialism, proclaiming, or advocating, that the *bourgeois machine for the suppression of the proletariat* (*that is*, the bourgeois-democratic republic, the bourgeois state) should remain inviolate; it is actual desertion to the camp of the bourgeoisie.

The absurdity of Kautsky's position is so glaring, the pressure exerted by the masses of the workers who are demanding Soviet power is so strong, that Kautsky and his followers have been obliged to make an ignominious retreat; they have got themselves into a muddle, for they lack the courage honestly to admit their mistake.

On February 9, 1919, *Freiheit* (Freedom), the organ of the "Independent" (of Marxism, but absolutely dependent on petty-bourgeois democracy) Social-Democrats of Germany, contained an article by Herr Hilferding. In this article the

\* See *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, pp. 227-327. — *Ed.*

author is *already* demanding that the Workers' Councils should be converted into a state organisation, but that they should exist *side by side with* the bourgeois parliament, the National Assembly, and together with it. On February 11, 1919, in an appeal to the German proletariat, this slogan was accepted by the *entire* Independent Party (and consequently, also by Herr Kautsky, who thereby contradicted the statements he had made in the autumn of 1918).

This attempt to combine the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the proletariat is a complete renunciation of Marxism and of socialism in general; forgotten are the experiences of the Russian Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries who from May 6, 1917 to October 25, 1917 (old style) made the "experiment" of combining the Soviets as a "state organisation" with the *bourgeois* state and failed ignominiously.

At the Party Congress of the Independents (held at the beginning of March 1919) the entire Party accepted this supremely sagacious proposal to combine Workers' Councils with bourgeois parliamentarism. But *Freiheit* No. 178, of April 13, 1919 (Supplement) reported that the "Independent" group at the Second Congress of Workers' Councils had proposed the following resolution:

"The Second Congress of Workers' Councils takes its stand on the Workers' Council system. Accordingly, the political and economic structure of Germany shall be based on the Councils (Räteorganisation). The Councils are the elected representative bodies of the working population in all spheres of political and economic life."

In addition to this, the same group submitted to the Congress a draft of "directives" (*Richtlinien*) in which we read the following:

"All political power is concentrated in the hands of the Congress of Workers' Councils..." "The right to elect and be elected to the Councils shall be enjoyed by all, irrespective of sex, who perform socially necessary and useful labour and do not exploit the labour of others..."

We see, therefore, that the "independent" leaders have turned out to be paltry philistines who are entirely dependent upon the philistine prejudices of the most backward section of the proletariat. In the autumn of 1918, these leaders, through their mouthpiece Kautsky, completely rejected the

idea of the Workers' Councils being converted into state organisations. In March 1919, following in the wake of the masses of the workers, they surrender this position. In April 1919, they throw the decision of their Congress overboard and go over entirely to the position of the Communists: "All Power to the Workers' Councils."

Leaders of this type are not worth very much. There is no need to have leaders to serve as an index of the temper of the most backward section of the proletariat which marches in the rear and not ahead of the vanguard. And considering the spineless way in which they change their slogans, such leaders are worthless. They cannot be trusted. They will *always* be mere ballast, a minus quantity in the working-class movement.

The most "Left" of these leaders, a certain Herr Däumig, argued as follows at the Party Congress (cf. *Freiheit* of March 9):

"Däumig stated that nothing stands between him and the demand of the Communists for 'All Power to the Workers' Councils'. But he must protest against the putschism practised by the Communist Party and against the Byzantinism they display towards the masses instead of educating them. Putschist, isolated action cannot lead to progress..."

By putschism the Germans mean what the old revolutionaries in Russia, some fifty years ago, called "flashes", "pyrotechnics", i. e., small conspiracies, attempts at assassination, revolts, etc.

By accusing the Communists of being "putschists", Herr Däumig merely betrays his own "Byzantinism", his own servility to the philistine prejudices of the petty bourgeoisie. The "Leftism" of a gentleman of this type, who repeats a "fashionable" slogan because he fears the masses but *does not understand the mass revolutionary movement* is not worth a brass farthing.

A powerful wave of spontaneous strikes is sweeping across Germany. The proletarian struggle is evidently growing in intensity to a degree unprecedented even in Russia in 1905, when the strike movement rose to heights that had never been reached before anywhere in the world. Anybody who speaks of "pyrotechnics" in face of such a movement proves that he is a hopeless vulgariser and a slave to philistine prejudices.

Those philistine gentlemen headed by Däumig are probably dreaming of a revolution (that is, if any idea of revolution ever enters their heads) in which the masses will all rise *at once, fully organised*.

Such revolutions never happen, nor can they happen. Capitalism would not be capitalism if it did not keep millions of working people, the vast majority of them, in a state of oppression, wretchedness, want and ignorance. Capitalism cannot collapse except as a result of a revolution which, in the course of struggle, rouses masses who had not hitherto been affected by the movement. Spontaneous outbreaks become inevitable as the revolution matures. There has never been a revolution in which this has not been the case, nor can there be such a revolution.

Herr Däumig lies when he says that the Communists pander to spontaneity; it is the same sort of lie that we heard so often from the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. The Communists do *not* pander to spontaneity, they are *not* in favour of isolated outbreaks. The Communists urge the masses to take organised, integrated, united, opportune and mature action. The philistine slander of Däumig, Kautsky and Co. cannot refute this fact.

But the philistines cannot understand that the Communists quite rightly regard it as their duty *to be with the fighting masses* of the oppressed and not with the philistine heroes who stand aloof from the struggle, timidly waiting to see how things turn out. Mistakes are inevitable when the masses are fighting, but the Communists *remain with the masses*, see these mistakes, explain them to the masses, try to get them rectified, and strive perseveringly for the victory of class-consciousness over spontaneity. It is better to be with the fighting masses, who, in the course of the struggle, gradually learn to rectify their mistakes, than with the paltry intellectuals, philistines, and Kautskyites, who hold aloof until "complete victory" is achieved—this is the truth that the Däumigs cannot understand.

The worse for them. They have already gone down in the history of the world proletarian revolution as cowardly philistines, reactionary snivellers, yesterday the servants of the Scheidemanns and today the advocates of "social peace", and it does not matter whether that advocacy is concealed by the combination of the Constituent Assembly with the

Workers' Councils or by profound condemnation of "putschism".

Herr Kautsky has broken the record for substituting reactionary philistine snivelling for Marxism. He does nothing else but bewail what is taking place, complain, weep, express horror, and urge conciliation! All his life this Knight of the Rueful Countenance *has been writing* about the class struggle and about socialism; but when the class struggle reached maximum intensity, reached the threshold of socialism, our pundit lost his nerve, burst into tears, and turned out to be a common or garden philistine. In issue No. 98 of the organ of the Vienna traitors to socialism, of the Austerlitzes, Renners and Bauers (*Arbeiterzeitung* [Workers' Gazette], April 9, 1919, Vienna, morning edition), Kautsky for the hundredth, if not the thousandth time, sums up all his lamentations in the following words:

"...Economic thinking and economic understanding," he wails, "has been knocked out of the heads of all classes..." "The long war has accustomed large sections of the proletariat to treat economic conditions with absolute contempt and to place all their confidence in the almighty power of violence..."

These are the two "favourite points" of this "extremely learned" man! The "cult of violence" and the break-down of industry—this is what has driven him to the usual, age-old, typical whining and snivelling of the philistine instead of analysing the *real* conditions of the class struggle. "We expected," he writes, "that the revolution would come as the product of the proletarian class struggle...", "but the revolution came as a consequence of the collapse of the prevailing system in Russia and Germany in the war..."

In other words, this pundit "expected" a peaceful revolution! This is superb!

But Herr Kautsky has lost his nerve to such a degree that he has forgotten what he himself wrote when he was a Marxist, namely, that in all probability a war would provide the occasion for revolution. Today, instead of calmly and fearlessly investigating what changes must *inevitably* take place in the form of the revolution as a consequence of the war, our "theoretician" bewails the collapse of his "expectations"!

"...Large sections of the proletariat ignore economic conditions!"

What utter piffle! How familiar the Menshevik press of Kerensky days made this philistine refrain to us!

The economist Kautsky has forgotten that when a country has been ruined by war and brought to the brink of disaster, the main, the fundamental, the root "economic condition" is to *save the workers*. If the working class is saved from death from starvation, saved from perishing, it will be possible to restore disrupted production. But in order to save the working class it is necessary to have the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is the only means of preventing the burdens and consequences of the war from being thrust upon the shoulders of the workers.

The economist Kautsky has "forgotten" that the question of how the burdens of defeat are to be distributed is determined by the *class struggle*, and that amidst the conditions prevailing in an absolutely exhausted, ruined, starving and dying country, the class struggle must *inevitably* assume a different form. It is no longer a class struggle for a share of the results of production, it is not a struggle to take charge of production (for production is at a standstill, there is no coal, the railways have been wrecked, the war has knocked people out of their groove, the machines are worn out, and so on and so forth) but a struggle *to save the workers from starvation*. Only simpletons, even if very "learned" ones, can "condemn", under such circumstances, "consumers", "soldiers'" communism and superciliously remind the workers of the importance of production.

The first and foremost task is to save the workers. The bourgeoisie want to retain their privileges, to thrust all the consequences of the war upon the workers, and this means starving the workers to death.

The working class wants to save itself from starvation, and for this it is necessary to smash the bourgeoisie, *first* to ensure consumption, even the most meagre, otherwise it will be impossible to *drag out* even an existence of semi-starvation, it will be *impossible to hold out* until industry can be restarted.

"Think of production!" says the well-fed bourgeoisie to the starving and exhausted workers. And Kautsky, repeating the capitalists' refrain in the guise of "economic science", becomes completely a lackey of the bourgeoisie.

But the workers say that the bourgeoisie, too, should be put on a semi-starvation ration, so that the working people might recuperate somewhat, so that the working people may be *saved from death*. "Consumers' communism" is a means of saving the workers. The workers must be saved, no matter at what sacrifice! Half a pound each for the capitalists, a pound each for the workers—this is the way out of this period of starvation and ruin. Consumption by the starving workers is the basis of, and the condition for, the restoration of industry.

Clara Zetkin was quite right when she told Kautsky that he was "*slipping into bourgeois political economy. Production is for man, and not man for production...*"

Independent Herr Kautsky revealed the same dependence upon petty-bourgeois prejudices when he bewailed the "cult of violence". When, as far back as 1914, the Bolsheviks argued that the imperialist war would become civil war, Herr Kautsky said nothing, but he remained in the same party with David and Co. who denounced this forecast (and slogan) as "madness". Kautsky failed entirely to understand that the imperialist war would inevitably be transformed into civil war; and now he is blaming both combatants in the civil war for his own lack of understanding! Is this not a perfect example of reactionary philistine stupidity?

But while in 1914, failure to understand that the imperialist war must inevitably be transformed into civil war was *only* philistine stupidity, today, in 1919, it is something worse. It is treachery to the working class; for the civil war in Russia, Finland, Latvia, Germany and Hungary, is a *fact*. Kautsky admitted hundreds and hundreds of times in his former writings that there are periods in history when the class struggle is inevitably transformed into the civil war. There is one now, but Kautsky is found in the camp of the vacillating, cowardly, petty bourgeoisie.

*"The spirit that inspires Spartacus is virtually the spirit of Ludendorff.... Spartacus is not only encompassing the doom of its own cause, but is also causing an intensification of the policy of violence on the part of the Majority Socialists. Noske is the antipode of Spartacus...."*

These words of Kautsky's (quoted from his article in the Vienna *Arbeiterzeitung*) are so infinitely stupid, base and despicable that it is sufficient to point to them without

making any comment. The party which tolerates such leaders must be rotten to the core. In the light of these words of Kautsky's, the Berne International, to which Herr Kautsky belongs, must be appraised on its merits as a yellow International.

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As a curiosity we shall also quote the argument advanced by Herr Haase, in an article entitled "The International at Amsterdam" (*Freiheit*, May 4, 1919). Herr Haase boasts of having proposed a resolution on the colonial question which states that "it is the function of an alliance of nations organised on the lines proposed by the International... *before the advent of socialism...* [please note this!]\*... to administer the colonies primarily in the interests of the natives, and then in the interests of all the nations that are united in the alliance of nations..."

A gem, is it not? According to the resolution proposed by this pundit, *before the advent of socialism, the colonies will be administered* not by the bourgeoisie, but by some sort of benevolent, just, sentimental "alliance of nations"! Is this not tantamount to whitewashing the most disgusting capitalist hypocrisy? And these are the "Lefts" in the Berne International....

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So that the reader may make a more striking comparison between the stupidity, baseness and despicableness of the writings of Haase, Kautsky and Co. and the real situation in Germany, I shall cite one other brief passage.

The well-known capitalist, Walther Rathenau, recently wrote a book entitled, *Der neue Staat* (The New State). It is dated March 24, 1919. Its value as a theoretical work is nil. But as an observer, Walther Rathenau is compelled to admit the following.

"We are a nation of poets and thinkers, but in our auxiliary occupations [in Nebenberuf] we are philistines..."

"Only the extreme monarchists and the Spartacists<sup>7</sup> now have ideals..."

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\* Interpolations in square brackets in quoted passages have been introduced by Lenin. — *Ed.*

"The unvarnished truth is that we are heading for dictatorship, proletarian or pretorian...." (pp. 29, 52, 65).

Evidently this bourgeois considers himself as "independent" of the bourgeoisie as Kautsky and Haase imagine they are of the petty bourgeoisie and of philistinism.

But Walther Rathenau towers head and shoulders above Karl Kautsky, for the latter snivels, and like a coward hides from the "unvarnished truth", whereas the former frankly admits it.

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Signed: *Lenin*

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## THE TASKS OF THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL

### RAMSAY MACDONALD ON THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL

The French social-chauvinist newspaper *l'Humanité*,<sup>8</sup> issue No. 5475, dated April 14, 1919, contains an editorial by Ramsay MacDonald, the well-known leader of the British so-called Independent Labour Party,<sup>9</sup> which is actually an opportunist party that has always been dependent on the bourgeoisie. This article is so typical of the position taken by the *trend* which it is customary to call the Centre and which was called by that name at the First Congress of the Communist International in Moscow that we quote it *in full* together with the introductory lines of the *l'Humanité* editorial board:

### THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL

Our friend Ramsay MacDonald was the authoritative leader of the Labour Party<sup>10</sup> in the House of Commons before the war. A socialist and a man of convictions, he considered it his duty to condemn the war as imperialist, in contrast to those who welcomed it as a war for a righteous cause. Consequently, after August 4 he resigned from his position of leader of the Labour Party, and together with comrades in the Independent Labour Party and with Keir Hardie whom we all admire, did not fear to declare war on war.

This required day-to-day heroism.

MacDonald showed by his example that courage, in the words of Jaurès, "consists in not submitting to the law of the triumphant lie and in not serving as the echo of the applause of imbeciles and the catcalling of fanatics".

In the khaki\* election held at the end of November, MacDonald was defeated by Lloyd George. But we may rest assured that MacDonald will have his revenge, and that in the very near future.

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\* Called "khaki" election by soldiers who were ordered to vote for the Government candidates. (Note by the editors of *The Communist International*. — Ed.)

The rise of separatist tendencies in the national and international policies of socialism has been a misfortune for the socialist movement.

It is, however, not a bad thing that there are shades of opinion and variations of method within socialism. Our socialism is still in the experimental stage.

Its basic principles are fixed, but the method of best applying them, the combinations which will bring about the triumph of the revolution, the manner in which the socialist state is to be built are still problems to be discussed, and the last word concerning them has not yet been spoken. Only deep study of all these points can lead us to sublime truth.

Extremes may clash, and such a struggle may serve to fortify socialist views; but evil commences when everybody considers his opponent a traitor, a believer fallen from grace, one who deserves to have the gates of the party paradise slammed in his face.

When socialists are possessed by the spirit of dogmatism, like that which in former days of Christianity preached civil war for the greater glory of God and the discomfiture of the devil, the bourgeoisie may sleep in peace, for the days of its rule are not yet ended, no matter how great the local and international successes achieved by socialism.

At the present moment our movement is unfortunately encountering a new obstacle. A new International has been proclaimed in Moscow.

I am very much grieved over this, for the Socialist International is at present sufficiently open to all forms of socialist thought, and in spite of all theoretical and practical disagreements engendered within it by Bolshevism I see no reason why its Left wing should separate from the Centre and form an independent group.

It must first of all be remembered that we are still living in the infancy of the revolution. The forms of government that have sprung up from the political and social debris wrought by the war have not yet stood the test and have not yet been definitely established.

A new broom sweeps remarkably clean at first, but nobody can be certain beforehand how it will work in the end.

Russia is not Hungary, Hungary is not France, France is not Britain, and therefore anyone who introduces a split in the International after the experience of some one nation displays criminal narrow-mindedness.

Besides, what is Russia's experience really worth? Who can answer that? The Allied governments are afraid to let us enlighten ourselves. But there are two things we do know.

First and foremost, that there was no prepared plan according to which the revolution was accomplished by the present Russian Government. It developed according to the course of events. Lenin started his attack on Kerensky by demanding a Constituent Assembly. Events led him to suppress this Assembly.<sup>11</sup> When the socialist revolution broke out in Russia no one thought the Soviets would take the place in the government which they did.

Subsequently Lenin quite justly exhorted Hungary not to copy Russia slavishly but to allow the Hungarian revolution to evolve freely according to its own character.

The evolution and fluctuations of those experiments we are now witnessing should on no account call forth a split in the International.

All socialist governments need the help and advice of the International. It is necessary that the International should watch their experiences with an alert eye and an open mind.

I have just heard from a friend who recently saw Lenin that no one is more free in his criticism of the Soviet Government than Lenin himself.

\* \* \*

If the post-war disorders and revolutions do not justify a split, does the latter not find justification in the attitude which some socialist factions took during the war? I frankly admit that here the grounds may seem more justified. But if there really is some excuse for split in the International, this question was at any rate presented most unhappily at the Moscow Conference.

I am one of those who consider that the discussion at the Berne Conference on who was responsible for the war was *merely a concession to non-socialist public opinion*.

At Berne it was not only impossible to adopt a decision on this question that would be of some historical value (although it might have some political value), but even the question itself was not broached properly.

The condemnation of the German majority (a condemnation which that majority fully deserved and with which I have very gladly associated myself) could not serve as an exposition of the origin of the war.

The Berne debate was not accompanied by a frank discussion of the views held by other socialists concerning the war.

It produced no formula of conduct for socialists during a war. All the International had said before then was that in a war of national defence socialists must unite with the other parties.

Under these circumstances whom are we going to condemn?

Some of us knew that what the International decided meant nothing and did not constitute a practical guide for action.

We knew that such a war would end in victory for imperialism and, being neither pacifists in the usual sense of the word nor anti-pacifists, we pursued a policy which in our opinion was the only one compatible with internationalism. *But the International* never prescribed any such rule of conduct for us.

That is why the moment the war began the International collapsed. It lost its authority and did not issue a single decision on the basis of which we would now have the right to condemn those who honestly carried out the resolutions of the international congresses.

In consequence, the attitude we should adopt today is the following: instead of parting ways on account of what has taken place, let us create a really active International which will guard the socialist movement during the period of revolution and reconstruction which we have now entered.

We must restore our socialist principles. We must place our international socialist conduct on firm foundations.

If, however, it appears that we differ essentially on these principles, if we do not arrive at any agreement on the issues of freedom and democracy, if our views on the conditions under which the proletariat may take power are definitely at variance, if finally it turns out that the war has infected some sections of the International with the virus of imperialism, then a split is possible.

But I do not think there should be such a calamity.

That is why I regret the Moscow Manifesto as being premature, to say the least, and certainly useless; and I hope that my French comrades, upon whom as well as upon me during the sombre last four years so much slander and misfortune has been heaped, will not, in an outburst of impatience, be instrumental in breaking up international solidarity.

Otherwise their children will have to set up that solidarity once more, if the proletariat is ever to rule the world.

*J. Ramsay MacDonald*

The author of this article, as the reader can see, tries to prove that a split is unnecessary. However, its inevitability follows from the very *way* the argument is presented by Ramsay MacDonald—that typical representative of the Second International and worthy colleague of Scheidemann and Kautsky, Vandervelde and Branting, and so on and so forth.

Ramsay MacDonald's article is a fine specimen of the smooth, euphonious, hackneyed, apparently socialistic phrases which have long served in all the advanced capitalist countries to conceal bourgeois policy within the working-class movement.

## I

Let us begin with what is least important but especially characteristic. Like Kautsky (in his pamphlet *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*), the author repeats the bourgeois lie that no one in Russia foresaw the role of the Soviets, that the Bolsheviks and I began to fight Kerensky only on the issue of the Constituent Assembly.

That is a bourgeois lie. Actually, as early as April 4, 1917, the first day after my arrival in Petrograd, I presented "theses" containing the demand for a *Soviet*, and not a *bourgeois-parliamentary*, republic. I repeated this many times under Kerensky in the press and at meetings. The Bolshevik Party solemnly and officially announced this in the decisions of its conference of April 29, 1917.<sup>12</sup> Who does not know this does *not want* to know the truth about the

socialist revolution in Russia. If one does not want to understand that a bourgeois-parliamentary republic with a Constituent Assembly is a step forward from the same sort of republic *without* a Constituent Assembly, and that a *Soviet* republic is two steps forward, one is merely closing one's eyes to the difference between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

To call oneself a socialist and not to see this difference two years after the issue was raised in Russia and one and a half years after the victory of the Soviet revolution in Russia means stubbornly to remain completely captive to "non-socialist public opinion", *that is to say*, to the ideas and the policy of the bourgeoisie.

A split with such people is necessary and inevitable, for it is impossible to accomplish the socialist revolution if you join hands with those who pull in the direction of the bourgeoisie.

And if "leaders" like Ramsay MacDonald or Kautsky, etc., have refused to overcome even so very small a "difficulty" as an acquaintance with the *documents* concerning the attitude of the Bolsheviks toward Soviet power, concerning the way this problem was posed before and after October 25 (November 7), 1917, would it not be ridiculous to expect such people to be ready and able to overcome the incomparably greater difficulties of the real struggle for a socialist revolution?

There are none so deaf as those who will not hear.

## II

Let us pass on to the second untruth (from among the countless untruths in which the whole article by Ramsay MacDonald abounds, for in this article there are perhaps more untruths than words). This untruth is probably the most important one.

Ramsay MacDonald asserts that until the war of 1914-18 the International only said that "in a war of national defence socialists must unite with the other parties".

That is a monstrous, a glaring deviation from the truth.

Everybody knows that the Basle Manifesto of 1912<sup>13</sup> was unanimously adopted by all socialists and that of all the documents of the International it alone refers precisely to

the war between the British and German groups of imperialist predators, which in 1912 everybody clearly saw was in preparation and which broke out in 1914. It was about this war that the Basle Manifesto said three things which MacDonald now passes over in silence, thereby committing an enormous crime against socialism and proving that with people like him a split is necessary, because in fact they serve the bourgeoisie and not the proletariat.

These three things are the following:

the war that threatens cannot be justified one whit as being in the interest of national freedom;

in this war it would be a crime on the part of the workers to shoot at one another;

the war leads to proletarian revolution.

Here you have the three basic, fundamental truths, by "forgetting" which (though he put his signature to them before the war) MacDonald *in fact* is going over to the bourgeoisie against the proletariat and thereby proves that a split is necessary.

The Communist International will not agree to unity with parties which refuse to admit this truth and are incapable of demonstrating by their *deeds* their determination, readiness and ability to bring these truths home to the masses.

The Treaty of Versailles<sup>14</sup> has proved even to the stupid and blind, even to the mass of short-sighted people, that the Entente was and is as bloody and filthy an imperialist predator as Germany. Only hypocrites and liars could fail to see this, people who deliberately conduct the policy of the bourgeoisie in the working-class movement, direct agents and henchmen of the bourgeoisie (labour lieutenants of the capitalist class,\* as the American Socialists say), or people who have so far succumbed to bourgeois ideas and bourgeois influence that they are socialists only in words, but in deeds are petty bourgeois, philistines, toadies to the capitalists. The difference between the first and the second category is important from the viewpoint of their personalities, i. e., for an appraisal of the Tom, Dick or Harry of the social-chauvinists of all countries. For the politician, i. e., from the

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\* These words are in English in the original. — *Ed.*



viewpoint of the relations among millions of people, among the classes, this difference is not substantial.

Those socialists who during the war of 1914-18 failed to understand that it was a criminal, reactionary, predatory, imperialist war on both sides, are social-chauvinists, i. e., socialists in words and chauvinists in deeds; friends of the working class in words, but in deeds lackeys of "their own" national bourgeoisie, individuals who help to deceive the people by depicting as "national", "emancipatory", "defensive", "righteous" and so forth the war between the British and German groups of imperialist predators, who are *equally* filthy, selfish, blood-thirsty, criminal, reactionary.

Unity with the social-chauvinists is betrayal of the revolution, betrayal of the proletariat, betrayal of socialism, desertion to the bourgeoisie, because it is "unity" with the *national bourgeoisie* of "one's own" country *against* the unity of the international revolutionary proletariat, is unity *with* the bourgeoisie *against* the proletariat.

The war of 1914-18 has definitely proved this. Let anyone who does not understand this remain in the yellow Berne International of traitor-socialists.

### III

Ramsay MacDonald, with the amusing naïveté of a "drawing-room" socialist who carelessly uses words without at all understanding their serious significance, giving no thought whatever to the fact that *words commit one to deeds*, declares that in Berne "a concession to non-socialist public opinion" was made.

Precisely! We regard the whole of the Berne International as yellow, treacherous and perfidious because the *whole* of its policy is a "*concession*" to the bourgeoisie.

Ramsay MacDonald knows perfectly well that we have built the Third International and broken unreservedly with the Second International because we became convinced that it was hopeless, incorrigible, played the part of a servant to imperialism, of a vehicle of bourgeois influence, bourgeois lies and bourgeois corruption in the labour movement. If in desiring to discuss the Third International Ramsay MacDonald evades the substance of the matter, beats about the bush, utters empty phrases and does not speak of what

should be spoken about, that is his fault and his crime. For the proletariat needs the truth, and there is nothing more harmful to its cause than plausible, respectable, petty-bourgeois lies.

The problem of imperialism and of *its connection* with opportunism in the labour movement, with the betrayal of the workers' cause by labour leaders, was raised long ago, very long ago.

For a period of *forty* years, from 1852 to 1892, Marx and Engels constantly pointed to the fact that the upper stratum of the British working class was becoming increasingly *bourgeois* as a consequence of the country's peculiar economic conditions (colonies, monopoly of the world market, etc.). In the seventies of last century Marx won himself the honourable hatred of the despicable heroes of the Berne International trend of those days, of the opportunists and reformists, for branding many of the British trade union leaders as men who had sold themselves to the bourgeoisie or were in its pay for services rendered to *its* class *from within* the labour movement.

During the Anglo-Boer War,<sup>15</sup> the Anglo-Saxon press quite clearly raised the problem of imperialism as the latest (*and last*) stage of capitalism. If my memory serves me right, it was none other than Ramsay MacDonald who then resigned from the Fabian Society,<sup>16</sup> that prototype of the Berne International, that nursery and model of opportunism, which Engels describes, with the power, brilliancy and truth of genius, in his correspondence with Sorge. "Fabian imperialism"—such was the common expression employed at that time in British socialist literature.

If Ramsay MacDonald has forgotten this, all the worse for him.

"Fabian imperialism" and "social-imperialism" are one and the same thing: socialism in words, imperialism in deeds, *the growth of opportunism into imperialism*. This has now become, during the war of 1914-18 and since, a *universal* fact. The failure to understand it shows the great blindness of the Berne yellow International, and is its great crime. Opportunism, or reformism, inevitably had to grow into a phenomenon of world-wide importance, *socialist imperialism*, or social-chauvinism, because imperialism brought to the fore a handful of very rich, advanced nations,

engaged in plundering the whole world, and thereby enabled the bourgeoisie of those countries, out of their monopolist superprofits (imperialism is monopoly capitalism), to bribe the upper strata of the working class.

Only ignoramuses or hypocrites who deceive the workers by repeating platitudes about capitalism and in this way cover up the bitter truth that a whole trend in socialism has gone over to the imperialist bourgeoisie could fail to see the economic inevitability of this development under imperialism.

And from this fact two indisputable conclusions emerge.

First conclusion: the Berne International is in fact, from the angle of its real historical and political role, and irrespective of the good will and pious wishes of particular members of it, an organisation of agents of international imperialism operating within the labour movement, permeating that movement with bourgeois influence, bourgeois ideas, bourgeois lies, and bourgeois corruption.

In countries where democratic parliamentary culture is of long standing, the bourgeoisie has learned splendidly to use deception, bribery and flattery in their most subtle forms as well as violence. Not for nothing have the "luncheons" given to British "labour leaders" (i. e., lieutenants of the bourgeoisie whose duty is to fool the workers) have acquired notoriety; Engels in his day spoke about them. To the same category of facts belongs the "charming" reception given by M. Clemenceau to the traitor-socialist Merrheim, the courteous receptions given by Entente ministers to the leaders of the Berne International, and so on and so forth. "You train 'em, and we buy 'em," a clever capitalist, an Englishwoman, said to Mr. Social-imperialist Hyndman, who related in his memoirs how this lady, a person shrewder than all the leaders of the Berne International put together, appraised the "labours" of the socialist intellectuals in training workers to become socialist leaders.

During the war, when the Vanderveldes, Brantings and the whole gang of traitors organised "international" conferences, the French bourgeois newspapers were bitingly scornful, and rightly so. They said: "These Vanderveldes seem to be suffering from a sort of tic. Just as those who suffer from tic cannot utter a couple of phrases without strangely twitching the muscles of the face, so the

Vanderveldes cannot make a political speech without repeating, parrot-like, the words internationalism, socialism, international working-class solidarity, proletarian revolution, etc. Let them repeat any sacramental formulas they like so long as they help to lead the workers by the nose and serve us, the capitalists, in waging the imperialist war and enslaving the workers."

Sometimes the British and French bourgeoisie are very clever and excellently appraise the servile role played by the Berne International.

Martov wrote somewhere: "You Bolsheviks hurl abuse at the Berne International but 'your own' friend Loriot is a member of it."

That is the argument of a rogue; for everybody knows that Loriot is openly, honestly and heroically fighting for the Third International. In 1902, when Zubatov organised meetings of workers in Moscow in order to hoodwink them with "police socialism",<sup>17</sup> the worker Babushkin, whom I had known since 1894 when he was in my study circle for workers in St. Petersburg, and who was one of the best and most devoted workers of the *Iskra* trend, one of the best leaders of the revolutionary proletariat, and was shot in 1906 by Rennenkampf in Siberia—Babushkin used to attend the Zubatov meetings in order to fight Zubatovism and to withdraw the workers from its clutches. Babushkin had no more connection with Zubatov than Loriot with Berne.

#### IV

The second conclusion is that the Third, Communist, International has been formed so as to prevent "socialists" from confining themselves to the verbal recognition of revolution, examples of which are provided by Ramsay MacDonald in his article. Verbal recognition of revolution, which in fact concealed a thoroughly opportunist, reformist, nationalist, petty-bourgeois policy, was the basic sin of the Second International, and we are waging a life-and-death struggle against this evil.

When it is said that the Second International died after suffering shameful bankruptcy, one must be able to understand what this means. It means that opportunism, reformism, petty-bourgeois socialism went bankrupt and

died. For the Second International rendered historic service, it has achievements to its credit that are εἰς αἰῶνι (everlasting) and which the class-conscious worker will never renounce—the creation of mass working-class organisations—co-operative, trade union and political—the utilisation of the bourgeois parliamentary system, and of all the institutions in general of bourgeois democracy, etc.

In order to really defeat opportunism, which caused the shameful death of the Second International, in order to really assist the revolution, the approach of which *even* Ramsay MacDonald is obliged to admit, it is necessary:

*Firstly*, to conduct all propaganda and agitation from the viewpoint of revolution as opposed to reforms, systematically explaining to the masses, both theoretically and practically, at every step of parliamentary, trade union, co-operative, etc., activity, that they are diametrically opposed. Under no circumstances to refrain (save in special cases, by way of exception) from utilising the parliamentary system and all the “liberties” of bourgeois democracy; not to reject reforms, but to regard them *only* as a *by-product* of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat. Not a single party affiliated to the Berne International meets these requirements. Not a single one of them shows that it has any idea of how to conduct its propaganda and agitation *as a whole*, explaining how reform *differs* from revolution; nor do they know how to train both the Party and the masses *unswervingly for revolution*.

*Secondly*, legal work must be combined with *illegal* work. The Bolsheviks have always taught this, and did so with particular insistence during the war of 1914-18. The heroes of despicable opportunism ridiculed this and smugly extolled the “legality”, “democracy”, “liberty” of the West-European countries, republics, etc. Now, however, only out-and-out swindlers, who deceive the workers with phrases, can deny that the Bolsheviks proved to be right. In every single country in the world, even the most advanced and “freest” of the bourgeois republics, bourgeois terror reigns, and there is no such thing as freedom to carry on agitation for the socialist revolution, to carry on propaganda and organisational work precisely in this sense. The party which to this day has not admitted this under the rule of the bourgeoisie and does not carry on systematic, all-sided *illegal* work in spite of the laws of the bourgeoisie and of the bourgeois

parliaments is a party of traitors and scoundrels who deceive the people by their verbal recognition of revolution. The place for such parties is in the yellow, Berne International. There is no room for them in the Communist International.

*Thirdly*, unswerving and ruthless war must be waged for the expulsion from the labour movement of all those opportunist leaders who exposed themselves both before and particularly during the war, both in the political sphere and particularly in the trade unions, and the co-operatives. The theory of “neutrality” is a false and despicable evasion, which helped the bourgeoisie to capture the masses in 1914-18. Parties which stand for revolution in words but in deeds fail to carry on undeviating work to spread the influence of precisely the revolutionary and only of the revolutionary party in every sort of mass organisation of the workers are parties of traitors.

*Fourthly*, there must be no toleration of the verbal condemnation of imperialism while no real revolutionary struggle is waged for the liberation of the colonies (and dependent nations) from one's *own* imperialist bourgeoisie. That is hypocrisy. That is the policy of the agents of the bourgeoisie in the labour movement (labour lieutenants of the capitalist class). The British, French, Dutch, Belgian, or other party which is hostile to imperialism in words but in deeds does not wage a revolutionary struggle within “its own” colonies for the *overthrow* of “its own” bourgeoisie, does not systematically assist the *revolutionary* work which has already begun everywhere in the colonies, and does not send arms and literature to the revolutionary parties in the colonies, is a party of scoundrels and traitors.

*Fifthly*, the extreme hypocrisy of the parties of the Berne International is to be seen in their typical recognition of revolution in words while they flaunt before the workers high-sounding phrases about recognising revolution but as far as deeds are concerned go no farther than adopting a purely reformist attitude to those beginnings, elements, manifestations of the growth of revolution in all mass actions which break bourgeois laws and go beyond the bounds of all legality, as for example, mass strikes, street demonstrations, soldiers' protests, meetings among the troops, leaflet distribution in barracks, camps, etc.

If you ask any hero of the Berne International whether his party does such systematic work, he will answer you either with evasive phrases to conceal that such work is not being done—his party lacks the organisations and the machinery for doing it, is incapable of doing it—or with declamatory speeches against “*putschism*” (pyrotechnics), “anarchism”, etc. And it is that which constitutes the betrayal of the working class by the Berne International, its actual desertion to the camp of the bourgeoisie.

All the scoundrelly leaders of the Berne International take great pains to affirm their “sympathy” for revolution in general, and for the Russian revolution in particular. But only hypocrites or simpletons can fail to understand that the particularly rapid successes of the revolution in Russia *are due* to the many years’ work by the revolutionary party in the ways indicated; for years illegal machinery was systematically built up to direct demonstrations and strikes, to conduct work among the troops; a detailed study was made of methods; illegal literature was issued summing up experience acquired and educating the whole Party in the idea that revolution was necessary; leaders of the masses were trained for such events, etc., etc.

## V

The most profound and radical differences, which sum up all that has been said above and explain the inevitability of an irreconcilable theoretical and practical political struggle of the revolutionary proletariat against the Berne International, centre around two issues—transformation of the imperialist war into civil war, and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The best proof that the Berne International is held captive by bourgeois ideology is its failure to understand (or not desiring to understand, or pretending not to understand) the imperialist character of the war of 1914-18 and the inevitability of its transformation into civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in all the advanced countries.

When the Bolsheviks, as far back as November 1914, pointed to this inevitability, the philistines of all countries retorted with stupid sneers, and among these philistines were all the leaders of the Berne International. Now, the

transformation of the imperialist war into civil war has become a fact in a number of countries, not only in Russia but also in Finland, in Hungary, in Germany, and even in neutral Switzerland, and that civil war is maturing is seen, felt, and sensed in all advanced countries without exception.

To ignore this problem now (as Ramsay MacDonald does) or to try to *evade* the issue of the inevitability of civil war with sentimental conciliatory phrases (as Messrs. Kautsky and Co. do) is tantamount to direct betrayal of the proletariat, equivalent to actual desertion to the bourgeoisie. Because the real political leaders of the bourgeoisie have long understood the inevitability of civil war and are making excellent, thoughtful and systematic preparations for it and are strengthening their positions in anticipation of it.

The bourgeoisie of the whole world are exerting all their strength, enormous energy, intellect and determination, hesitating at no crime, and condemning whole countries to famine and complete extinction, in the preparations they are making to crush the proletariat in the impending civil war. The heroes of the Berne International, on the other hand, like simpletons, or hypocritical parsons, or pedantic professors, chant their old, worn-out, threadbare reformist song! No spectacle could be more revolting or more disgusting!

The Kautskys and MacDonalds continue to *frighten* the capitalists with the menace of revolution, to *scare* the bourgeoisie with the menace of civil war in order to obtain concessions from them and get them to agree to follow the reformist path. This is what all the writings, all the philosophy, all the policy of the entire Berne International amount to. We saw that miserable lackey’s trick played in Russia in 1905 by the liberals (Constitutional-Democrats<sup>18</sup>), and in 1917-19 by the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. The servile souls of the Berne International never think of *inculcating upon* the masses the idea of the inevitability and necessity of *defeating* the bourgeoisie in civil war, of pursuing a policy wholly dedicated to this aim, of elucidating, raising and solving all problems from this, and only from this, point of view. That is why our sole aim should be once and for all to push the incorrigible reformists, i. e., nine-tenths of the leaders of the Berne International, into the cesspool of the hirelings of the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie *needs* hirelings who enjoy the trust of a section of the working class, whitewash and prettify the bourgeoisie with talk about the reformist path being possible, throw dust in the eyes of the people by such talk, and *divert* the people from revolution by giving glowing descriptions of the charms and possibilities of the reformist path.

All the writings of the Kautskys, and of our Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, boil down to such whitewashing and to the whining of the cowardly philistine who fears revolution.

We cannot repeat here in detail the main economic causes that have made the revolutionary (and only the revolutionary) path inevitable, and have made impossible any solution other than civil war to the problems history has placed on the order of the day. Volumes must and will be written about this. If the Kautskys and other leaders of the Berne International do not understand this, all that can be said is ignorance is closer to the truth than prejudice.

Now, after the war, ignorant but sincere men of labour and supporters of the working people, understand the inevitability of revolution, of civil war and of the dictatorship of the proletariat far more easily than do the gentlemen stuffed with most learned reformist prejudices, the Kautskys, MacDonalds, Vanderveldes, Brantings, Turatis, and *tutti quanti*.\*

As one of the particularly striking confirmations of the phenomenon observable everywhere, on a mass scale, namely, that of the growth of revolutionary consciousness among the masses, we may take the novels of Henri Barbusse, *Le Feu* (Under Fire) and *Clarté* (Light). The former has already been translated into all languages, and in France 230,000 copies have been sold. The transformation of an absolutely ignorant rank-and-filer, utterly crushed by philistine ideas and prejudices, into a revolutionary under the influence of the war is depicted with extraordinary power, talent and truthfulness.

The mass of proletarians and semi-proletarians are on our side and are coming over to us by leaps and bounds. The Berne International is a General Staff without an army,

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\* All the others. — *Ed.*

and will collapse like a house of cards if thoroughly exposed to the masses.

The name of Karl Liebknecht was used in the whole of the Entente bourgeois press during the war in order to deceive the masses; the French and British imperialist pirates and plunderers were shown as sympathising with this hero, with this "sole honest German", as they said.

Now the heroes of the Berne International belong to the same organisation as the Scheidemanns who engineered the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, the Scheidemanns who fulfilled the role of worker-executioners and rendered hangman's service to the bourgeoisie. In words—hypocritical attempts to "condemn" the Scheidemanns (as if "condemning" makes any difference!). In deeds—belonging to the same organisation as the murderers do.

In 1907 the late Harry Quelch was expelled by the German Government from Stuttgart for describing a gathering of European diplomats as a "thieves' supper".<sup>19</sup> The leaders of the Berne International are not only participants in a thieves' supper, but even in a vile assassins' supper.

They will not escape the justice of the revolutionary workers.

## VI

Ramsay MacDonald disposes of the problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat in a couple of words as if it were a subject for a discussion on freedom and democracy.

But it is not. It is time to act, it is too late for discussions.

The most dangerous thing about the Berne International is its verbal recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. These people are capable of recognising everything, of signing everything, as long as they can keep at the head of the labour movement. Kautsky now says that he is not opposed to the dictatorship of the proletariat! The French social-chauvinists and Centrists put their names to resolutions in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat!

But they deserve not the slightest confidence.

It is not verbal recognition that is needed, but a complete rupture *in deeds* with the policy of reformism, with prejudices about bourgeois freedom and bourgeois democracy,

the pursuit in deeds of the policy of revolutionary class struggle.

Attempts are being made to recognise the dictatorship of the proletariat in words, in order to smuggle in along with it the "will of the majority", "universal suffrage" (this is exactly what Kautsky does), bourgeois parliamentarism, rejection of the idea that the entire bourgeois machinery of state must be destroyed, smashed, blown up. These new evasions, new loopholes of reformism, are most of all to be feared.

The dictatorship of the proletariat would be impossible if the majority of the population did not consist of proletarians and semi-proletarians. Kautsky and Co. try to falsify this truth by arguing that "the vote of the majority" is required for the dictatorship of the proletariat to be recognised as "valid".

Comical pedants! They fail to understand that voting within the bounds, institutions and customs of bourgeois parliamentarism is a *part* of the bourgeois state machinery that has to be broken and smashed from top to bottom *in order* to give effect to the dictatorship of the proletariat, in order to pass from bourgeois democracy to proletarian democracy.

They fail to understand that when history places the dictatorship of the proletariat on the order of the day it is not voting, but civil war that decides *all* serious political problems.

They fail to understand that the dictatorship of the proletariat is the rule of *one* class, which takes into its hands the *entire* machinery of the new state, and which *defeats* the bourgeoisie and *neutralises* the whole of the petty bourgeoisie—the peasantry, the lower middle class and the intelligentsia.

The Kautskys and MacDonalds recognise the class struggle in words, but in deeds forget about it at the most decisive moment in the history of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat—at the moment when, having seized state power, and supported by the semi-proletariat, the proletariat with the aid of this power *continues* the class struggle until *classes are abolished*.

Like real philistines, the leaders of the Berne International repeat bourgeois-democratic catchwords about freedom,

equality and democracy, but fail to see that they are repeating fragments of ideas concerning the free and equal *commodity owner*, fail to understand that the proletariat needs a state not for the "freedom", but *for the suppression* of its enemy, the exploiter, the capitalist.

The freedom and equality of the *commodity owner* are as dead as capitalism. And the Kautskys and MacDonalds will never be able to revive it.

The proletariat needs the abolition of classes—such is the *real* content of proletarian democracy, of proletarian freedom (freedom *from* the capitalist, from commodity exchange), of proletarian equality (not equality of *classes*—that is the banality which the Kautskys, Vanderveldes and MacDonalds slip into—but the equality of the working people who *overthrow* capital and capitalism).

So long as classes exist the freedom and equality of classes is a bourgeois deception. The proletariat takes power, becomes the *ruling* class, smashes bourgeois parliamentarism and bourgeois democracy, suppresses the bourgeoisie, suppresses *all* the attempts of *all* other classes to return to capitalism, gives *real* freedom and equality to the working people (which is practicable only when the private ownership of the means of production *has been abolished*), and gives them not only the "right to", but the *real* use of, *what has been taken* from the bourgeoisie.

He who fails to understand *this* content of the dictatorship of the proletariat (or what is the same thing, Soviet power, or proletarian democracy) is misusing the term dictatorship of the proletariat.

I cannot here develop these ideas in greater detail; I have done so in *The State and Revolution* and in the pamphlet *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. I shall conclude by dedicating these remarks to the delegates to the Lucerne Congress<sup>20</sup> (August 10, 1919) of the Berne International.

July 14, 1919

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Signed: *N. Lenin*

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *The Entente*—a bloc of imperialist powers (Britain, France and tsarist Russia) that took final shape in 1907 and was opposed to the imperialists of the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy). It derived its name from the *Entente cordiale*, the Anglo-French agreement concluded in 1904. During the First World War (1914-18) the United States, Japan and other countries joined this bloc. After the October Socialist Revolution its principal members—Britain, France, the U.S.A. and Japan—inspired, organised and took part in the armed intervention against Soviet Russia. p. 5
- <sup>2</sup> See Engels's letter to Marx, dated October 7, 1858 (Marx, Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, 1965, p. 110). p. 9
- <sup>3</sup> See Marx's letter to Engels, dated April 16, 1856 (Marx, Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, 1965, p. 92). p. 10
- <sup>4</sup> V. I. Lenin refers to the Second (Berne) International formed at a conference of Socialist Parties in Berne in February 1919 by the leaders of the West-European Socialist Parties in place of the Second International which ceased to exist with the outbreak of the First World War. p. 11
- <sup>5</sup> *The Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany*—a Centrist party founded in April 1917 at the Inaugural Congress in Gotha. The Independents advocated unity with the social-chauvinists and went as far as to reject the class struggle. Kautsky's group (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*) in the Reichstag made up the core of the Party. In October 1920, a split took place at the Party's congress in Halle. The majority merged with the Communist Party of Germany in December 1920. The Right-wing elements formed a separate party and assumed the old name—the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, which existed until 1922. p. 12
- <sup>6</sup> *Mensheviks*—an opportunist trend in the Russian Social-Democratic movement. The Mensheviks began to be called so at the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. (1903) when during the elections to the Party's central organs they received the minority (*menshinstvo* in Russian), while the revolutionary Social-Democrats headed by V. I. Lenin received the majority (*bolshinstvo* in Russian); hence the names: Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. During the 1905-07 revolution the Mensheviks came out against the

proletariat's hegemony in the revolution and against an alliance between the working class and the peasantry. In the years of reaction (1907-10) that set in after the defeat of the revolution the Mensheviks preached liquidationism, that is, they sought to liquidate the illegal revolutionary party of the proletariat. During the First World War (1914-18) they adopted a social-chauvinist stand. Following the victory of the February bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1917 the Mensheviks, together with the Socialist-Revolutionaries, entered the bourgeois Provisional Government. They supported the latter's imperialist policy and fought the growing proletarian revolution.

After the October Socialist Revolution the Mensheviks became a counter-revolutionary party which organised plots and revolts against the Soviet government.

*Socialist-Revolutionaries* (S.R.s)—a party of petty-bourgeois democrats that emerged at the end of 1901 and the beginning of 1902 as a result of the union of various Narodnik groups and circles.

During the First World War the majority of the Socialist-Revolutionaries pursued a social-chauvinist policy. After the victory of the February bourgeois-democratic revolution in 1917 the S.R.s together with the Mensheviks and the Constitutional-Democrats were the mainstay of the counter-revolutionary bourgeois-landowner Provisional Government, and their leaders were members of it. In the years of the foreign armed intervention and the Civil War, the S.R.s engaged in counter-revolutionary disruptive activity, gave support to the interventionists and white-guards, and organised terrorist acts against leaders of the Soviet State and the Communist Party. p. 12

<sup>7</sup> *Spartacists*—members of a revolutionary organisation of German Left-wing Social-Democrats, formed at the beginning of the First World War by Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring, Clara Zetkin, Julian Marchlewski, Leon Jogiches (Tyszka) and Wilhelm Pieck. The Spartacists carried on revolutionary propaganda among the masses, organised mass anti-war demonstrations, headed strikes and exposed the imperialist content of the war and the treachery of the opportunist leaders of the Social-Democratic movement. However, they made serious mistakes on cardinal issues of theory and policy. Lenin repeatedly criticised the mistakes of the German Left-wing Social-Democrats and helped them to adopt a correct stand.

In April 1917, the Spartacists entered the Centrist Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany but retained their organisational independence. In November 1918, in the course of a revolution in Germany, they became known as the Spartacus League. On December 14, the League published its programme and broke away from the Independents. At the Inaugural Congress held December 30, 1918-January 1, 1919, the Spartacists founded the Communist Party of Germany. p. 22

<sup>8</sup> *l'Humanité*—a daily founded by Jean Jaurès in 1904 as the organ of the French Socialist Party. During the First World War it was in the hands of the extreme Right wing of the Party and took a

social-chauvinist stand. In December 1920, following the split in the French Socialist Party, the newspaper became the Central Organ of the Communist Party of France. p. 24

<sup>9</sup> *The Independent Labour Party of Britain*—a reformist organisation founded by the leaders of the "new trade unions" in 1893 at the time of the revival of the strike movement and the intensification of the working-class struggle for independence from the bourgeois parties. The I.L.P. included members of the "new trade unions" and a number of the old trade unions, representatives of the intelligentsia and the petty bourgeoisie. Its leaders were Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald. Ever since its foundation the I.L.P. maintained a bourgeois-reformist stand concentrating its attention on the parliamentary form of struggle and on parliamentary deals with the Liberal Party. p. 24

<sup>10</sup> *The Labour Party of Britain* was founded in 1900 as an association of trade unions and socialist organisations and groups for the purpose of securing the election of workers' representatives to parliament (the Labour Representation Committee). In 1906 the Committee was renamed into the Labour Party. Members of trade unions are automatically members of the Party provided they pay Party membership dues. Ever since the foundation of the Party its leaders have been pursuing a policy of class collaboration with the bourgeoisie. During the First World War (1914-18) the Labour Party leaders adopted a social-chauvinist position and entered the government. With their active support the government passed a number of laws against the workers (on the country's militarisation, etc.). The Labour leaders repeatedly headed the Government. p. 24

<sup>11</sup> The bourgeois Provisional Government, formed in Russia after the February bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1917, declared on March 2 (15), 1917 that it intended to convene a Constituent Assembly, but repeatedly postponed its elections. The Constituent Assembly was convoked only on January 5, 1918, after the establishment of Soviet power. The elections to the Constituent Assembly were conducted according to the lists drawn up prior to the October Socialist Revolution and its composition reflected the alignment of forces at the time of the bourgeois rule. There appeared a rupture between the will of the overwhelming majority of the people who advocated Soviet power and the policy of the S.R.-Menshevik-Cadet majority of the Constituent Assembly which expressed the interests of the bourgeoisie and the landowners. In view of the fact that the Assembly refused to discuss the Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People and to endorse the decrees, adopted by the Second Congress of Soviets, on peace, on land and on the transfer of power to the Soviets, it was dissolved by the decision of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of January 6 (19), 1918. p. 25

<sup>12</sup> The reference is to the decisions of the Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) which was held in Petrograd between April 24 and 29 (May 7 and 12), 1917. p. 27



<sup>13</sup> *The Basle Manifesto*—a manifesto on war adopted by the Emergency International Socialist Congress that took place in Basle on November 24-25, 1912. The Manifesto warned the peoples against the imminent danger of an imperialist war, exposed the predatory aims of the war and called upon the workers of all countries to wage a determined struggle for peace and "to pit against capitalist imperialism the might of the international solidarity of the proletariat". The Manifesto contained a clause from the resolution of the Stuttgart Congress (1907) which had been formulated by Lenin and said that if the imperialist war break out, the socialists must utilise the economic and political crisis created by the war to struggle for the socialist revolution. p. 28

<sup>14</sup> *The Peace Treaty of Versailles* which concluded the imperialist war of 1914-18 was signed on June 28, 1919 by the U.S.A., the British Empire, France, Italy, Japan and the countries that sided with them, on the one hand, and Germany, on the other.

Speaking of the Treaty of Versailles on October 15, 1920, Lenin said: "It is an unparalleled and predatory peace, which has made slaves of tens of millions of people, including the most civilised" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 326). The aim of the Treaty was to confirm the division of the capitalist world in favour of the victor countries and to establish a system of relations between countries directed at the destruction of Soviet Russia and the defeat of the world revolutionary movement. p. 29

<sup>15</sup> *The Anglo-Boer War* (October 1899-May 1902)—a colonial war of conquest waged by Britain against two South-African republics—the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, as a result of which these republics lost independence and became Britain's colonies. p. 31

<sup>16</sup> *The Fabian Society*—an English reformist organisation founded in 1884. It was called after Quintus Fabius Maximus, the Roman general of the 3rd century B.C., nicknamed Cunctator (the Delayer) for his dilatory tactics and avoidance of a decisive encounter with Hannibal. Its members were chiefly bourgeois intellectuals, scientists, writers and politicians (the Webbs, Ramsay MacDonald, Bernard Shaw and others). The Fabians denied the need for the proletariat to wage the class struggle and rejected the socialist revolution, maintaining that transition from capitalism to socialism could be effected by petty reforms and gradual social evolution. In 1900 they joined the Labour Party. p. 31

<sup>17</sup> The reference is to legal workers' organisations set up in 1901-03 on the initiative of Zubatov, Chief of the Moscow Secret Political Police, with a view to diverting the workers from political struggle against the tsarist autocracy. The followers of Zubatov sought to switch the workers' attention to narrow economic demands which the government, they asserted, was ready to meet. Zubatov organisations were set up in many major cities of Russia.

Exposing the reactionary nature of Zubatov's policy, revolutionary Social-Democrats made use of legal workers' organisations to draw the masses of working people into the struggle against the

autocracy. Subsequently Lenin wrote: "And now the Zubatov movement is outgrowing its bounds. Initiated by the police in the interests of the police, in the interests of supporting the autocracy and demoralising the political consciousness of the workers, this movement is turning against the autocracy and is becoming an outbreak of the proletarian class struggle" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 90).

The tsarist government had to close down the Zubatov organisations in 1903 because of the mounting revolutionary movement. p. 33

<sup>18</sup> *Cadets*—members of the Constitutional-Democratic Party, the leading party of the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie in Russia, founded in October 1905. Its membership included representatives of the bourgeoisie, landowners and intellectuals. To deceive the working people, the Cadets called themselves the "party of people's freedom" but in fact they went no farther than the demand for a constitutional monarchy. During the First World War the Cadets actively supported the expansionist policy of the tsarist government. In the February bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1917 they tried to save the monarchy. Occupying a leading position in the bourgeois Provisional Government, the Cadets conducted an anti-popular, counter-revolutionary policy. After the victory of the October Socialist Revolution the Cadets became avowed enemies of the Soviet power and actively participated in all armed counter-revolutionary actions and interventionist campaigns against Soviet Russia. p. 37

<sup>19</sup> Harry Quelch said this in his speech at the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International in 1907. He called the Hague Conference, held at the same time, "a thieves' supper", for which he was deported by the German Government. p. 39

<sup>20</sup> This refers to the Conference of the Second International held in Lucerne (Switzerland) from August 2 to August 9, 1919. At first a "world congress" was to be convened, but since only 40 delegates appeared a conference was held instead. The agenda consisted of two items: restoration of the International and the political situation in the world. p. 41

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