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LENIN
ON THE
STRUGGLE AGAINST
REVISIONISM

Michael
Harmon
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WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

**LENIN
ON THE
STRUGGLE AGAINST
REVISIONISM**

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I. REVISIONISM SACRIFICES THE FUNDAMENTAL INTERESTS OF THE PROLETARIAT TO CATER TO THE NEEDS OF THE BOURGEOISIE

THE THEORETICAL VICTORY OF MARXISM OBLIGED ITS ENEMIES TO DISGUISE THEMSELVES AS MARXISTS

Revisionism, or "revision" of Marxism, is today one of the chief, if not the chief, manifestation of bourgeois influence on the proletariat and bourgeois corruption of the workers. That is why Eduard Bernstein, the opportunist leader, has won such worldwide notoriety.

From "Hasty Conclusions" (published in *Prosveshcheniye*, No. 5, May 1914).

The dialectics of history were such that the theoretical victory of Marxism obliged its enemies to *disguise themselves* as Marxists. Liberalism, rotten to the core, tried to revitalize itself in the form of so-

cialist *opportunism*. The period of the preparation of forces for great battles the opportunists interpreted as renunciation of these battles. Improvement of the conditions of the slaves to facilitate the struggle against wage slavery they interpreted as the selling, by the slaves, of their right to liberty for a mess of pottage. They cravenly preached "social peace" (i.e., peace with the slave owners), the renunciation of the class struggle, and so forth. They had many adherents among socialist members of parliament, various officials of the working-class movement, and the "sympathizer" intellectuals.

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

Certain individuals among the present social-chauvinist leaders may return to the proletariat. But the social-chauvinist or (what is the same thing) opportunist *trend* can neither disappear nor "return" to the revolutionary proletariat. Wherever Marxism is popular among the workers, this political trend, this "bourgeois labour party" will swear by the name of Marx. It cannot be prohibited from doing this, just as a trading firm cannot be prohibited from using any particular label, sign, or advertisement. It

has always been the case in history that after the death of revolutionary leaders who were popular among the oppressed classes, their enemies have attempted to appropriate their names so as to deceive the oppressed classes.

From "Imperialism and the Split in the Socialist Movement" (October 1916).

**EMASCULATES THE REVOLUTIONARY ESSENCE OF
MARXISM, PUSHES TO THE FOREGROUND AND
EXTOLS WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE TO THE
BOURGEOISIE**

What is now happening to Marx's teaching has, in the course of history, happened repeatedly to the teachings of revolutionary thinkers and leaders of oppressed classes struggling for emancipation. During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes constantly hounded them, received their teachings with the most savage malice, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaigns of lies and slander. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonize them, so to say, and to surround their *names* with a certain halo for the "consolation" of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping the

latter, while at the same time emasculating the *essence* of the revolutionary teaching, blunting its revolutionary edge and vulgarizing it. At the present time, the bourgeoisie and the opportunists within the working-class movement concur in this "doctoring" of Marxism. They omit, obliterate and distort the revolutionary side of this teaching, its revolutionary soul. They push to the foreground and extol what is or seems acceptable to the bourgeoisie. All the social-chauvinists are now "Marxists" (don't laugh!). And more and more frequently, German bourgeois scholars, but yesterday specialists in the annihilation of Marxism, are speaking of the "national-German" Marx, who, they aver, educated the workers' unions which are so splendidly organized for the purpose of conducting a predatory war!

From "The State and Revolution"
(August-September 1917).

Kautsky takes from Marxism what is acceptable to the liberals, to the bourgeoisie (the criticism of the Middle Ages, and the progressive historical role of capitalism in general and of capitalist democracy in particular), and discards, passes in silence, glosses over all that in Marxism which is *unacceptable*

to the bourgeoisie (the revolutionary violence of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie for the latter's destruction). That is why Kautsky, by virtue of his objective position and irrespective of what his subjective convictions may be, inevitably proves to be a lackey of the bourgeoisie.

From "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky" (October-November 1918).

**DECLARES THAT THE DOCTRINES OF MARX ARE
INADEQUATE AND OBSOLETE, USING "NEW"
ARGUMENTS AND "NEW" REASONINGS TO
APOLOGIZE FOR SOCIAL REFORMISM**

International Social-Democracy is at present in a state of mental wavering. Hitherto the doctrines of Marx and Engels were considered to be the firm foundation of revolutionary theory, but voices are now being raised on all hands declaring that these doctrines are inadequate and obsolete. Whoever declares himself to be a Social-Democrat and intends to publish a Social-Democratic organ must precisely define his attitude to a question which is by no means agitating the German Social-Democrats alone.

We stand wholly on the basis of the Marxist theory: it was the first to transform Socialism from

a utopia into a science, to lay a firm foundation for this science and to indicate the path that must be followed in further developing this science and elaborating it in all its parts. It disclosed the nature of modern capitalist economy by explaining how the hire of the labourer, the purchase of labour power, masks the enslavement of millions of propertyless people by a handful of capitalists, the owners of the land, factories, mines and so forth. It showed how the whole development of modern capitalism tends toward the ousting of small-scale production by large-scale production and creates the conditions which render a socialist order of society possible and necessary. It taught us how, beneath the surface of rooted customs, political intrigues, abstruse laws and intricate doctrines, to discern the *class struggle*, the struggle between all species of propertied classes and the propertyless mass, the *proletariat* which stands at the head of all the propertyless. It made clear the real task of a revolutionary socialist party: not to invent plans for refashioning society, not to preach to the capitalists and their hangers-on about improving the lot of the workers, not to hatch conspiracies, *but to organize the class struggle of the proletariat and to lead this struggle, the ultimate*

aim of which is the conquest of political power by the proletariat and the organization of a socialist society.

From "Our Programme"
(latter half of 1899).

Social-Democracy must change from a party of the social revolution into a democratic party of social reforms. Bernstein has surrounded this political demand with a whole battery of symmetrically arranged "new" arguments and reasonings. The possibility of putting Socialism on a scientific basis and of proving from the point of view of the materialist conception of history that it is necessary and inevitable was denied, as was also the growing impoverishment, proletarianization and the intensification of capitalist contradictions. The very conception, "*ultimate aim*," was declared to be unsound, and the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat was absolutely rejected. It was denied that there is any counterdistinction in principle between liberalism and Socialism. *The theory of the class struggle* was rejected on the grounds that it could not be applied to a strictly democratic society, governed according to the will of the majority, etc.

From "What Is To Be Done?"
(autumn 1901-February 1902).

**VAGUENESS, DRIFTING WITH THE STREAM, LACK-
ING DEFINITE AND FIRM PRINCIPLES**

The articles in the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10 (our comrades saw this issue for the first time when they arrived at the congress, a few days before the meetings started), clearly showed that a new turn had taken place in the "Union" in the period between the summer and the autumn: the Economists had again gained the upper hand, and the editorial board, which turned with every "wind," again set out to defend "the most pronounced Bernsteinians" and "freedom of criticism," to defend "spontaneity," and through the mouth of Martynov, to preach the "theory of restricting" the sphere of our political influence (for the alleged purpose of making this influence more complex). Once again Parvus' apt observation that it was difficult to catch an opportunist with a formula was proved correct. An opportunist will put his name to *any* formula and as readily abandon it, because opportunism is precisely a lack of definite and firm principles.

Ibid.

When we speak of fighting opportunism, we must never forget a feature that is characteristic of

present-day opportunism in every sphere, namely, its vagueness, diffuseness, elusiveness. An opportunist, by his very nature, will always evade formulating an issue clearly and decisively, he will always seek a middle course, he will always wriggle like a snake between two mutually exclusive points of view and try to "agree" with both and to reduce his differences of opinion to petty amendments, doubts, good and pious suggestions, and so on and so forth.

From "One Step Forward, Two
Steps Back" (February-May 1904).

Thus, throughout the past three years, we have not observed the slightest attempt on the part of this entire literary fraternity to present *their own* formulated answer to the "vexed questions." There were many metaphors and idle hypotheses, but not a single straight answer. The distinguishing, characteristic feature of the fraternity under consideration was their love for *amorphousness*, i.e., the very symptom which, *at the very time* the direct answer was given to the vexed questions, was recognized in the most definite, precise and unequivocal manner to be a constituent part of the con-

cept *liquidationism*. To drift amorphously with the stream, to wallow in one's amorphousness, to "put the lid on" what is the very opposite of the present amorphousness — that is one of the basic features of liquidationism.

From "The Social Structure of State Power, the Prospects and Liquidationism" (published in *Mysl*, No. 4, March 1911).

And you stress that "it is necessary for us to advance such a slogan as would *unite* everyone."

I will say frankly that I am most of all afraid, at this time, of such indiscriminate unificationism, which, in my conviction, is the most dangerous and the most harmful to the proletariat. Indeed, Kautsky has already thought up, in *Neue Zeit*, an arch-"unificationist" theory. . . .

From "Letter to A. M. Kollontai"
(November 28-December 8, 1914).

"THE MOVEMENT IS EVERYTHING, THE FINAL AIM IS NOTHING"—THIS STATEMENT OF BERNSTEIN'S SHOWS THE SUBSTANCE OF REVISIONISM MORE CLEARLY THAN ANYTHING ELSE

But his [the opportunist's] typical and characteristic feature is a tendency to be influenced by the

mood of the moment, inability to stand up against the fashion of the day, political short-sightedness and spinelessness. Opportunism is the sacrificing of the long-term and vital interests of the Party to its momentary, passing, secondary interests. A bit of a rise in industrial activity, a relative flourishing of trade, a slight stirring of bourgeois liberalism — and the opportunist already begins to shout: Don't scare the bourgeoisie, don't shun it, away with "phrases" about the social revolution!

From "The Russian Radical Is Strong in Hindsight" (published in *Vestnik Zhizni*, No. 12, October 18, 1906).

A natural complement to the economic and political tendencies of revisionism was its attitude to the final aim of the socialist movement. "The movement is everything, the final aim is nothing" — this catchphrase of Bernstein's expresses the substance of revisionism better than many long arguments. To determine its conduct from case to case, to adapt itself to the events of the day and to the chops and changes of petty politics, to forget the basic interests of the proletariat, the main features of the capitalist system as a whole and of capitalist evolution as a whole; to sacrifice these basic

interests for the real or assumed advantages of the moment—such is the policy of revisionism. And it patently follows from the very nature of this policy that it may assume an infinite variety of forms, and that every more or less “new” question, every more or less unexpected and unforeseen turn of events, even though it may change the basic line of development only to an insignificant degree and only for the shortest period of time, will always inevitably give rise to one or another variety of revisionism.

From “Marxism and Revisionism”
(before April 3, 1908).

II. REVISIONISM EMASCULATES MARXIST PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL ECONOMY AND TEACHINGS ON CLASS STRUGGLE

IN PHILOSOPHY RENOUNCES DIALECTICAL MA-
TERIALISM AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM,
REPLACING “ARTFUL” (AND REVOLUTION-
ARY) DIALECTICS BY “SIMPLE” (AND
TRANQUIL) “EVOLUTION”

In the domain of philosophy revisionism followed in the wake of bourgeois professorial “science.” The professors went “back to Kant”—and revisionism followed the neo-Kantians; the professors repeated the banalities that priests have uttered a thousand times against philosophical materialism—and the revisionists, smiling condescendingly, mumbled (word for word after the latest *Handbuch*) that materialism had been “refuted” long ago. The professors treated Hegel as a “dead dog,” and while they themselves preached idealism, only an idealism a thousand times more petty and banal than Hegel’s,

they contemptuously shrugged their shoulders at dialectics — and the revisionists floundered after them into the swamp of philosophical vulgarization of science, replacing “artful” (and revolutionary) dialectics by “simple” (and tranquil) “evolution.”

From “Marxism and Revisionism” (before April 3, 1908).

All these people could not have been ignorant of the fact that Marx and Engels scores of times termed their philosophical views dialectical materialism. Yet all these people, who, despite the sharp divergence of their political views, are united in their hostility toward dialectical materialism, at the same time claim that in philosophy they are Marxists! Engels’ dialectics is “mysticism,” says Berman. Engels’ views have become “antiquated,” remarks Bazarov casually, as though it were a self-evident fact. Materialism thus appears to be refuted by our bold warriors, who proudly allude to the “modern theory of knowledge,” “recent philosophy” (or “recent positivism”), the “philosophy of modern natural science,” or even the “philosophy of natural science of the twentieth century.” Supported by all these supposedly recent doctrines, our destroyers of dialectical

tical materialism proceed fearlessly to downright fideism (in the case of Lunacharsky it is most evident, but by no means in his case alone!). Yet when it comes to an explicit definition of their attitude towards Marx and Engels, all their courage and all their respect for their own convictions at once disappear. In deed — a complete renunciation of dialectical materialism, i.e., of Marxism; in word — endless subterfuges, attempts to evade the essence of the question, to cover their retreat, to put some materialist or other in place of materialism in general, and a determined refusal to make a direct analysis of the innumerable materialist declarations of Marx and Engels. This is truly “mutiny on one’s knees,” as it was justly characterized by one Marxist. This is typical philosophical revisionism, for it was only the revisionists who gained a sad notoriety for themselves by their departure from the fundamental views of Marxism and by their fear, or inability, to “settle accounts” openly, explicitly, resolutely and clearly with the views they had abandoned.

From “Preface to the First Edition of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*” (September 1908).

Dialectics are replaced by eclecticism — this is the most usual, the most widespread phenomenon to be met with in present-day official Social-Democratic literature in relation to Marxism. This sort of substitution is, of course, no new thing, it was observed even in the history of classic Greek philosophy. In falsifying Marxism in opportunist fashion, the substitution of eclecticism for dialectics is the easiest way of deceiving the masses; it gives an illusory satisfaction; it seems to take into account all sides of the process, all tendencies of development, all the conflicting influences, and so forth, whereas in reality it presents no integral and revolutionary conception of the process of social development at all.

From "The State and Revolution"
(August-September 1917).

In what lies the main mistake of all these opportunist reasonings? In that, in these reasonings, the socialist theory of class struggle as the single *real* moving force of history is *in fact* supplanted by the bourgeois theory of "solidarity," "social" progress. According to the teachings of Socialism, i.e., of Marxism (now, one cannot even speak seriously of non-

Marxist socialism) the real moving force of history is the revolutionary struggle of classes; reforms are the by-product of this struggle, a by-product because they express the unsuccessful attempts to weaken, to blunt this struggle, etc. According to the teachings of the bourgeois philosophers, the motive force of progress is the solidarity of all elements of society which have realized the "imperfection" of this or that institution. The first teaching is materialist, the second is idealist. The first is revolutionary. The second is reformist. The first provides the basis for the tactics of the proletariat in the present-day capitalist countries. The second provides the basis for the tactics of the bourgeoisie.

From "More on the Duma Ministry"
(published in *Echo*, No. 6, June 28, 1906).

"REVISES" MARXIST POLITICAL ECONOMY, EXPECTING THAT A NEW PEACEFUL ERA OF CAPITALISM WILL BE USHERED IN

Passing to political economy, it must be noted first of all that the "amendments" of the revisionists in this domain were much more comprehensive and circumstantial; attempts were made to influence the public by adducing "new data on economic develop-

ment." It was said that concentration and the ousting of small-scale production by large-scale production do not occur in agriculture at all while they proceed very slowly in commerce and industry. It was said that crises had now become rarer and of less force, and that the cartels and trusts would probably enable capital to do away with crises altogether. It was said that the "theory of collapse" to which capitalism is heading was unsound, owing to the tendency of class antagonisms to become milder and less acute. It was said, finally, that it would not be amiss to correct Marx's theory of value in accordance with Böhm-Bawerk.

The fight against the revisionists on these questions resulted in as fruitful a revival of the theoretical thought of international Socialism as followed from Engels' controversy with Dühring twenty years earlier. The arguments of the revisionists were analysed with the help of facts and figures. It was proved that the revisionists were systematically presenting modern small-scale production in a favourable light. The technical and commercial superiority of large-scale *production* over small-scale production not only in industry, but also in agriculture, is proved by irrefutable facts. But commodity pro-

duction is far less developed in agriculture, and modern statisticians and economists are, as a rule, not very skilful in picking out the special branches (sometimes even operations) in agriculture which indicate that agriculture is being progressively drawn into the *exchange* of world economy. Small-scale production maintains itself on the ruins of natural economy by a steady deterioration in nourishment, by chronic starvation, by the lengthening of the working day, by the deterioration in the quality of cattle and in the care given to cattle, in a word, by the very methods whereby handicraft production maintained itself against capitalist manufacture. Every advance in science and technology inevitably and relentlessly undermines the foundations of small-scale production in capitalist society, and it is the task of socialist political economy to investigate this process in all its often complicated and intricate forms, and to demonstrate to the small producer the impossibility of holding his own under capitalism, the hopelessness of peasant farming under capitalism, and the necessity of the peasant adopting the standpoint of the proletarian. On this question the revisionists sinned from the scientific standpoint by superficially generalizing facts selected one-sidedly

and without reference to the system of capitalism as a whole; from the political standpoint they sinned by the fact that they inevitably, whether they wanted to or not, invited or urged the peasant to adopt the standpoint of the master (i.e., the standpoint of the bourgeoisie), instead of urging him to adopt the standpoint of the revolutionary proletarian.

The position of revisionism was even worse as far as the theory of crises and the theory of collapse were concerned. Only for the shortest space of time could people, and then only the most shortsighted, think of remodelling the foundations of the Marxian doctrine under the influence of a few years of industrial boom and prosperity. Facts very soon made it clear to the revisionists that crises were not a thing of the past: prosperity was followed by a crisis. The forms, the sequence, the picture of the particular crises changed, but crises remained an inevitable component of the capitalist system. While uniting production, the cartels and trusts at the same time, and in a way that was obvious to all, aggravated the anarchy of production, the insecurity of existence of the proletariat and the oppression of capital, thus intensifying class antagonisms to an unprecedented degree. That capitalism is moving

towards collapse — both in the sense of individual political and economic crises and of the complete collapse of the entire capitalist system — has been made very clear; and on a very large scale, precisely by the latest giant trusts.

From "Marxism and Revisionism"
(before April 3, 1908).

Advancing this definition of imperialism brings us into complete contradiction to K. Kautsky, who refuses to regard imperialism as a "phase of capitalism" and who defines imperialism as the *policy* "preferred" by finance capital, as a tendency on the part of "industrial" countries to annex "agrarian" countries. Kautsky's definition is thoroughly false from the theoretical standpoint. What distinguishes imperialism is the rule *not* of industrial capital but of finance capital, the striving to annex *not* agrarian countries particularly, but *every kind* of country. Kautsky *divorces* imperialist politics from imperialist economics, he divorces monopoly in politics from monopoly in economics in order to pave the way for his vulgar bourgeois reformism, such as "disarmament," "ultra-imperialism" and similar nonsense. The aim and object of this theoretical falsity is to obscure the *most profound* contra-

dictions of imperialism and thus to justify the theory of "unity" with the apologists of imperialism, the frank social-chauvinists and opportunists.

From "Imperialism and the Split in the Socialist Movement" (October 1916).

From the fact that imperialism is necessary the Left wing draws the conclusion that revolutionary action is necessary. The "theory of ultra-imperialism," however, serves Kautsky as a means by which to justify the opportunists, to present the situation in such a light as to make it appear that they have not gone over to the bourgeoisie but simply that they "do not believe" that Socialism could come immediately and expect that "perhaps" a new "era" of disarmament and lasting peace will be ushered in. The "theory" reduces itself to this and *only* to this, that Kautsky utilizes the *hope* for a *new* peaceful era of capitalism to justify the opportunists and the official Social-Democratic Parties who joined the bourgeoisie and repudiated revolutionary, i.e., proletarian, tactics during the *present turbulent era*, notwithstanding the solemn declarations of the Basle resolution!

From "The Collapse of the Second International" (latter half of May to first half of June 1915).

DENIES CLASS STRUGGLE AND PREACHES CLASS COLLABORATION

In the domain of politics, revisionism did really try to revise the foundation of Marxism, namely, the doctrine of the class struggle. Political freedom, democracy and universal suffrage remove the ground for the class struggle — we were told — and render untrue the old proposition of the *Communist Manifesto* that the workers have no country. For, they said, since the "will of the majority" prevails under democracy, one must neither regard the state as an organ of class rule, nor reject alliances with the progressive, social-reformist bourgeoisie against the reactionaries.

It cannot be disputed that these objections of the revisionists constituted a fairly harmonious system of views, namely, the old and well-known liberal bourgeois views. The liberals have always said that bourgeois parliamentarism destroys classes and class divisions, since the right to vote and the right to participate in state affairs are shared by all citizens without distinction. The whole history of Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the whole history of the Russian revolution in the be-

ginning of the twentieth, clearly shows how absurd such views are. Economic distinctions are not mitigated but aggravated and intensified under the freedom of "democratic" capitalism. Parliamentarism does not remove, but lays bare the innate character even of the most democratic bourgeois republics as organs of class oppression. By helping to enlighten and to organize immeasurably wider masses of the population than those which previously took an active part in political events, parliamentarism does not make for the elimination of crises and political revolutions, but for the maximum intensification of civil war during such revolutions. The events in Paris in the spring of 1871 and the events in Russia in the winter of 1905 showed as clear as clear could be how inevitably this intensification comes about. The French bourgeoisie without a moment's hesitation made a deal with the enemy of the whole nation, with the foreign army, which had ruined its fatherland, in order to crush the proletarian movement. Whoever does not understand the inevitable inner dialectics of parliamentarism and bourgeois democracy — which leads to an even sharper decision of the dispute by mass violence than formerly — will never be able on this basis of parliamen-

tarism to conduct propaganda and agitation that are consistent in principle and really prepare the working-class masses for victorious participation in such "disputes." The experience of alliances, agreements and blocs with the social-reformist liberals in the West and with the liberal reformists (Constitutional-Democrats) in the Russian revolution convincingly showed that these agreements only blunt the consciousness of the masses, that they do not enhance but weaken the actual significance of their struggle by linking the fighters with the elements who are less capable of fighting and who are most vacillating and treacherous. French Millerandism — the biggest experiment in applying revisionist political tactics on a wide, a really national scale — has provided a practical appraisal of revisionism that will never be forgotten by the proletariat all over the world.

From "Marxism and Revisionism" (before April 3, 1908).

The state is the product and the manifestation of the *irreconcilability* of class antagonisms. The state arises when, where and to the extent that class antagonisms objectively *cannot* be reconciled. And,

conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable.

It is precisely on this most important and fundamental point that the distortion of Marxism, proceeding along two main lines, begins.

On the one hand, the bourgeois and particularly the petty-bourgeois ideologists, compelled under the weight of indisputable historical facts to admit that the state only exists where there are class antagonisms and the class struggle, "correct" Marx in such a way as to make it appear that the state is an organ for the *reconciliation* of classes. According to Marx, the state could neither arise nor maintain itself if it were possible to reconcile classes. According to the petty-bourgeois and philistine professors and publicists it appears — very frequently they benignantly refer to Marx to prove this — that the state does reconcile classes. According to Marx, the state is an organ of class *rule*, an organ for the *oppression* of one class by another; it is the creation of "order," which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between the classes. In the opinion of the petty-bourgeois politicians, order means precisely the reconciliation of classes, and not the oppression of one class by

another; to moderate the conflict means reconciling classes and not depriving the oppressed classes of definite means and methods of struggle to overthrow the oppressors.

For instance, when, in the Revolution of 1917, the question of the significance and role of the state arose in all its magnitude as a practical question demanding immediate action on a mass scale, all the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks immediately and completely sank to the petty-bourgeois theory that the "state" "reconciles" classes. Innumerable resolutions and articles by politicians of both these parties are thoroughly saturated with this petty-bourgeois and philistine "reconciliation" theory. That the state is an organ of the rule of a definite class which *cannot* be reconciled with its antipode (the class opposite to it), is something the petty-bourgeois democrats will never be able to understand. Their attitude towards the state is one of the most striking manifestations of the fact that our Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks are not Socialists at all (a point that we Bolsheviks have always maintained), but petty-bourgeois democrats with near-socialist phraseology.

On the other hand, the "Kautskyite" distortion of Marxism is far more subtle. "Theoretically," it is not denied that the state is an organ of class rule, or that class antagonisms are irreconcilable. But what is lost sight of or glossed over is this: if the state is the product of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms, if it is a power standing *above* society and "*increasingly alienating* itself from it," then it is obvious that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, *but also without the destruction* of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class and which is the embodiment of this "alienation." As we shall see later, Marx very definitely drew this theoretically self-evident conclusion as a result of a concrete historical analysis of the tasks of the revolution. And — as we shall show in detail further on — it is precisely this conclusion which Kautsky . . . has "forgotten" and distorted.

From "The State and Revolution"
(August-September 1917).

Every class struggle is a political struggle. It is known that the opportunists, enslaved by the ideas of liberalism, have understood these profound words

of Marx falsely and tried to interpret them in a distorted way. The opportunists included, for instance, the "Economists," the elder brothers of the Liquidators. The "Economists" thought that any clash between the classes is a political struggle. They, therefore, recognized the struggle for a 5 Kopeck per ruble raise as a "class struggle," not wishing to see the higher, more developed, nationwide class struggle as *politics*. The "Economists" thus recognized the rudimentary class struggle and did not recognize it in its developed form. In other words, the "Economists" recognized in the class struggle only that which was most tolerable from the viewpoint of the liberal bourgeoisie, refusing to go further than the liberals, refusing to acknowledge the higher class struggle which is unacceptable to the liberals. The "Economists" were thus becoming liberal workman politicians. They, in this way, rejected the Marxist revolutionary concept of the class struggle.

Further. It is not enough to say that the class struggle becomes real, consistent and developed only when it embraces the sphere of politics. In politics, too, it is possible to limit oneself to petty details, or one can go deeper, right down to essentials. Marx-

ism recognizes the class struggle as fully developed, "nationwide" *only* when it not only embraces politics but also takes in politics the most essential thing: the structure of state power.

Conversely, liberalism, when the workers' movement has somewhat gained in strength, no longer dares to deny the class struggle, but tries to narrow, clip, castrate the concept of the class struggle. Liberalism is ready to recognize the class struggle in the sphere of politics but on the one condition that it does *not* include the structure of state power. It is not hard to understand what class interests of the bourgeoisie give rise to this liberal distortion of the concept of the class struggle.

From "About the Liberal and Marxist Understanding of the Class Struggle" (published in *Prosveshcheniye*, No. 5, May 1913).

It is often said and written that the main point in Marx's teachings is the class struggle; but this is not true. And from this untruth very often springs the opportunist distortion of Marxism, its falsification in such a way as to make it acceptable to the bourgeoisie. For the doctrine of the class struggle was created *not* by Marx, *but* by the bourgeoisie *before* Marx, and generally speaking it is *acceptable*

to the bourgeoisie. Those who recognize *only* the class struggle are not yet Marxists; they may be found to be still within the boundaries of bourgeois thinking and bourgeois politics. To confine Marxism to the doctrine of the class struggle means curtailing Marxism, distorting it, reducing it to something which is acceptable to the bourgeoisie. Only he is a Marxist who *extends* the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. This is what constitutes the most profound difference between the Marxist and the ordinary petty (as well as big) bourgeois. This is the touchstone on which the *real* understanding and recognition of Marxism is to be tested. And it is not surprising that when the history of Europe brought the working class face to face with this question as a *practical* issue, not only all the opportunists and reformists, but all the "Kautskyites" (people who vacillate between reformism and Marxism) proved to be miserable philistines and petty-bourgeois democrats who *repudiate* the dictatorship of the proletariat. Kautsky's pamphlet, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, published in August 1918, i.e., long after the first edition of the present book, is a perfect example of petty-bourgeois distortion of Marxism

and base renunciation of it *in practice*, while hypocritically recognizing it *in words* (see my pamphlet, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, Petrograd and Moscow, 1918).

Present-day opportunism in the person of its principal representative, the ex-Marxist, K. Kautsky, fits in completely with Marx's characterization of the *bourgeois* position quoted above, for this opportunism limits the recognition of the class struggle to the sphere of bourgeois relationships. (Within this sphere, within its framework, not a single educated liberal will refuse to recognize the class struggle "in principle"!)

Opportunism *does not extend* the recognition of class struggle to what is the cardinal point, to the period of *transition* from capitalism to Communism, to the period of the *overthrow* and the complete *abolition* of the bourgeoisie. In reality, this period inevitably is a period of an unprecedentedly violent class struggle in unprecedentedly acute forms and, consequently, during this period the state must inevitably be a state that is democratic *in a new way* (for the proletariat and the propertyless in general) and dictatorial *in a new way* (against the bourgeoisie).

From "The State and Revolution"
(August-September 1917).

The betrayal of Socialism by the majority of the leaders of the Second International (1889-1914) means the ideological collapse of this International. The basic cause of this collapse is the actual predominance in it of petty-bourgeois opportunism, whose bourgeois nature and danger was pointed out long since by the best representatives of the proletariat of all countries. The opportunists have long been preparing the collapse of the Second International, by rejecting the socialist revolution and substituting for it bourgeois reformism, rejecting the class struggle with its necessary, at certain moments, transformation into civil war and preaching class collaboration, championing bourgeois chauvinism, under the guise of patriotism and defence of the fatherland and ignoring or denying the elementary truth of Socialism, already set out in the *Communist Manifesto*, that the workers have no fatherland; restricting themselves in the struggle against militarism to a sentimental-philistine viewpoint, instead of recognizing the necessity of a revolutionary war of the proletariat of all countries against the bourgeoisie of all countries; turning the necessary utilization of bourgeois parliamentarism and bourgeois legality into fetishization of this legality and forgetting the illegal forms

of organization and agitation which are obligatory in the epoch of crises.

From "Theses on the War"
(September 5-6, 1914).

It would be absolutely incorrect to suppose that, in order to carry on a direct struggle for the socialist revolution, we can or must throw away the struggle for reforms. By no means. We cannot know how soon we will achieve success, how soon objective conditions will permit the coming of *this* revolution. We must support every improvement, real improvement of both the economic and political conditions of the masses. The difference between us and the reformists (i.e., in Switzerland — with the Grutlants) consists not in that we are against reforms while they are for reforms. Nothing of the sort. They limit themselves to reforms and, owing to this, descend, according to the apt expression of one (unusual!) revolutionary contributor of the *Schweizerische Metallarbeiterzeitung* (No. 40), to the role of mere "nurses of capitalism." We tell the workers: vote for proportional and similar elections, but do not restrict thereby your activity, put in the foreground the systematic dissemination of the idea

of immediate socialist revolution, prepare for it and all along the line introduce the corresponding radical changes in all Party activity. The conditions of bourgeois democracy very often compel us to adopt this or that position towards a mass of petty and minute reforms, but we must be able to learn or adopt a position for reforms so (in such a manner) *that* — to put it somewhat simply for the sake of greater clarity — in every half hour speech we speak five minutes about reforms and 25 minutes about the coming revolution.

From "Propositions of Principle on the
Question of War" (December 1916).

**SLAVISHLY WORSHIPS BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY, IN
A VAIN ATTEMPT TO WIN A MAJORITY BY
MEANS OF UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE AND
THEN TO OBTAIN STATE POWER**

In mockery of the teachings of Marx, those gentlemen, the opportunists including the Kautskyites, "teach" the people that: the proletariat must first win a majority by means of universal suffrage, then, on the basis of the voting of that majority, obtain state power, and only after that, on that basis of

“consistent” (otherwise called “pure”) democracy, organize Socialism.

But we say on the basis of the teachings of Marx and the experience of the Russian revolution:

The proletariat must first overthrow the bourgeoisie and win *for itself* state power, and then use that state power, that is, the dictatorship of the proletariat, as an instrument of its class for the purpose of winning the sympathy of the majority of the toilers.

From “The Constituent Assembly Elections
and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat”
(December 16, 1919).

It was this dialectics that the traitors, block-heads and pedants of the Second International could never understand: the proletariat cannot achieve victory if it does not win the majority of the population to its side. But to limit that winning to polling a majority of votes in an election *under the rule of the bourgeoisie*, or to make it the condition for it, is crass stupidity, or else sheer deception of the workers. In order to win the majority of the population to its side the proletariat must, in the first

place, overthrow the bourgeoisie and seize state power; secondly, it must introduce Soviet power and smash the old state apparatus to bits, whereby it immediately undermines the rule, prestige and influence of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeois compromisers over the non-proletarian toiling masses.

Ibid.

The majority of the European Socialist leaders, both the social-chauvinists and the Kautsky trend, have become so much a prey to purely philistine prejudices, fostered by decades of relatively “peaceful” capitalism and bourgeois parliamentarism, that they are unable to understand what Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat mean. The proletariat cannot perform its epoch-making emancipatory mission unless it removes these leaders from its path, unless it sweeps them out of its way. These people believed, or half-believed, the bourgeois lies about the Soviet regime in Russia and were unable to distinguish the essence of the new, proletarian democracy — democracy for the working people, socialist democracy, as embodied in Soviet government — from bourgeois democracy, which

they slavishly worship and call "pure democracy" or "democracy" in general.

These purblind people stuffed with bourgeois prejudices failed to understand the epoch-making swing from bourgeois to proletarian democracy, from bourgeois to proletarian dictatorship. They confused certain peculiarities of Russian Soviet government, of Russian history and its development, with Soviet government as an international category.

From "Greetings to the Hungarian Workers" (May 27, 1919).

Lack of faith in the masses, fear of their initiative, fear of their independence, trepidation before their revolutionary energy instead of thorough and unstinted support of it—this is where the S.-R.'s and Menshevik leaders have sinned most. This is where we find the deepest roots of their indecision, their vacillations, their endless and utterly fruitless attempts to pour new wine into the old bottles of the old bureaucratic state apparatus.

From "One of the Fundamental Questions of the Revolution" (published in *Rabochi Put*, No. 10, September 27, 1917).

VAINLY ATTEMPTS TO TAKE A PEACEFUL, REFORMIST ROAD OF TRANSITION TO SOCIALISM, DENYING REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE AS THE FUNDAMENTAL FEATURE OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

And here these people are saying to us, "Socialism is the raising of productivity." You have read books, dear gentlemen, you have written books and you have understood nothing in books.

Of course from the point of view of a capitalist society which passed over to Socialism peacefully in times of peace there would be no more urgent task than the raising of productivity. Only one little word has to be said: "if." If Socialism were born peacefully in this way; the capitalist gentlemen were unwilling to allow it to be born so. So there was a little something missing. Even if there had been no war, the capitalist gentlemen would have done everything to prevent such a peaceful development. Great revolutions, even when they have begun peacefully like the Great French Revolution, have ended in furious wars which the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie has started. It cannot be otherwise if we look at this question from the point of view of the class struggle and not from

that of philistine phrase-mongering about freedom, equality, Labour Democracy and the will of the majority, or that stupid philistine phrase-mongering to which the Mensheviks, S.-R.'s, and all those "Democrats" are treating us. There can be no peaceful development to Socialism.

From "First All-Russian Congress on Extra-School Education: The Deception of the People by the Slogans of Freedom and Equality" (May 19, 1919).

In the concrete situation which has been created by militarism, imperialism; all over the world, and most of all in the most advanced, powerful, most enlightened and free capitalist countries, the strangulation of colonies and weak countries, the world imperialist butchery and the Versailles "Peace" — the very thought of peacefully subordinating the capitalists to the will of the majority of the exploited, of the peaceful, reformist transition to Socialism is not only extreme philistine stupidity, but also downright deception of the workers, the embellishment of capitalist wage slavery, concealment of the truth. The truth is that the bourgeoisie, even the most educated and democratic, now no longer hesitates to resort to any fraud or crime, to massacre

millions of workers and peasants in order to save the private ownership of the means of production. Only the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the confiscation of its property, the destruction of the whole of the bourgeois state apparatus from top to bottom — parliamentary, judicial, military, bureaucratic, administrative, municipal, etc., right up to the very wholesale deportation or internment of the most dangerous and stubborn exploiters — putting them under strict surveillance in order to combat inevitable attempts to resist and to restore capitalist slavery — only such measures can ensure the real subordination of the whole class of exploiters.

From "Theses on the Fundamental Tasks of the Second Congress of the Communist International" (July 4, 1920).

We have already said above, and shall show more fully later, that the teaching of Marx and Engels concerning the inevitability of a violent revolution refers to the bourgeois state. The latter *cannot* be superseded by the proletarian state (the dictatorship of the proletariat) through the process of "withering away," but, as a general rule, only through a violent revolution. The panegyric Engels

sang in its honour, and which fully corresponds to Marx's repeated declarations — (recall the concluding passages of *The Poverty of Philosophy* and the *Communist Manifesto*, with their proud and open proclamation of the inevitability of a violent revolution; recall what Marx wrote nearly thirty years later, in his criticism of the Gotha Programme of 1875, when he mercilessly castigated the opportunist character of that programme)—this panegyric is by no means a mere “impulse,” a mere declamation or a polemical sally. The necessity of systematically imbuing the masses with *this* and precisely this view of violent revolution lies at the root of *all* the teachings of Marx and Engels. The betrayal of their teaching by the now predominant social-chauvinist and Kautskyite trends is expressed in striking relief by the neglect of *such* propaganda and agitation by both these trends.

From “The State and Revolution”
(August-September 1917).

At all events, we are convinced that the experience of revolution and counter-revolution in Russia has proved the correctness of the struggle our Party has carried on for more than twenty years against terrorism as tactics. We must not forget, however,

that this struggle was closely connected with a ruthless struggle against opportunism, which was inclined to repudiate the use of all violence by the oppressed classes against their oppressors. We have always stood for the employment of violence in the mass struggle and in connection with it.

From “Speech at the Congress of the
Social-Democratic Party of Switzerland”
(November 4, 1916).

Kautsky the “historian” so shamelessly falsifies history that he “forgets” the fundamental fact that pre-monopoly capitalism — which reached its zenith actually in the 1870's — was by virtue of its fundamental *economic* traits, which found most typical expression in England and in America, distinguished by a, relatively speaking, maximum fondness for peace and freedom. Imperialism, on the other hand, i.e., monopoly capitalism, which finally matured only in the twentieth century, is, by virtue of its fundamental *economic* traits, distinguished by a minimum fondness for peace and freedom, and by a maximum and universal development of militarism. To “fail to notice” this in discussing the extent to which a peaceful or violent revolution is typical or

probable is to stoop to the position of a most ordinary lackey of the bourgeoisie.

From "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky" (October-November 1918).

Otto Bauer excellently expressed the quintessence of the views of world opportunism in a single phrase for which — if we could do as we liked in Vienna — we ought to raise a monument to him while he is still alive. The application of violence in the class struggle in modern democracies — quoth Otto Bauer — would be "violence against the social factors of force."

Probably you will think that this sounds queer and unintelligible. But this is an example of what Marxism has been reduced to, of the degree of banality and defence of the exploiters the most revolutionary theory *can* be reduced to. The German variety of philistinism is required, and you get the "theory" that the "social factors of force" are — number, state of organization, place in the process of production and distribution, activity, education. If an agricultural labourer in the country, or a working man in the town, commits revolutionary

violence against the landlord and capitalist, it is not the dictatorship of the proletariat, it is not violence against the exploiters and the oppressors of the people. Oh, no! It is "violence against the social factors of force."

Perhaps my example sounds somewhat jocular. But the nature of modern opportunism is such that its struggle against Bolshevism becomes transformed into a joke. The task of drawing the working class, all the thinking elements of it, into the struggle between international Menshevism (MacDonald, Otto Bauer and Co.) and Bolshevism is a very useful and imperative one for Europe and America!

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

In defining dictatorship, Kautsky tried his utmost to conceal from the reader the fundamental feature of this concept, namely, revolutionary *violence*. But now the truth is out: it is a question of the contrast between *peaceful* and *violent revolutions*.

That is where the trouble lies. Kautsky had to resort to all these subterfuges, sophistries and

fraudulent falsifications only in order to *dissociate* himself from *violent* revolution, and to conceal his renunciation of it, his desertion to the *liberal* labour policy, i.e., to the bourgeoisie. That is where the trouble lies.

From "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky" (October-November 1918).

History teaches that not a single oppressed class has ever come into power, or could come into power, without passing through the period of dictatorship, i.e., the conquest of political power and the violent suppression of the desperate, furious and unscrupulous resistance which the exploiters always put up. The bourgeoisie, whose rule the Socialists who oppose "dictatorship in general" and who bow down before "democracy in general" now defend, achieved power in the advanced countries by means of a number of rebellions, by civil wars, by the violent suppression of kings, feudal barons and slave-owners, and their attempts at restoration. In their books and pamphlets, in the resolutions of their congresses and in their agitational speeches, the Socialists of all countries have explained to the people the class character of these bourgeois revolu-

tions, of this bourgeois dictatorship, a thousand and a million times. Hence, the present defence of bourgeois democracy cloaked in speeches about "democracy in general" and the present howling and shouting against the dictatorship of the proletariat cloaked by cries about "dictatorship in general" are a downright betrayal of Socialism, the practical desertion to the side of the bourgeoisie, the denial of the right of the proletariat to make its own, proletarian revolution, and defence of bourgeois reformism at the very historical moment when bourgeois reformism is bankrupt all over the world, and when the war has created a revolutionary situation.

From "Theses and Report on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, Presented to the First Congress of the Communist International" (March 4, 1919).

A DIRECT RETREAT TO THE SIDE OF BOURGEOIS POLICY, JUSTIFYING COLONIAL WARS AND ATROCITIES

This is not the first time the colonial question has figured at international congresses. Hitherto their decisions have always been an unreserved

condemnation of bourgeois colonial policy as a policy of plunder and rapine. This time, however, the Congress commission was so composed that the opportunist element, headed by Van Kohl of Holland, predominated. A phrase was inserted in the draft resolution to the effect that the Congress did not on principle reject all colonial policy, for under Socialism colonial policy could play a civilizing role. The commission minority (Ledebour of Germany, the Polish and Russian Social-Democrats and many others) vigorously protested against any such thought being allowed in the resolution. The matter was referred to Congress, where the forces were nearly equal, and there was an extremely heated debate.

The opportunists backed Van Kohl. Speaking for the majority of the German delegation, Bernstein and David urged acceptance of a "socialist colonial policy" and attacked the radicals for their futile, negative stand, failure to appreciate the importance of reforms, absence of a practical colonial programme, etc. Among those who opposed them was Kautsky, who felt compelled to ask Congress to reject the position of the majority of the German delegation. He rightly pointed out that there could

be no talk of abandoning the struggle for reform; that was explicitly stated in other sections of the resolution, which had evoked no dispute. The point at issue was whether we should make concessions to the modern regime of bourgeois plunder and rapine. The present colonial policy stood to be discussed by the Congress and this policy was based on the outright enslavement of primitive populations. The bourgeoisie was actually introducing slavery in the colonies and subjecting native populations to unprecedented insults and violence, "civilizing" them by the spread of liquor and syphilis. And in that situation Socialists were expected to come out with evasive phrases about the possibility of accepting colonial policy in principle! That would be tantamount to outright acceptance of the bourgeois viewpoint. It would represent a decisive step towards subordinating the proletariat to bourgeois ideology, to bourgeois imperialism, now so arrogantly raising its head.

From "The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart" (end of August and beginning of September 1907).

On the colonial question an opportunist majority was formed in the commission, and the following

monstrous phrase appeared in the draft resolution: "The congress does not on principle and for all time reject all colonial policy, which, under a socialist regime, may exercise a civilizing influence." In reality this proposition was equal to a direct retreat to the side of bourgeois policy and bourgeois outlook which justifies colonial wars and atrocities.

From "The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart" (September 1907).

**IN AN ARGUMENT WHERE THE REVOLUTIONARY
CLASS STRUGGLE OF THE WORKERS AGAINST
CAPITAL DISAPPEARS, INTERNATIONALISM
DISAPPEARS**

If a German under Wilhelm or a Frenchman under Clemenceau says, "It is my right and duty as a Socialist to defend my country if it is invaded by an enemy," he argues not like a Socialist, not like an internationalist, not like a revolutionary proletarian, but like a *petty-bourgeois nationalist*. Because in this argument the revolutionary class struggle of the workers against capital disappears, the appraisal of the war as a *whole* from the point of view of the world bourgeoisie and the world proletariat disappears, that is, internationalism disap-

pears, and all that remains is a miserable and narrow-minded nationalism. My country is being wronged, that is all I care about — that is what this argument amounts to, and that is where its petty-bourgeois nationalist narrow-mindedness lies. It is the same as if in regard to individual violence, violence against an individual, one were to argue that Socialism is opposed to violence and therefore I would rather be a traitor than go to prison.

The Frenchman, German or Italian who says: "Socialism is opposed to violence against nations, *therefore* I defend myself when my country is invaded," *betrays* Socialism and internationalism, because such a man *sees only* his own "country," he puts "his own" . . . *bourgeoisie* above everything else and does not give a thought to the *international connections* which make the war an imperialist war and *his bourgeoisie* a link in the chain of imperialist plunder.

All philistines and all stupid and ignorant yokels argue in the same way as the renegade Kautskyites, Longuetites, Turatis and Co.: "The enemy has invaded my country, I don't care about anything else."

From "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky" (October-November 1918).

The recognition of internationalism in words, and substituting for it in deeds, in all propaganda, agitation and practical work, petty-bourgeois nationalism and pacifism, is a common occurrence, not only among the parties affiliated to the Second International, but also among those which have withdrawn from that International, and not infrequently, even among those which now call themselves Communist Parties. The struggle against this evil, against these most deep-rooted petty-bourgeois national prejudices, comes more and more to the forefront in proportion as the task of transforming the dictatorship of the proletariat from a national one (i.e., existing in one country and incapable of determining world politics) into an international one (i.e., the dictatorship of the proletariat covering at least several advanced countries and capable of exercising decisive influence upon the whole of world politics) becomes the question of the day. Petty-bourgeois nationalism declares the recognition of the equality of nations, and nothing else, to be internationalism, while preserving intact national egoism (quite apart from the purely verbal character of this recognition), whereas proletarian internationalism demands, firstly, the subordination of the interests of the

proletarian struggle in one country to the interests of the struggle on a world scale; and secondly, it calls for the ability and readiness on the part of the nations which are achieving victory over the bourgeoisie to make the greatest national sacrifices for the sake of overthrowing international capital.

Thus, in states which are already fully capitalistic, which have workers' parties that are really the vanguard of the proletariat, the struggle against the opportunist and petty-bourgeois pacifist distortions of the concept and policy of internationalism is a primary and very important task.

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

III. REVISIONISM IS A REFLECTION OF BOURGEOIS INFLUENCE IN THE WORKING- CLASS MOVEMENT

REVISIONISM IS A PRODUCT OF THE "PEACEFUL" EPOCH IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

The principal tactical differences in the labour movement of Europe and America today resolve into a struggle against two big trends that are departing from Marxism, which has virtually become the dominant theory in this movement. These two trends are revisionism (opportunism, reformism) and anarchism (anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-socialism). Both these departures from the Marxist theory that is dominant in the labour movement, and from Marxist tactics, have been observable in various forms and in various shades in all civilized countries throughout the more than half-century history of the mass labour movement.

This fact alone shows that these departures cannot be attributed to accident, or to the mistakes of individuals or groups, or even to the influence of national characteristics and traditions, and so forth. There must be radical causes lying in the economic system and in the nature of the development of all capitalist countries which constantly give rise to these departures.

From "Differences in the European Labour Movement" (published in *Zvezda*, No. 1, December 16, 1910).

Present events have proved this very fact that objective conditions for an imperialist war (i.e., a war corresponding to the highest and last stage of capitalism) are ripe; that, on the other hand, decades of a so-called peaceful epoch have allowed a *heap* of petty-bourgeois, opportunist refuse to accumulate *inside* of the Socialist parties of all European countries. Some fifteen years ago, during the famous "Bernstein crusade" in Germany — in many countries even earlier than that — the question of the opportunist, the *foreign*, elements within the proletarian parties had become acute. There is hardly one noted Marxist who has not recognized

many times and on different occasions that opportunists are a non-proletarian element actually hostile to the socialist revolution. The rapid growth of this social element during the last years is a recognized fact; the officials of the legal labour unions, the parliamentarians and the other intellectuals who comfortably and placidly built themselves berths in the legal mass movements, some groups of the best paid workers, office employees, etc., etc., belong to this social stratum. The war has clearly proved that in a crisis (and the imperialist era will undoubtedly be an era of such crises) a substantial mass of opportunists, supported and often directly guided by the bourgeoisie (this is particularly important!) goes over to its camp, betrays Socialism, harms the workers' cause, ruins it. In every crisis the bourgeoisie will always aid the opportunists, will always suppress the revolutionary portion of the proletariat, shrinking before nothing, employing the most lawless and cruel *military* measures. The opportunists are bourgeois enemies of the proletarian revolution. In peaceful times they conduct their bourgeois work under cover, finding refuge inside of the workers' parties; in times of crisis they appear *immediately* as open

allies of the *entire* united bourgeoisie from the conservative to the most radical and democratic part of it, from the freethinkers to the religious and clerical sections. He who has not grasped this truth *after* the recent events is hopelessly deceiving himself and the workers. Personal desertions are unavoidable under given conditions, but one must not forget that their significance is determined by the existence of a *group* and *current* of petty-bourgeois opportunists. Such social-chauvinists as Hyndman, Vandervelde, Guesde, Plekhanov, Kautsky, would be of no importance whatever if their characterless and trite speeches in defence of bourgeois patriotism were not grasped at by whole social strata of opportunists and by hosts of bourgeois papers and bourgeois politicians.

From "And Now What?" (published in *Sotsial-Demokrat*, No. 36, January 9, 1915).

The collapse of the Second International is the collapse of Socialist opportunism. The latter has grown as a product of the preceding "peaceful" epoch in the development of the labour movement. This epoch taught the working class to utilize such important means of struggle as parliamentarism and

all legal possibilities, to create mass economic and political organizations, a widespread labour press, etc.; on the other hand this epoch created a tendency to repudiate class struggle and to preach social peace, to repudiate the socialist revolution, to repudiate the very principle of illegal organizations, to recognize bourgeois patriotism, etc. Certain strata of the working class (the bureaucracy of the labour movement and the labour aristocracy which received crumbs of the profits from the exploitation of the colonies and from the privileged position of their "fatherland" on the world market), as well as petty-bourgeois sympathizers within the Socialist parties, have proved to be the main social support of these tendencies and the conductors of bourgeois influence into the proletariat.

From "Conference of the Foreign Sections of the R.S.D.L.P.: Resolutions of the Conference" (before February 19, 1915).

A LABOUR ARISTOCRACY IS THE SOCIAL BULWARK OF REVISIONISM

Here we must ask: How is the firmness of such trends in Europe to be explained? And why is this opportunism stronger in Western Europe than it is

in our country? Because the advanced countries have been creating their culture by the opportunity they have of living at the expense of billions of oppressed people. Because the capitalists of these countries obtain a great deal more than they would have been able to obtain in the shape of profits resulting from the robbery of the workers in their own countries.

Before the war it was calculated that the three richest countries—Great Britain, France and Germany—obtained from the export of capital alone, apart from other incomes, from eight to ten billion francs per annum.

It goes without saying that out of this tidy sum it is possible to throw at least a half a billion as a sop to the labour leaders, to the labour aristocracy, in order to bribe them in various ways. The whole thing reduces itself precisely to bribery. This is done in a thousand different ways: by raising culture in the largest centres, by creating educational institutions, creating thousands of soft jobs for the leaders of the co-operative societies, for the trade union leaders and parliamentary leaders. This is done wherever modern, civilized, capitalist relations exist. And these billions of superprofits serve as

the economic basis upon which opportunism in the working-class movement rests.

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

One of the chief causes which retard the revolutionary working-class movement in the developed capitalist countries is that, owing to the colonial possessions and the superprofits of finance capital, etc., capital has succeeded in these countries in singling out a relatively broader and more stable stratum, a small minority, a labour aristocracy. The latter enjoys better terms of employment and is most imbued with the narrow craft spirit and with petty-bourgeois and imperialist prejudices. This is the real social "bulwark" of the Second International, of the reformists and "Centrists" and at the present time it is almost the principal social bulwark of the bourgeoisie.

From "Theses on the Fundamental Tasks of the Second Congress of the Communist International" (July 4, 1920).

In reality, the formal adherence of the opportunists to workers' parties does not by any means remove the fact that, objectively, they are a political detachment of the bourgeoisie, that they are transmitters of its influence, its agents in the labour movement.

From "The Collapse of the Second International" (latter half of May to first half of June 1915).

THE ZIGZAGS OF BOURGEOIS TACTICS INTENSIFY REVISIONISM WITHIN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

Lastly, an extremely important cause that gives rise to differences among the participants in the labour movement lies in the changes in tactics of the ruling classes in general, and of the bourgeoisie in particular. If the tactics of the bourgeoisie were always the same, or at least similar, the working class would rapidly learn to reply to them by tactics that were also always the same or similar. But as a matter of fact, the bourgeoisie in all countries inevitably evolves two systems of rule, two methods of fighting for its interests and of retaining its rule, and these methods at times alternate and at times are interwoven one with another in various

combinations. They are, firstly, the method of force, the method which rejects all concessions to the labour movement, the method of supporting all the old and obsolete institutions, the method of irreconcilably rejecting reforms. Such is the nature of the conservative policy, which in Western Europe is becoming less and less a policy of the landowning classes and more and more one of the varieties of bourgeois policy in general. The second method is the method of "liberalism," which takes steps towards the development of political rights, towards reforms, concessions and so on.

The bourgeoisie passes from one method to the other not in accordance with the malicious design of individuals, and not fortuitously, but owing to the fundamental contradictions of its own position. Normal capitalist society cannot develop successfully without a firmly established representative system and without the enjoyment of certain political rights by the population, which is bound to be distinguished by its relatively high "cultural" demands. This demand for a certain minimum of culture is created by the conditions of the capitalist mode of production itself, with its high technique, complexity, flexibility, mobility, rapidity of devel-

opment of world competition, etc. The oscillations in the tactics of the bourgeoisie, the passage from the system of force to the system of ostensible concessions, are, consequently, peculiar to the history of all European countries during the last half-century, while, at the same time, various countries chiefly develop the application of one method or the other at definite periods. For instance, England in the sixties and seventies was a classical country of "liberal" bourgeois policy, Germany in the seventies and eighties adhered to the method of force, and so on.

When this method prevailed in Germany, a one-sided echo of this system, one of the systems of bourgeois government, was the growth in the labour movement of anarcho-syndicalism, or anarchism, as it was then called (the "Young" at the beginning of the nineties, Johann Most at the beginning of the eighties). When in 1890 the change towards "concessions" took place, this change, as is always the case, proved to be even more dangerous to the labour movement, and gave rise to the equally one-sided echo of bourgeois "reformism": opportunism in the labour movement. "The positive and real aim of the liberal policy of the bourgeoisie," Pan-

nekoek says, "is to mislead the workers, to split their ranks, to transform their policy into an impotent adjunct of an impotent, always impotent and ephemeral, sham reformism."

Not infrequently, the bourgeoisie for a certain time achieves its object by a "liberal" policy, which, as Pannekoek justly remarks, is a "more crafty" policy. A section of the workers, of their representatives, at times allow themselves to be deceived by sham concessions. The revisionists declare the doctrine of the class struggle to be "antiquated," or begin to conduct a policy which in fact amounts to a renunciation of the class struggle. The zigzags of bourgeois tactics intensify revisionism within the labour movement and not infrequently exacerbate the differences within the labour movement to the point of a direct split.

From "Differences in the European Labour Movement" (published in *Zvezda*, No. 1, December 16, 1910).

The tremendous progress which capitalism has made in recent decades and the rapid growth of the working-class movement in all the civilized countries have brought about a big change in the attitude of the bourgeoisie to the proletariat. In-

stead of fighting openly, plainly and in principle against all the fundamental tenets of Socialism and in defence of the complete inviolability of private property and free competition, the bourgeoisie of Europe and America — as represented by its ideologists and political leaders — is more and more coming out in defence of so-called social reforms as opposed to the idea of social revolution. Not liberalism versus Socialism, but reformism versus socialist revolution — that is the formula of the modern, "advanced," educated bourgeoisie. And the higher the development of capitalism in a given country, the more unadulterated the rule of the bourgeoisie, and the greater the political liberty, the wider is the field of application of the "most up-to-date" bourgeois slogan: reform *versus* revolution; partial patching up of the doomed regime, with the object of dividing and weakening the working class and of maintaining the rule of the bourgeoisie, *versus* the revolutionary overthrowal of that rule.

From the standpoint of the worldwide development of Socialism the mentioned change cannot but be regarded as a big step forward. At first Socialism fought for its existence, and it was confronted by a bourgeoisie confident of its strength

and boldly and consistently advocating liberalism as an integral system of economic and political views. Now Socialism has grown into a force and throughout the civilized world has already upheld its right to existence; it is now fighting *for power*; and the bourgeoisie, disintegrating as it is, and seeing the inevitability of its doom, is exerting every effort to defer the day of doom and to maintain its rule under the new conditions at the cost of partial and spurious concessions.

The intensification of the struggle of reformism against revolutionary Social-Democracy *within* the working-class movement is an absolutely inevitable result of the mentioned changes in the entire economic and political situation in all the civilized countries of the world.

From "Reformism in the Russian Social-Democratic Movement" (published in *Sotsial-Demokrat*, No. 23, September 14, 1911).

REVISIONISM IS A DIRECT PRODUCT OF THE BOURGEOIS WORLD OUTLOOK AND ITS INFLUENCE

Wherein lies its inevitability in capitalist society? Why is it more profound than the differences on

national peculiarities and degrees of capitalist development? Because in every capitalist country, side by side with the proletariat, there are always broad strata of the petty bourgeoisie, small masters. Capitalism arose and is constantly arising out of small production. A number of new "middle strata" is inevitably created by capitalism (appendages to the factory, homework, and small workshops scattered all over the country in view of the requirements of big industries, such as the bicycle and automobile industries, etc.). These new small producers are just as inevitably being cast into the ranks of the proletariat. It is quite natural that the petty-bourgeois world conception should again and again crop up in the ranks of the broad workers' parties.

From "Marxism and Revisionism" (before April 3, 1908).

Thus, the demand for a resolute turn from revolutionary Social-Democracy to bourgeois social-reformism was accompanied by a no less resolute turn towards bourgeois criticism of all the fundamental ideas of Marxism. As this criticism of Marxism has been going on for a long time now, from the political platform, from university chairs,

in numerous pamphlets and in a number of learned treatises, as the entire younger generation of the educated classes has been systematically trained for decades on this criticism, it is not surprising that the "new, critical" trend in Social-Democracy should spring up, all complete, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter. The content of this new trend did not have to grow and take shape, it was transferred bodily from bourgeois literature to socialist literature.

From "What Is To Be Done?"
(autumn 1901-February 1902).

Again, a constant source of differences is the dialectical nature of social development, which proceeds in contradictions and through contradictions. Capitalism is progressive because it destroys the old modes of production and develops the productive forces, yet at the same time, at a certain stage of development, it retards the growth of productive forces. It develops, organizes, and disciplines the workers — and it crushes, oppresses, leads to degeneration, poverty and so on. Capitalism creates its own grave-digger, it itself creates the elements of a new system, yet at the same time, without a "leap," these individual elements change nothing in the

general state of affairs and do not affect the rule of capital. Marxism, the theory of dialectical materialism, is able to embrace these contradictions of real life, of the real history of capitalism and the labour movement. But needless to say, the masses learn from real life and not from books, and therefore certain individuals or groups constantly exaggerate, elevate to a one-sided theory, to a one-sided system of tactics, now one and now another feature of capitalist development, now one and now another "lesson" from this development.

Bourgeois ideologists, liberals and democrats, not understanding Marxism, and not understanding the modern labour movement, are constantly leaping from one helpless extreme to another. At one time they explain the whole matter by asserting that evil-minded persons are "inciting" class against class — at another they console themselves with the assertion that the workers' party is "a peaceful party of reform." Both anarcho-syndicalism and reformism — which seize upon *one* aspect of the labour movement, which elevate one-sidedness to a theory, and which declare such tendencies or features of this movement as constitute a specific peculiarity of a given period, of given conditions of working-class

activity, to be mutually exclusive — must be regarded as a direct product of this bourgeois world outlook and its influence. But real life, real history, *includes* these different tendencies, just as life and development in nature include both slow evolution and swift leaps, breaks in continuity.

The revisionists regard all reflections on “leaps” and on the fundamental antithesis between the labour movement and the whole of the old society as mere phrase-mongering. They regard reforms as a partial realization of socialism. The anarcho-syndicalist rejects “petty work,” especially the utilization of the parliamentary platform. As a matter of fact, these latter tactics amount to waiting for the “great days” and to an inability to muster the forces which create great events. Both hinder the most important and most essential thing, namely, the concentration of the workers into big, powerful and properly functioning organizations capable of functioning properly under *all* circumstances, organizations permeated with the spirit of the class struggle, clearly realizing their aims and trained in the true Marxist world outlook.

From “Differences in the European Labour Movement” (published in *Zvezda*, No. 1, December 16, 1910).

IV. IT IS NECESSARY TO RESOLUTELY STRUGGLE AGAINST REVISIONISM

REVISIONISM EMBELLISHES THE BOURGEOISIE; IT FOOLS AND DISUNITES THE WORKING CLASS

The imperialist epoch cannot tolerate the existence in a single party of the vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat on the one hand, and of the semi-petty-bourgeois aristocracy of the working class, which enjoys crumbs of the privileges of the “Great Power” position of “their” nation, on the other. The old theory that opportunism is a “legitimate shade” of a single party that avoids “extremes” has now become a great deception of the workers and a great hindrance to the labour movement. Open opportunism, which immediately becomes repulsive to the working masses, is not so dangerous and harmful as this theory of the golden mean, which with Marxian catchwords justifies opportunist practice, and by a series of sophisms tries to prove that revolutionary action is premature, etc.

Kautsky, the most notable representative of this theory, and also the greatest authority in the Second International, has revealed himself as a first-class hypocrite and a virtuoso in the art of prostituting Marxism.

From "The Collapse of the Second International" (latter half of May to first half of June 1915).

The Socialists who deserted to the side of the bourgeoisie on the outbreak of the war—all the Davids and Scheidemanns in Germany and the Plekhanovs, Potressovs, Gvozdyovs and Co. in Russia—clamoured loud and long against the "illusions" of the revolutionaries, against the "illusions" of the Basle Manifesto, against the "farcical dream" of transforming the imperialist war into a civil war. They sang praises in every key to the strength, tenacity and adaptability allegedly revealed by capitalism—*they*, who had aided the capitalists to "adapt," tame, fool and disunite the working classes of the various countries!

From "Letters from Afar" (March 7, 1917).

The bourgeoisie *needs* lackeys whom a section of the working class could trust, and who would paint

in fine colours, embellish the bourgeoisie with talk about the possibility of the reformist path, who would throw dust in the eyes of the people by this talk, who would *divert* the people from revolution by depicting in glowing colours the charms and the possibilities of the reformist path.

All the writings of the Kautskys, like those of our Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, reduce themselves to such painting and to the whining of cowardly philistines who fear revolution.

From "The Tasks of the Third International" (July 14, 1919).

**THE BOURGEOISIE UNDERSTANDS THAT IT IS
BETTER TO USE THE REVISIONISTS WITHIN THE
WORKING-CLASS MOVEMENT—RATHER THAN
THE BOURGEOISIE ITSELF—TO DEFEND
THE BOURGEOISIE**

I will not dwell on the concrete manner in which we must do this: this is dealt with in my theses, which have been published. My task is to point to the deep economic roots of this phenomenon. The disease is a protracted one; the cure is even more protracted than optimists hoped it would be. Op-

portunism is our principal enemy. Opportunism in the upper ranks of the working-class movement is not proletarian Socialism, but bourgeois socialism. Practice has shown that the active people in the working-class movement who adhere to the opportunist trend are better defenders of the bourgeoisie, than the bourgeoisie itself. Without their leadership of the workers, the bourgeoisie could not have remained in power. This is not only proved by the history of the Kerensky regime in Russia; it is also proved by the democratic republic in Germany, headed by its Social-Democratic government; it is proved by Albert Thomas' attitude toward his bourgeois government. It is proved by the analogous experience in Great Britain and the United States. This is where our principal enemy is; and we must conquer this enemy. We must leave this congress with the firm determination to carry this struggle on to the very end in all parties. This is our main task.

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

**TO GO DOWN LOWER AND DEEPER TO WIN THE
MASSES, THIS IS THE WHOLE MEANING OF
THE STRUGGLE AGAINST REVISIONISM**

Engels draws a distinction between the "bourgeois labour party" of the *old* trade unions — the privileged minority — and the "*lowest mass*," the real majority, and he appeals to the latter who are *not* infected by "bourgeois respectability." This is the essence of Marxist tactics!

We cannot — nor can anybody else — calculate what portion of the proletariat is following and will follow the social-chauvinists and opportunists. This will be revealed only by the struggle, it will be definitely decided only by the socialist revolution. But we know for certain that the "defenders of the fatherland" in the imperialist war *represent* only a minority. And it is therefore our duty, if we wish to remain Socialists, to go down *lower* and *deeper*, to the real masses. This is the whole meaning and the whole purport of the struggle against opportunism. By exposing the fact that the opportunists and social-chauvinists are in reality betraying and selling the interests of the masses, that they are defending the temporary privileges of a minority of the workers, that they are the vehicles of bourgeois

ideas and influences, that they are really allies and agents of the bourgeoisie, we teach the masses to realize their true political interests, to fight for Socialism and for the revolution through all the long and painful vicissitudes of imperialist wars and imperialist armistices.

The only Marxist line in the world labour movement is to explain to the masses the inevitability and necessity of breaking with opportunism, to educate them for revolution by waging a relentless struggle against opportunism, to utilize the experiences of the war for the purpose of exposing all the vileness of national-liberal labour politics, and not of concealing it.

From "Imperialism and the Split in the Socialist Movement" (October 1916).

Against the social-traitors, against reformism and opportunism, this political line can and must be followed in *all* spheres of the struggle without exception. And then we shall win the working masses. And with the working masses the Marxist centralized political party, the vanguard of the proletariat, will take the people along the right road to the triumph of proletarian dictatorship, to proletarian

instead of bourgeois democracy, to the Soviet Republic, to the socialist system.

From "Greetings to Italian, French and German Communists" (October 10, 1919).

But this is not the point, Messrs. the Kautskyites. The point is that at the present time, in the imperialist countries of Europe, *you are fawning* on the opportunists, who are *alien* to the proletariat as a class, who are the servants, the agents of the bourgeoisie and the vehicles of its influence, and unless the labour movement *rids* itself of them, it will remain a *bourgeois labour movement*. Your advocacy of "unity" with the opportunists, with the Legiens and Davids, the Plekhanovs, the Chkhenkelis and Potresovs, etc., is, objectively, a defence of the *enslavement* of the workers by the imperialist bourgeoisie with the aid of its best agents in the labour movement. The victory of revolutionary Social-Democracy on a world scale is absolutely inevitable, only it is moving and will move, is proceeding and will proceed, *against* you, it will be a victory *over* you.

From "Imperialism and the Split in the Socialist Movement" (October 1916).

One of the necessary conditions for preparing the proletariat for its victory is a long, stubborn and ruthless struggle against opportunism, reformism, social-chauvinism, and similar bourgeois influences and trends, which are inevitable, since the proletariat is operating in a capitalist environment. If there is no such struggle, if opportunism in the working-class movement is not utterly defeated beforehand, there can be no dictatorship of the proletariat. Bolshevism would not have defeated the bourgeoisie in 1917-1919 had it not learnt before that, in 1903-1917, to defeat the Mensheviks, i.e., the opportunists, reformists, social-chauvinists, and ruthlessly expel them from the party of the proletarian vanguard.

From "The Constituent Assembly Elections
and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat"
(December 16, 1919).

**REVISIONISM IS AN INTERNATIONAL PHENOMENON,
IT IS NECESSARY TO REMOVE THIS PUS AS
QUICKLY AND AS THOROUGHLY AS
POSSIBLE**

The inevitability of revisionism is determined by its class roots in modern society. Revisionism is an

international phenomenon. No Socialist who is in the least informed and thinks at all can have the slightest doubt that the relation between the orthodox and the Bernsteinians in Germany, the Guesdites and the Jaurèsites (and now particularly the Broussites) in France, the Social-Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party in Great Britain, the Brouckères and Vanderveldes in Belgium, the Integralists and the Reformists in Italy, and the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks in Russia is everywhere essentially similar, notwithstanding the vast difference in the national conditions and historical factors in the present state of all these countries. In reality, the "division" within the present international socialist movement is now proceeding along *one* line in all the various countries of the world, which testifies to a tremendous advance compared with thirty or forty years ago, when heterogeneous trends within a united international socialist movement were combating one another within the various countries. And the "revisionism from the Left" which has begun to take shape in the Latin countries, such as "revolutionary syndicalism," is also adapting itself to Marxism while "amending" it; Labriola in Italy and Lagardelle in France

frequently appeal from Marx wrongly understood to Marx rightly understood.

We cannot stop here to analyse the ideological substance of *this* revisionism, which has not yet by far developed to the extent that opportunist revisionism has, has not yet become international, has not yet stood the test of a single big practical battle with a socialist party even in one country. We shall therefore confine ourselves to the "revisionism from the Right" described above.

From "Marxism and Revisionism"
(before April 3, 1908).

The relatively "peaceful" character of the period between 1871 and 1914 first of all fostered opportunism as a *mood*, then as a *trend*, and finally, as a *group or stratum* of the labour bureaucracy and petty-bourgeois fellow-travellers. These elements were able to gain the upper hand in the working-class movement only by recognizing, in words, revolutionary aims and revolutionary tactics. They were able to win the confidence of the masses only by solemnly vowing that all this "peaceful" work was only *preparation* for the proletarian revolution. This contradiction was an abscess which had to burst

some day, and it has burst. The whole question is: is it necessary to try, as Kautsky and Co. are doing, to re-inject the pus into the body for the sake of "unity" (with the pus), or whether, in order to help the body of the working-class movement fully to recover, to remove the pus as quickly and as thoroughly as possible, notwithstanding the acute pain temporarily caused by the process.

From "Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International" (published in *Vorbote*, No. 1, January 1916).

Our idea will become even clearer to the reader if we compare the opinions of Engels on the British and American movements with his opinions on the German movement.

Such opinions, and extremely interesting ones at that, also abound in the published correspondence. And what runs like a red thread through all these opinions is something quite different, namely, a warning against the "Right wing" of the workers' party, a merciless (sometimes — as with Marx in 1877-79 — *a furious*) war upon *opportunism* in Social-Democracy.

From "Preface to the Russian Translation of *Letters by J. F. Becker, J. Dietzgen, F. Engels, K. Marx and Others to F. A. Sorge and Others*" (April 6, 1907).

Such is my fate. One battle after another against political stupidity, vulgarity, opportunism, etc.

It has been that way ever since 1893. And it has earned me the hatred of the philistines. Well, I would not exchange this fate for "peace" with the philistines.

From "Letter to Inessa Armand"
(December 18, 1916).

**COMMUNISTS ALSO COMMIT MISTAKES SOMETIMES;
SOMETIMES EAGLES MAY FLY LOWER THAN
HENS, BUT HENS CAN NEVER RISE TO THE
HEIGHT OF EAGLES! LET THE REVISION-
ISTS GLOAT!**

Compared with this task, the rectification of the errors of the "Left" trend in Communism will be an easy task. In a number of countries we observe anti-parliamentarism, which is not so much brought in by those who come from the petty bourgeoisie as fostered by certain advanced detachments of the proletariat because of their hatred for the old parliamentarism, because of a legitimate, proper and necessary hatred for the conduct of the members of parliament in Great Britain, France, Italy and in all countries. The Communist International must give

guiding instructions, the comrades must be made more closely familiar with the experience of Russia, with the significance of a real proletarian political party. It will be our work to fulfil this task. And the fight against these errors of the proletarian movement, against these shortcomings, will be a thousand times easier than fighting against those bourgeois who in the guise of reformists belong to the old parties of the Second International and carry on the whole of their work in a bourgeois, and not in a proletarian, spirit.

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

We must see to it that the Communists do not repeat the same mistake, only the other way round; or rather, we must see to it that the *same mistake* only the other way round that is committed by the "Left" Communists is corrected as soon as possible and is overcome as quickly and as painlessly as possible. It is not only Right doctrinairism that is a mistake; Left doctrinairism is also a mistake. Of course, at the present moment, the mistake of Left

doctrinairism in Communism is a thousand times less dangerous and less significant than the mistake of Right doctrinairism (i.e., social-chauvinism and Kautskyism); but after all, this is only due to the fact that Left Communism is a very young trend, and that it is only just coming into being. It is only for this reason that, given certain conditions, the disease can be easily cured; and it is necessary to set to work to cure it with the utmost energy.

From "‘Left-Wing’ Communism, an Infantile Disorder" (April-May 1920).

Bebel was, undoubtedly, wrong also in Essen when he defended Noske, when he defended the division of wars into defensive and offensive, when he attacked the *method* of struggle of the "radicals" against Van Kohl, when he denied (together with Singer) the failure and incorrectness of the tactic of the German delegation at Stuttgart. We must not cover up these mistakes but show by their example, that the Russian Social-Democrats must learn to avoid them, must satisfy the stricter demands of revolutionary Marxism. And let not the Russian anarchists and syndicalists, liberals and Social-Revolutionaries gloat over our criticism of

Bebel. We shall say to these gentlemen: sometimes eagles may fly lower than hens, but hens can never rise to the height of eagles!

From "Introduction to the Pamphlet by Voinov (A. V. Lunacharsky) on the Relation of the Party to the Trade Unions" (November 1907).

Paul Levi now wants to get into the good graces of the bourgeoisie — and, *consequently*, of its agents, the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals — by republishing precisely those works of Rosa Luxemburg in which she was wrong. We shall reply to this by quoting two lines from a well-known Russian fable: Sometimes eagles may fly lower than hens, but hens can never rise to the height of eagles. Rosa Luxemburg was mistaken on the question of the independence of Poland; she was mistaken in 1903 in her appraisal of Menshevism; she was mistaken on the theory of the accumulation of capital; she was mistaken in July 1914, when side by side with Plekhanov, Vandervelde, Kautsky and others, she advocated unity between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks; she was mistaken in the works she wrote while in prison in 1918 (she corrected most of these mistakes at the end of 1918 and the beginning

of 1919 after she was released). But in spite of her mistakes she was—and remains for us—an eagle. And not only will the memory of her always remain precious for Communists all over the world, but her biography and her *complete* works (the publication of which the German Communists are inordinately delaying, which can only be excused by the tremendous losses they are suffering in their severe struggle) will serve as a useful lesson in the training of many generations of Communists all over the world. “After August 4, 1914, German Social-Democracy is a stinking corpse” — this is the utterance which will make Rosa Luxemburg’s name live forever in the history of the world working-class movement. And of course, in the backyard of the working-class movement, among the dung heaps, hens like Paul Levi, Scheidemann, Kautsky and the whole of that fraternity will cackle over the mistakes committed by that great Communist. Everyone to his own.

From “Notes of a Publicist”
(end of February 1922).

V. DEVELOP MARXISM IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST REVISIONISM AND IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM

**THE “RENOVATION” OF THE REVISIONISTS MEANS
ABSOLUTELY NOTHING, IT IS ONLY A RETREAT,
A CONCESSION TO THE BOURGEOISIE**

And we now ask: Has anything new been introduced into this theory by its loud-voiced “renovators” who are raising so much noise in our day and have grouped themselves around the German socialist Bernstein? *Absolutely nothing.* They have not advanced one single step the science which Marx and Engels enjoined us to develop; they have not taught the proletariat any new methods of struggle; they have only retreated, borrowing fragments of backward theories and preaching to the proletariat not the theory of struggle but the theory of cession, cession to the most vicious enemies of the proletariat, the governments and bourgeois parties, who

never cease to seek for new means of baiting the Socialists. Plekhanov, one of the founders and leaders of Russian Social-Democracy, was absolutely right in mercilessly criticizing the latest "critique," Bernstein's, whose views have now been rejected by the representatives of the German workers as well (at the Hanover Congress).

We know that a flood of accusations will be showered on us for these words; it will be cried that we want to convert the Socialist Party into an order of "true believers" which persecutes "heretics" for deviations from "dogma," for every independent opinion, and so forth. We know all about these fashionable and trenchant phrases. Only there is not a grain of truth or sense in them. There can be no strong Socialist Party without a revolutionary theory which unites all Socialists, from which they draw all their convictions, and which they apply in their methods of struggle and means of action. To defend such a theory, which to the best of your knowledge you consider to be true, against unfounded attacks and attempts to vitiate it, does not imply that you are an enemy of *all* criticism. We do not regard Marxist theory as something completed and inviolable; on the contrary, we are convinced that it has only laid

the cornerstone of the science which Socialists *must* further advance in all directions if they wish to keep pace with life. We think that an *independent* elaboration of the Marxist theory is especially essential for Russian Socialists, for this theory provides only general *guiding* principles, which, *in particular*, are applied in England differently from France, in France differently from Germany, and in Germany differently from Russia. We shall therefore gladly afford space in our paper for articles on theoretical questions and we invite all comrades openly to discuss controversial points.

From "Our Programme"
(latter half of 1899).

It is precisely because Marxism is not a lifeless dogma, not a final, finished and ready-made, immutable doctrine, but a living guide to action that it was bound to reflect the astonishingly abrupt change in the conditions of social life. A reflection of the change was a profound disintegration and disunity, vacillations of all kinds, in a word, a very serious *internal* crisis of Marxism. The necessity of putting up a determined resistance to this disintegration, of waging a determined and persistent struggle on

behalf of the *foundations* of Marxism again came up on the order of the day.

From "Certain Features of the Historical Development of Marxism" (published in *Zvezda*, No. 2, December 23, 1910).

DO NOT ALLOW ANY BARGAINING OVER PRINCIPLES, DO NOT MAKE "CONCESSIONS" IN QUESTIONS OF THEORY

Those who have the slightest acquaintance with the actual state of our movement cannot but see that the wide spread of Marxism was accompanied by a certain lowering of the theoretical level. Quite a number of people with very little, and even a total lack of theoretical training joined the movement because of its practical significance and its practical successes. We can judge from that how tactless the *Rabocheye Dyelo* is when, with an air of triumph, it quotes Marx's statement: "Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes." To repeat these words in a period of theoretical chaos is like wishing mourners at a funeral "many happy returns of the day." Moreover, these words of Marx are taken from his letter on the Gotha Programme, in which he *sharply con-*

demns eclecticism in the formulation of principles: If you must unite, Marx wrote to the party leaders, then enter into agreements to satisfy the practical aims of the movement, but do not allow any bargaining over principles, do not make "concessions" in questions of theory. This was Marx's idea, and yet there are people among us who strive — in his name — to belittle the significance of theory!

Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This thought cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity. Yet, for Russian Social-Democrats the importance of theory is enhanced by three more circumstances, which are often forgotten: firstly, by the fact that our Party is only in process of formation, its features are only just becoming outlined, and it is yet far from having settled accounts with other trends of revolutionary thought, which threaten to divert the movement from the correct path. On the contrary, precisely the very recent past was marked by a revival of non-Social-Democratic revolutionary trends (which Axelrod long ago warned the Economists would happen). Under these

circumstances, what at first sight appears to be an "unimportant" mistake may lead to most deplorable consequences, and only shortsighted people can consider factional disputes and a strict differentiation between shades inopportune or superfluous. The fate of Russian Social-Democracy for many, many years to come may depend on the strengthening of one or other "shade."

Secondly, the Social-Democratic movement is in its very essence an international movement. This means not only that we must combat national chauvinism, but also that a movement that is starting in a young country can be successful only if it implements the experience of other countries. And in order to implement this experience, it is not enough merely to be acquainted with it, or simply to transcribe the latest resolutions. What it requires is the ability to treat this experience critically and to test it independently. Anybody who realizes how enormously the modern working-class movement has grown and branched out will understand what a reserve of theoretical forces and political (as well as revolutionary) experience is required to fulfil this task.

Thirdly, the national tasks of Russian Social-Democracy are such as have never confronted any other socialist party in the world. Further on we shall have occasion to deal with the political and organizational duties which the task of emancipating the whole people from the yoke of autocracy imposes upon us. At this point, we only wish to state that *the role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory*. In order to get some concrete understanding of what this means, let the reader recall such predecessors of Russian Social-Democracy as Herzen, Belinsky, Chernyshevsky and the brilliant galaxy of revolutionaries of the seventies; let him ponder over the world significance which Russian literature is now acquiring, let him . . . but that is enough!

From "What Is To Be Done?"
(autumn 1901-February 1902).

Nothing is more important than to rally *all* Marxists who have realized the profundity of the crisis and the necessity of combating it, for the purpose of defending the theoretical foundations of Marxism and its basic propositions, which are being distorted from diametrically opposite sides by the spread of

the bourgeois influence to the various "fellow-travellers" of Marxism.

From "Certain Features of the Historical Development of Marxism" (published in *Zvezda*, No. 2, December 23, 1910).

DEVELOP REVOLUTIONARY MARXISM TO FIGHT AGAINST REVISIONISM

Crisis of official Marxism (1895-1915). Not to resurrect the corpse, but to develop revolutionary Marxism against opportunist "also-Marxism."

From "May First and War" (last days of April 1915).

The only banner the class movement of the workers can have is the theory of revolutionary Marxism, and Russian Social-Democracy must see that it is further developed and put into practice, and at the same time protect it against those distortions and vulgarizations to which "fashionable theories" are often subjected (and the successes of revolutionary Social-Democracy in Russia have already made Marxism a "fashionable" theory).

From "A Protest by Russian Social-Democrats" (end of August and beginning of September 1899).

There is a well-known saying that if geometrical axioms affected human interests attempts would certainly be made to refute them. Theories of the natural history which conflict with the old prejudices of theology provoked, and still provoke, the most rabid opposition. No wonder, therefore, that the Marxian doctrine, which directly serves to enlighten and organize the advanced class in modern society, indicates the tasks of this class and proves the inevitable (by virtue of economic development) replacement of the present system by a new order — no wonder that this doctrine had to fight at every step in its course.

There is no need to speak of bourgeois science and philosophy, which are officially taught by official professors in order to befuddle the rising generation of the possessing classes and to "coach" it against internal and foreign enemies. The science will not even hear of Marxism, declaring that it has been refuted and annihilated. Young scientists who are building their careers by refuting Socialism and decrepit elders who are preserving the traditions of all the various outworn "systems" attack Marx with equal zest. The progress of Marxism and the fact that its ideas are spreading and taking firm hold

among the working class inevitably tend to increase the frequency and intensity of these bourgeois attacks on Marxism, which only becomes stronger, more hardened and more vigorous every time it is "annihilated" by official science.

But even among doctrines which are connected with the struggle of the working class and which are current mainly among the proletariat, Marxism by no means consolidated its position immediately. In the first half century of its existence (from the eighteen forties on) Marxism was engaged in combating theories fundamentally hostile to it. In the first half of the forties Marx and Engels settled accounts with the radical Young Hegelians, who took the stand of philosophical idealism. At the end of the forties the struggle invaded the domain of economic doctrine, in opposition to Proudhonism. The fifties saw the completion of this struggle: the criticism of the parties and doctrines which manifested themselves in the stormy year of 1848. In the sixties the struggle was transferred from the domain of general theory to a domain closer to the direct working-class movement: the ejection of Bakunism from the International. In the early seventies the stage in Germany was occupied for a short while

by the Proudhonist Mühlberger, and in the latter seventies by the positivist Dühring. But the influence of both on the proletariat was already absolutely insignificant. Marxism was already gaining an unquestionable victory over all other ideologies in the working-class movement.

By the nineties this victory was in the main completed. Even in the Latin countries, where the traditions of Proudhonism held their ground longest of all, the workers' parties actually based their programmes and tactics on a Marxist foundation. The revived international organization of the working-class movement—in the shape of periodical international congresses—from the outset, and almost without a struggle, adopted the Marxist standpoint in all essentials. But after Marxism had ousted all the more or less integral doctrines hostile to it, the tendencies expressed in those doctrines began to seek other channels. The forms and motives of the struggle changed, but the struggle continued. And the second half century of the existence of Marxism began (in the nineties) with the struggle of a trend hostile to Marxism within Marxism.

Bernstein, a one-time orthodox Marxist, gave his name to this trend by making the most noise and

advancing the most integral expression of the amendments to Marx, the revision of Marx, revisionism. Even in Russia, where, owing to the economic backwardness of the country and the preponderance of a peasant population oppressed by the relics of serfdom, non-Marxian Socialism has naturally held its ground longest of all, it is plainly passing into revisionism before our very eyes. Both in the agrarian question (the programme of the municipalization of all land) and in general questions of programme and tactics, our social-Narodniks are more and more substituting "amendments" to Marx for the moribund and obsolescent remnants of the old system, which in its own way was integral and fundamentally hostile to Marxism.

Pre-Marxian Socialism has been smashed. It is continuing the struggle not on its own independent ground but on the general ground of Marxism — as revisionism.

From "Marxism and Revisionism"
(before April 3, 1908).

列宁論反对修正主义

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