

LENIN

ON THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION



THE GREAT LEGACY OF MARXISM-LENINISM

1917  1977

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Novosti Press Agency Publishing House
Moscow, 1977

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В. И. ЛЕНИН О ВЕЛИКОМ ОКТЯБРЕ

на английском языке

Цена 38 коп.

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Editing completed on April 20, 1977

The Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917 occupies a special place among the historic events of our stormy age. It laid the foundation for radical social changes which transformed the face of our planet. Unlike all previous revolutions, it put the reins of government into the hands of the people—the working class and the working peasantry, investing them with new political powers and making them active builders of a society free from exploitation of working people and from national and social inequality, and capable of carrying out the ideals of freedom, peace and social progress.

Some bourgeois historians, in particular those specialising in "Sovietology," still insist that the October Revolution gave power to a handful of intellectuals, and not to the mass of working people, as the result of the operation of objective laws of historical development.

This assertion is totally groundless. The October Revolution was the result of the operation of definite laws. It came at a time when the contradictions of world imperialism were aggravated to the highest

degree, leading to the outbreak of the First World War.

At the time of the October Revolution in 1917 Russia happened to be the weakest link in the world capitalist system, embodying as she did all the negative features—economic, social, political, national and ideological—of that system. The country's social contradictions came to a head: the peasants demanded land while the workers fought for changing their economic conditions, for the abolishment of capitalist ownership of the implements and means of production, and both wanted an end of the sanguinary war. The bourgeois-landlord government was unable to solve any of the country's problems.

All these factors created a revolutionary situation in Russia, the situation when the masses did not longer want to live in the old way and the upper classes were unable to live in the old way, as the Marxists put it.*

The October Revolution was a people's revolution, for all the working sections of the population were involved in it. The working class and its political vanguard—the Communist Party—rallied around themselves the millions of peasants and soldiers, all the oppressed nationalities and national groups of Russia, and led them in the assault on the capitalist system.

The man who planned and inspired the October Socialist Revolution was Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. Lenin combined the qualities of an ardent revolutionary, a sober-minded politician, a brilliant Party organiser, a great scholar and a sagacious statesman, and it was largely owing to his leadership that the revolution succeeded. Lenin's whole life was devoted to the revolutionary struggle and all

his theoretical works (more than 9,000 in all) deal with the subject of revolution. The history of the socialist revolution and of the formation of the new social system in Russia is summed up, as it were, in the books, pamphlets, articles, speeches, letters, and notes written by Lenin and in the Party and Government documents which he drafted.

Both Right- and "Left"-wing critics of Leninism have tried to place Lenin in opposition to Marx. This opposition is unjustified, for Lenin was a consistent Marxist. To Lenin and his followers Marxism was a living doctrine, a guide to revolutionary action. The October Revolution exemplified the creative application of Marxism in the specific conditions of Russia.

Sixty years have passed since the accomplishment of the 1917 October Socialist Revolution. But as that historic event recedes further into the past, its vital impact is increasingly felt.

Guided by the objective laws of social development and inspired by the ideals of the Revolution, the Soviet people have built, within the shortest possible historical period, a socialist society with harmonious social relations and an advanced economy, science and culture. This can be seen in the fact that the USSR now accounts for 20 per cent of world industrial output although its population is only six per cent of the world population.

The October Revolution provided an enormous impetus for the world revolutionary process. It ushered in a new historical epoch characterised by the transition from capitalism to socialism and by the downfall of the centuries-old system of colonialism. The world's face has changed. There has emerged and is growing stronger a world socialist system, which has become the decisive factor facilitating social progress today.

* See Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 21, p. 213.

The national-liberation movement of the peoples has reached unprecedented scales. The colonial empires have crumbled, and on their ruins more than ninety sovereign states have arisen.

The ideas and achievements of the Great October Revolution make themselves felt in the developed capitalist countries, where broad sections of the working people are united in anti-imperialist groups, where the working class is waging a struggle for democratic and socialist reforms, and where the influence of the Communist and Workers' parties is growing.

As Lenin had foreseen, all revolutionary movements are merging to form a single current in the anti-imperialist struggle.

The October Revolution led to radical changes in international relations. The first decree issued by the Soviet Government was the Decree on Peace. In the world arena a state appeared which proclaimed the principles of its foreign policy to be the defence of the peoples' freedom and independence, the preservation of peace, and peaceful coexistence of states with different socio-political systems. In keeping with these Leninist principles the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has worked out a realistic Peace Programme, which is being carried out successfully and has already borne fruit.

Today the ideals of the October Revolution have won the minds of millions of people on all continents. Most nations of the world are faced with formidable economic, political and social tasks similar to those undertaken by the revolutionary people of Russia in October 1917.

This book contains Lenin's works and speeches (mostly excerpts) in which he assessed the role played by the Great October Revolution in the destiny of the peoples of Russia and in the history

of mankind. The prerequisites, driving forces, strategy and tactics of the struggle for the victory of the socialist revolution are also discussed.

The first section of the book covers the period from the spring of 1894 to October 14, 1917.

The earlier works of that period deal with the first two principles of Lenin's theory of revolution, namely, the continuity of the revolution and its transition from the bourgeois-democratic to the socialist stage; the need for political guidance of the revolutionary struggle by a proletarian party; and the place of the Russian revolutionary movement in the world revolutionary process.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 led Lenin to another important conclusion: it is necessary to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry as an instrument for carrying through the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

During the First World War Lenin wrote a fundamental work entitled *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, which anticipated, as it were, the Great October Socialist Revolution. In it Lenin explained the economic and political principles underlying the capitalist system, a system which gave rise to wars of conquest, and formulated the objective laws governing the world revolutionary process in the late 19th and early 20th centuries "when the features of the epoch of transition from capitalism to a higher social and economic system had taken shape and revealed themselves in all spheres." *

During those years, while studying the contradictions of the capitalist system and world developments, Lenin again and again turned to the problems of the revolution. He showed that owing

* Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 22, p. 265.

to the uneven economic and political development of the capitalist countries, socialism could be built first in one or several countries.

Lenin said that the liberation movement of the world proletariat would extend over an entire historical epoch and entail many a battle against the exploitative system.

From the spring to the autumn of 1917, in the months immediately preceding the October Revolution, Lenin worked out in detail the Party's strategy and tactics in accomplishing a socialist revolution, including preparations for an armed uprising.

A brilliant analyst of social and economic developments, he chose the right time for the uprising and estimated with absolute accuracy the correlation of political forces at every stage of the revolutionary struggle.

The second section of the book begins with Lenin's "Letter to Central Committee Members," written on the evening of October 24 (Old Style), 1917.

This section contains documents relating to the October Revolution drawn up by Lenin, and excerpts from books, articles, reports and addresses written by Lenin in the first few years after the Revolution. From these the reader will understand why the October Revolution is of world-wide, historic significance. He will discern in these writings a general plan for the socialist transformation of Russia and come to appreciate Lenin's dynamic leadership during the five eventful years when he was head of the Party and country.

In his works written immediately after the October Revolution and in late 1922 and early 1923, Lenin dealt with the tasks and prospects of the Soviet state. These works are of utmost importance

also today, for they examine the basic problems of the development of socialist society—problems which are still being tackled in the Soviet Union and in other countries moving in the same direction.

Among these problems are: the revolutionary significance of the masses' initiatives and the guidance provided in this matter by their Marxist-Leninist party; the necessity to take account of the sentiments and demands of the non-proletarian strata; a creative approach to the theory of scientific socialism and its constant enrichment on the basis of practical experience; the revolutionary process taking place in individual countries as a component part of the world revolutionary process; and the most favourable international conditions for the development of the socialist revolution in individual countries.

Much space is devoted in the book to the works which explain the international significance of the October Revolution, notably *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, and "*Left-Wing*" *Communism—an Infantile Disorder*.

For Lenin the international significance of the October Revolution did not merely consist in its direct impact on the world revolutionary movement. He said that "*Bolshevism can serve as a model of tactics for all.*"* In the October Revolution he saw a prototype for future revolutions in other countries. He believed that the basic features of the October Revolution would manifest themselves in a variety of forms in the countries concerned, in conformity with their specifically national characteristics. He had in mind such features as the vanguard role of the working class and its party; the revolutionary activity of the masses in all spheres of so-

* Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 28, p. 293.

cial life; the break-up of the state machinery of the exploitative classes; direct relationship between the organs of the revolutionary government and the people's participation in administration; nationalisation of the means of production and establishment of socialist production and other social relations; making cultural values accessible to the working people; and the conduct of a fundamentally new foreign policy.

Lenin pointed out again and again that Communist Parties should bear in mind the concrete situation in their countries when utilising the experience of the October Revolution and applying the objective laws governing socialist revolution.

* * *

For reasons of space this book does not include all the material bearing on the subject "Lenin on the Great October Revolution." Its purpose is to draw the reader's attention to the main aspects of the socialist revolution in Russia.

The section "Notes" provides brief information about the works included in the collection and the circumstances in which they were written. The material (except that on pp. 22 and 26) is presented in chronological order.

"A Socialist Soviet Republic in Russia Will Stand as a Living Example to the Peoples of All Countries, and the Propaganda and Revolutionising Effect of This Example Will Be Immense."

V. I. Lenin

I

From: "WHAT THE 'FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE'
ARE AND HOW THEY FIGHT THE
SOCIAL-DEMOCRATS"¹

...The political activity of the Social-Democrats lies in promoting the development and organisation of the working-class movement in Russia, in transforming this movement from its present state of sporadic attempts at protest, "riots" and strikes devoid of a guiding idea, into an organised struggle of the **WHOLE** Russian working **CLASS** directed against the bourgeois regime and working for the expropriation of the expropriators and the abolition of the social system based on the oppression of the working people. Underlying these activities is the common conviction of Marxists that the Russian worker is the sole and natural representative of Russia's entire working and exploited population.*

...The worker cannot fail to see that he is oppressed by *capital*, that his struggle has to be waged against the bourgeois *class*...

* Russia's man of the future is the muzhik, thought the representatives of peasant socialism, the Narodniks in the broadest sense of the term. Russia's man of the future is the worker—think the Social-Democrats. That is how the Marxist view was formulated in a certain manuscript.

...Accordingly, it is on the working class that the Social-Democrats concentrate all their attention and all their activities. When its advanced representatives have mastered the ideas of scientific socialism, the idea of the historical role of the Russian worker, when these ideas become widespread, and when stable organisations are formed among the workers to transform the workers' present sporadic economic war into conscious class struggle—then the Russian **WORKER**, rising at the head of all the democratic elements, will overthrow absolutism and lead the **RUSSIAN PROLETARIAT** (side by side with the proletariat of **ALL COUNTRIES**) *along the straight road of open political struggle to THE VICTORIOUS COMMUNIST REVOLUTION.*

Spring-summer of 1894

Coll. Works, Vol. 1, pp. 298-300.

From: "DRAFT PROGRAMME OF THE RUSSIAN
SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY"²

...
/B/...

VII. The emancipation of the workers must be the act of the working class itself. All the other classes of present-day society stand for the preservation of the foundations of the existing economic system. The real emancipation of the working class requires a social revolution—which is being prepared by the entire development of capitalism—i.e., the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, their conversion into public property, and

the replacement of capitalist production of commodities by the socialist organisation of the production of articles by society as a whole, with the object of ensuring full well-being and free, all-round development for all its members.

VIII. This proletarian revolution will completely abolish the division of society into classes and, consequently, all social and political inequality arising from that division.

IX. To effect this social revolution the proletariat must win political power, which will make it master of the situation and enable it to remove all obstacles along the road to its great goal. In this sense the dictatorship of the proletariat is an essential political condition of the social revolution.

X. Russian Social-Democracy undertakes the task of disclosing to the workers the irreconcilable antagonism between their interests and those of the capitalists, of explaining to the proletariat the historical significance, nature, and prerequisites of the social revolution it will have to carry out, and of organising a revolutionary class party capable of directing the struggle of the proletariat in all its forms.

XI. But the development of international exchange and of production for the world market has established such close ties among all nations of the civilised world, that the present-day working-class movement had to become, and has long become, an international movement. That is why Russian Social-Democracy regards itself as one of the detachments of the world army of the proletariat, as part of international Social-Democracy.

February-March 1902

Coll. Works, Vol. 6, pp. 28-29.

From: "TWO TACTICS OF SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY IN THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION"³

...We are all convinced that the emancipation of the working classes must be won by the working classes themselves; a socialist revolution is out of the question unless the masses become class-conscious and organised, trained, and educated in an open class struggle against the entire bourgeoisie. Replying to the anarchists' objections that we are putting off the socialist revolution, we say: we are not putting it off, but are taking the first step towards it in the only possible way, along the only correct path, namely, the path of a democratic republic. Whoever wants to reach socialism by any other path than that of political democracy, will inevitably arrive at conclusions that are absurd and reactionary both in the economic and the political sense...

...One of the objections raised to the slogan of "the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry"⁴ is that dictatorship presupposes a "single will", and that there can be no single will of the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie. This objection is unsound, for it is based on an abstract, "metaphysical" interpretation of the term "single will"... The absence of unity on questions of socialism and in the struggle for socialism does not preclude singleness of will on questions of democracy and in the struggle for a republic. To forget this would be tantamount to forgetting the logical and historical difference between a democratic revolution and a socialist revolution. To forget this would be tantamount to forgetting the character of the democratic revolution as one of the whole people: if it is "of the whole

people", that means that there is "singleness of will" precisely in so far as this revolution meets the needs and requirements of the whole people. Beyond the bounds of democratism there can be no question of the proletariat and the peasant bourgeoisie having a single will. Class struggle between them is inevitable, but it is in a democratic republic that this struggle will be the most thoroughgoing and widespread struggle of the people *for socialism*. Like everything else in the world, the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry has a past and a future. Its past is autocracy, serfdom, monarchy, and privileges. In the struggle against this past, in the struggle against counter-revolution, a "single will" of the proletariat and the peasantry is possible, for here there is unity of interests.

Its future is the struggle against private property, the struggle of the wage-worker against the employer, the struggle for socialism. Here singleness of will is impossible. Here the path before us lies not from autocracy to a republic, but from a petty-bourgeois democratic republic to socialism.

Of course, in actual historical circumstances, the elements of the past become interwoven with those of the future; the two paths cross. Wage-labour with its struggle against private property exists under the autocracy as well; it arises even under serfdom. But this does not in the least prevent us from logically and historically distinguishing between the major stages of development. We all contrapose bourgeois revolution and socialist revolution; we all insist on the absolute necessity of strictly distinguishing between them; however, can it be denied that in the course of history individual, *particular* elements of the two revolutions become interwoven? Has the period of democratic

revolutions in Europe not been familiar with a number of socialist movements and attempts to establish socialism? And will not the future socialist revolution in Europe still have to complete a great deal left undone in the field of democratism?...

...The struggle against the autocracy is a temporary and transient task for socialists, but to ignore or neglect this task in any way amounts to betrayal of socialism and service to reaction. The revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry is unquestionably only a transient, temporary socialist aim, but to ignore this aim in the period of a democratic revolution would be downright reactionary...

...The time will come when the struggle against the Russian autocracy will end, and the period of democratic revolution will have passed in Russia; it will then be ridiculous even to speak of "singleness of will" of the proletariat and the peasantry, about a democratic dictatorship, etc. When that time comes we shall deal directly with the question of the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat and speak of it in greater detail. At present the party of the advanced class cannot but strive most energetically for the democratic revolution's decisive victory over tsarism. And a decisive victory means nothing else than the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry...

The proletariat must carry the democratic revolution to completion, allying to itself the mass of the peasantry in order to crush the autocracy's resistance by force and paralyse the bourgeoisie's instability. The proletariat must accomplish the socialist revolution, allying to itself the mass of the

semi-proletarian elements of the population, so as to crush the bourgeoisie's resistance by force and paralyse the instability of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie...

At the head of the whole people, and particularly of the peasantry—for complete freedom, for a consistent democratic revolution, for a republic! At the head of all the toilers and the exploited—for socialism! Such in practice must be the policy of the revolutionary proletariat, such is the class slogan which must permeate and determine the solution of every tactical problem, every practical step of the workers' party during the revolution...

...The complete victory of the present revolution will mark the end of the democratic revolution and the beginning of a determined struggle for a socialist revolution. Satisfaction of the present-day demands of the peasantry, the utter rout of reaction and the achievement of a democratic republic will mark the utter limit of the revolutionism of the bourgeoisie, and even that of the petty bourgeoisie, and the beginning of the proletariat's real struggle for socialism. The more complete the democratic revolution, the sooner, the more widespread, the cleaner, and the more determined will the development of this new struggle be. The slogan of a "democratic" dictatorship expresses the historically limited nature of the present revolution and the necessity of a new struggle on the basis of the new order for the complete emancipation of the working class from all oppression and all exploitation. In other words, when the democratic bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie ascends another step, when not only the revolution but the complete victory of the revolution becomes an accomplished fact, we shall "change" ... the slogan of the de-

mocratic dictatorship to the slogan of a socialist dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., of a full socialist revolution...

June-July 1905

Coll. Works, Vol. 9, pp. 29, 84-86, 100, 114, 130.

From: "ON THE SLOGAN FOR A UNITED STATES OF EUROPE"⁵

...A United States of the World (not of Europe alone) is the state form of the unification and freedom of nations which we associate with socialism—until the time when the complete victory of communism brings about the total disappearance of the state, including the democratic. As a separate slogan, however, the slogan of a United States of the World would hardly be a correct one, first, because it merges with socialism; second, because it may be wrongly interpreted to mean that the victory of socialism in a single country is impossible, and it may also create misconceptions as to the relations of such a country to the others.

Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence, the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country alone...

August 1915

Coll. Works, Vol. 21, p. 342.

**From: PREFACE TO THE FRENCH AND
GERMAN EDITIONS TO "IMPERIALISM,
THE HIGHEST STAGE OF CAPITALISM"
(A POPULAR OUTLINE)⁶**

...out of the universal ruin caused by the war a world-wide revolutionary crisis is arising which, however prolonged and arduous its stages may be, cannot end otherwise than in a proletarian revolution and in its victory...

Imperialism is the eve of the social revolution of the proletariat. This has been confirmed since 1917 on a world-wide scale.

June 6, 1920

Coll. Works, Vol. 22, pp. 191, 194.

**From: "A CARICATURE OF MARXISM AND
IMPERIALIST ECONOMISM"⁷**

...There is a still greater difference, despite homogeneity in essentials, between political forms in the advanced imperialist countries—America, England, France, Germany. The same variety will manifest itself also in the path mankind will follow from the imperialism of today to the socialist revolution of tomorrow. All nations will arrive at socialism—this is inevitable, but all will do so in not exactly the same way, each will contribute something of its own to some form of democracy, to some variety of the dictatorship of the proletariat, to the varying rate of socialist transformations in the different aspects of social life...

August-September 1916

Coll. Works, Vol. 23, pp. 69-70.

**From: "THE MILITARY PROGRAMME OF THE
PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION"⁸**

...The development of capitalism proceeds extremely unevenly in different countries. It cannot be otherwise under commodity production. From this it follows irrefutably that socialism cannot achieve victory simultaneously in *all* countries. It will achieve victory first in one or several countries, while the others will for some time remain bourgeois or pre-bourgeois. This is bound to create not only friction, but a direct attempt on the part of the bourgeoisie of other countries to crush the socialist state's victorious proletariat. In such cases a war on our part would be a legitimate and just war. It would be a war for socialism, for the liberation of other nations from the bourgeoisie. Engels was perfectly right when, in his letter to Kautsky⁹ of September 12, 1882, he clearly stated that it was possible for *already victorious* socialism to wage "defensive wars". What he had in mind was defence of the victorious proletariat against the bourgeoisie of other countries...

September 1916

Coll. Works, Vol. 23, p. 79.

**From: "THE TASKS OF THE PROLETARIAT¹⁰
IN THE PRESENT REVOLUTION"¹¹**

...The specific feature of the present situation in Russia is that the country is *passing* from the first stage of the revolution—which, owing to the insufficient class-consciousness and organisation of the proletariat, placed power in the hands of the bour-

geoisie—to its *second* stage, which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants.

This transition is characterised, on the one hand, by a maximum of legally recognised rights (Russia is *now* the freest of all the belligerent countries in the world); on the other, by the absence of violence towards the masses, and, finally, by their unreasoning trust in the government of capitalists, those worst enemies of peace and socialism.

This peculiar situation demands of us an ability to adapt ourselves to the *special* conditions of Party work among unprecedentedly large masses of proletarians who have just awakened to political life. . .

April 4-5, 1917

Coll. Works, Vol. 24, p. 22.

From: "MATERIALS RELATING TO THE REVISION OF THE PARTY PROGRAMME"

...World capitalism has at the present time, i.e., about the beginning of the twentieth century, reached the stage of imperialism. Imperialism, or the epoch of finance capital, is a high stage of development of the capitalist economic system, one in which monopolist associations of capitalists—syndicates, cartels, and trusts—have assumed decisive importance; in which enormously concentrated banking capital has fused with industrial capital; in which the export of capital to foreign countries has assumed vast dimensions; in which the whole world has been divided up territorially among the richer countries, and the economic carve-up of the world among international trusts has begun.

Imperialist wars, i.e., wars for world domination,

for markets for banking capital and for the subjugation of small and weaker nations, are inevitable under such a state of affairs. The first great imperialist war, the war of 1914-17, is precisely such a war.

The extremely high level of development which world capitalism in general has attained, the replacement of free competition by monopoly capitalism, the fact that the banks and the capitalist associations have prepared the machinery for the social regulation of the process of production and distribution of products, the rise in the cost of living and increased oppression of the working class by the syndicates due to the growth of capitalist monopolies, the tremendous obstacles standing in the way of the proletariat's economic and political struggle, the horrors, misery, ruin, and brutalisation caused by the imperialist war—all these factors transform the present stage of capitalist development into an era of proletarian socialist revolution.

That era has dawned.

Only a proletarian socialist revolution can lead humanity out of the impasse which imperialism and imperialist wars have created. Whatever difficulties the revolution may have to encounter, whatever possible temporary setbacks or waves of counter-revolution it may have to contend with, the final victory of the proletariat is inevitable.

Objective conditions make it the urgent task of the day to prepare the proletariat in every way for the conquest of political power in order to carry out the economic and political measures which are the sum and substance of the socialist revolution. . .

April-May 1917

Coll. Works, Vol. 24, pp. 469-470.

From: "THE STATE AND REVOLUTION.
THE MARXIST THEORY OF THE STATE AND
THE TASKS OF THE PROLETARIAT IN
THE REVOLUTION"¹²

Chapter II

The State and Revolution.
The Experience of 1848-51

1. THE EVE OF THE REVOLUTION

...By educating the workers' party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat, capable of assuming power and *leading the whole people* to socialism, of directing and organising the new system, of being the teacher, the guide, the leader of all the working and exploited people in organising their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie...

August-September 1917

3. THE PRESENTATION OF THE QUESTION BY
MARX IN 1852*

It is often said and written that the main point in Marx's theory is the class struggle. But this is wrong. And this wrong notion very often results in an opportunist distortion of Marxism and its falsification in a spirit acceptable to the bourgeoisie. For the theory of the class struggle was created *not by Marx, but by the bourgeoisie before Marx*,

* Added in the second edition.

and, generally speaking, it is *acceptable* to the bourgeoisie. Those who recognise *only* the class struggle are not yet Marxists; they may be found to be still within the bounds of bourgeois thinking and bourgeois politics. To confine Marxism to the theory of the class struggle means curtailing Marxism, distorting it, reducing it to something acceptable to the bourgeoisie. A Marxist is solely someone who *extends* the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. This is what constitutes the most profound distinction between the Marxist and the ordinary petty (as well as big) bourgeois...

Before September 17, 1918

Coll. Works, Vol. 25, pp. 404, 411-12.

From: "THE IMPENDING CATASTROPHE AND
HOW TO COMBAT IT"¹³

...It is impossible to stand still in history in general, and in war-time in particular. We must either advance or retreat. It is *impossible* in twentieth-century Russia, which has won a republic and democracy in a revolutionary way, to go forward without *advancing* towards socialism, without taking *steps* towards it...

...The dialectics of history is such that the war, by extraordinarily expediting the transformation of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism, has *thereby* extraordinarily advanced mankind towards socialism.

Imperialist war is the eve of socialist revolution.

And this not only because the horrors of the war give rise to proletarian revolt—no revolt can bring about socialism unless the economic conditions for socialism are ripe—but because state-monopoly capitalism is a complete *material* preparation for socialism, the *threshold* of socialism, a rung on the ladder of history between which and the rung called socialism *there are no intermediate rungs*...

Owing to a number of historical causes—the greater backwardness of Russia, the unusual hardships brought upon her by the war, the utter rottenness of tsarism and the extreme tenacity of the traditions of 1905—the revolution broke out in Russia earlier than in other countries. The revolution has resulted in Russia catching up with the advanced countries in a few months, as far as her *political* system is concerned.

But that is not enough. The war is inexorable; it puts the alternative with ruthless severity: either perish or overtake and outstrip the advanced countries *economically as well*.

That is possible, for we have before us the experience of a large number of advanced countries, the fruits of their technology and culture. We are receiving moral support from the war protest that is growing in Europe, from the atmosphere of the mounting world-wide workers' revolution. We are being inspired and encouraged by a revolutionary-democratic freedom which is extremely rare in time of imperialist war.

Perish or forge full steam ahead. That is the alternative put by history.

And the attitude of the proletariat to the peasants in such a situation confirms the old Bolshevik concept, correspondingly modifying it, that the peasants must be wrested from the influence of the

bourgeoisie. That is the sole guarantee of salvation for the revolution.

And the peasants are the most numerous section of the entire petty-bourgeois mass. . .

September 23-27, 1917

Coll. Works, Vol. 25, pp. 358, 359, 364.

From: "THE CRISIS HAS MATURED" ¹⁴

...We are on the threshold of a world proletarian revolution. And since of all the proletarian internationalists in all countries only we Russian Bolsheviks enjoy a measure of freedom—we have a legal party and a score or so of papers, we have the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of both capitals on our side, and we have the support of a *majority* of the people in a time of revolution—to us the saying, "To whom much has been given, of him much shall be required" in all justice can and must be applied.

October 12, 1917

Coll. Works, Vol. 26, p. 77.

From: "CAN THE BOLSHEVIKS RETAIN STATE POWER?" ¹⁵

Foreword to the Second Edition

The present pamphlet, as is evident from the text, was written at the end of September and was finished on October 1, 1917 (Old Style—Ed.).

The October 25 Revolution has transferred the question raised in this pamphlet from the sphere of theory to the sphere of practice.

This question must now be answered by deeds, not words. The theoretical arguments advanced against the Bolsheviks taking power were feeble in the extreme. These arguments have been shot to pieces.

The task now is for the advanced class—the proletariat—to prove *in practice* the viability of the workers' and peasants' government. All class-conscious workers, all the active and honest peasants, all working and exploited people, will do everything they can to solve the immense historic question in practice.

To work, everybody to work, the cause of the world socialist revolution must and will triumph.

St. Petersburg, November 9, 1917

* * *

...We must bear firmly in mind that we have never set ourselves "insoluble" social problems, and as for the *perfectly* soluble problem of taking immediate steps towards socialism, which is the only way out of the exceedingly difficult situation, that will be *solved only* by the dictatorship of the proletariat and poor peasants. Victory, and lasting victory, is now more than ever, more than anywhere else, assured for the proletariat in Russia if it takes power...

If the creative enthusiasm of the revolutionary classes had not given rise to the Soviets, the proletarian revolution in Russia would have been a hopeless cause, for the proletariat could certainly not retain power with the old state apparatus, and it

is impossible to create a new apparatus immediately¹⁶...

But when every labourer, every unemployed worker, every cook, every ruined peasant sees, not from the newspapers, but with his own eyes, that the proletarian state is not cringing to wealth but is helping the poor, that this state does not hesitate to adopt revolutionary measures, that it confiscates surplus stocks of provisions from the parasites and distributes them to the hungry, that it forcibly installs the homeless in the houses of the rich, that it compels the rich to pay for milk but does not give them a drop until the children of *all* poor families are sufficiently supplied, that the land is being transferred to the working people and the factories and banks are being placed under the control of the workers, and that immediate and severe punishment is meted out to the millionaires who conceal their wealth—when the poor see and feel this, no capitalist or kulak¹⁷ forces, no forces of world finance capital which manipulates thousands of millions, will vanquish the people's revolution; on the contrary, *the socialist revolution* will triumph all over the world for it is maturing in all countries...

Justice alone, the mere anger of the people against exploitation, would never have brought them on to the true path of socialism. But now that, thanks to capitalism, the material apparatus of the big banks, syndicates, railways, and so forth, has grown, now that the immense experience of the advanced countries has accumulated a stock of engineering marvels, the employment of which is being *hindered* by capitalism, now that the class-conscious workers have built up a party of a quarter of a million members to systematically lay hold of this apparatus and set it in motion with the support of all the working and exploited people—now

that these conditions *exist*, no power on earth can prevent the Bolsheviks, *if they do not allow themselves to be scared* and if they succeed in taking power, from retaining it until the triumph of the world socialist revolution.

The end of September-October 14, 1917

Coll. Works, Vol. 26, pp. 89, 94,
104, 127, 130.

From: MEETING OF THE CENTRAL
COMMITTEE OF
THE RSDLP(B)¹⁸
OCTOBER 16 (29), 1917

Report

MINUTES

...The position was clear—either Kornilov's¹⁹ dictatorship or the dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorer strata of the peasantry... The masses had put their trust in the Bolsheviks and demanded deeds from them and not words, a decisive policy both in the struggle against the war and in the struggle against economic ruin...

From a political analysis of the class struggle in Russia and in Europe²⁰ there emerged the necessity to pursue the most determined and most active policy, which could be only the armed uprising.

Coll. Works, Vol. 26, pp. 191-192.

II

LETTER TO CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS²¹

Comrades,

I am writing these lines on the evening of the 24th. The situation is critical in the extreme. In fact it is now absolutely clear that to delay the uprising would be fatal.

With all my might I urge comrades to realise that everything now hangs by a thread; that we are confronted by problems which are not to be solved by conferences or congresses (even congresses of Soviets), but exclusively by peoples, by the masses, by the struggle of the armed people.

...we must not wait. We must at all costs, this very evening, this very night, arrest the government, having first disarmed the officer cadets (defeating them, if they resist), and so on.

We must not wait! We may lose everything!

...Who must take power?

That is not important at present. Let the Revolutionary Military Committee²² do it, or "some other institution" which will declare that it will relinquish power only to the true representatives of the interests of the people, the interests of the army (the immediate proposal of peace), the interests of the peasants (the land to be taken im-

mediately and private property abolished), the interests of the starving.

All districts, all regiments, all forces must be mobilised at once and must immediately send their delegations to the Revolutionary Military Committee and to the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks with the insistent demand that under no circumstances should power be left in the hands of Kerensky and Co.²³ until the 25th—not under any circumstances; the matter must be decided without fail this very evening, or this very night.

History will not forgive revolutionaries for procrastinating when they could be victorious today (and they certainly will be victorious today), while they risk losing much tomorrow, in fact, they risk losing everything.

If we seize power today, we seize it not in opposition to the Soviets but on their behalf.

The seizure of power is the business of the uprising; its political purpose will become clear after the seizure.

It would be a disaster, or a sheer formality, to await the wavering vote of October 25. The people have the right and are in duty bound to decide such questions not by a vote, but by force; in critical moments of revolution, the people have the right and are in duty bound to give directions to their representatives, even their best representatives, and not to wait for them.

This is proved by the history of all revolutions; and it would be an infinite crime on the part of the revolutionaries were they to let the chance slip, knowing that the *salvation of the revolution*, the offer of peace, the salvation of Petrograd, salvation from famine, the transfer of the land to the peasants depend upon them.

The government is tottering. It must be *given the deathblow* at all costs.

To delay action is fatal.

Written on October 24
(November 6, New Style—Ed.), 1917

Coll. Works, Vol. 26, pp. 234-235.

MEETING OF THE PETROGRAD SOVIET OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES OCTOBER 25 (NOVEMBER 7), 1917

I

From: "REPORT ON THE TASKS OF THE
SOVIET POWER"
(Newspaper Report)

Comrades, the workers' and peasants' revolution, about the necessity of which the Bolsheviks have always spoken, has been accomplished.

What is the significance of this workers' and peasants' revolution? Its significance is, first of all, that we shall have a Soviet government, our own organ of power, in which the bourgeoisie will have no share whatsoever. The oppressed masses will themselves create a power. The old state apparatus will be shattered to its foundations and a new administrative apparatus set up in the form of the Soviet organisations.

From now on, a new phase in the history of Russia begins, and this, the third Russian revolution, should in the end lead to the victory of socialism...

Coll. Works, Vol. 26, p. 239.

**SECOND ALL-RUSSIA CONGRESS
OF SOVIETS OF WORKERS'
AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES
OCTOBER 25-26 (NOVEMBER 7-8), 1917 ²⁴**

**From: "REPORT ON PEACE"
OCTOBER 26 (NOVEMBER 8)**

The question of peace is a burning question, the painful question of the day. Much has been said and written on the subject, and all of you, no doubt, have discussed it quite a lot. Permit me, therefore, to proceed to read a declaration which the government you elect should publish.

Decree on Peace

The workers' and peasants' government, created by the Revolution of October 24-25 and basing itself on the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, calls upon all the belligerent peoples and their governments to start immediate negotiations for a just, democratic peace.

By a just or democratic peace, for which the overwhelming majority of the working class and other working people of all the belligerent countries, exhausted, tormented and racked by the war, are craving—a peace that has been most definitely and insistently demanded by the Russian workers and peasants ever since the overthrow of the tsarist monarchy—by such a peace the government means an immediate peace without annexations (i.e., without the seizure of foreign lands, without the forcible incorporation of foreign nations) and without indemnities.

The Government of Russia proposes that this

kind of peace be immediately concluded by all the belligerent nations, and expresses its readiness to take all the resolute measures now, without the least delay, pending the final ratification of all the terms of such a peace by authoritative assemblies of the people's representatives of all countries and all nations.

In accordance with the sense of justice of democrats in general, and of the working classes in particular, the government conceives the annexation or seizure of foreign lands to mean every incorporation of a small or weak nation into a large or powerful state without the precisely, clearly and voluntarily expressed consent and wish of that nation, irrespective of the time when such forcible incorporation took place, irrespective also of the degree of development or backwardness of the nation forcibly annexed to the given state, or forcibly retained within its borders, and irrespective, finally, of whether this nation is in Europe or in distant, overseas countries.

If any nation whatsoever is forcibly retained within the borders of a given state, if, in spite of its expressed desire—no matter whether expressed in the press, at public meetings, in the decisions of parties, or in protests and uprisings against national oppression—it is not accorded the right to decide the forms of its state existence by a free vote, taken after the complete evacuation of the troops of the incorporating or, generally, of the stronger nation and without the least pressure being brought to bear, such incorporation is annexation, i.e., seizure and violence.

The government considers it the greatest of crimes against humanity to continue this war over the issue of how to divide among the strong and rich nations the weak nationalities they have con-

quered, and solemnly announces its determination immediately to sign terms of peace to stop this war on the terms indicated, which are equally just for all nationalities without exception.

At the same time the government declares that it does not regard the above-mentioned peace terms as an ultimatum; in other words, it is prepared to consider any other peace terms, and insists only that they be advanced by any of the belligerent countries as speedily as possible, and that in the peace proposals there should be absolute clarity and the complete absence of all ambiguity and secrecy.

The government abolishes secret diplomacy, and, for its part, announces its firm intention to conduct all negotiations quite openly in full view of the whole people. It will proceed immediately with the full publication of the secret treaties endorsed or concluded by the government of landowners and capitalists from February to October 25, 1917. The government proclaims the unconditional and immediate annulment of everything contained in these secret treaties insofar as it is aimed, as is mostly the case, at securing advantages and privileges for the Russian landowners and capitalists and at the retention, or extension, of the annexations made by the Great Russians.

Proposing to the governments and peoples of all countries immediately to begin open negotiations for peace, the government, for its part, expresses its readiness to conduct these negotiations in writing, by telegraph, and by negotiations between representatives of the various countries, or at a conference of such representatives. In order to facilitate such negotiations, the government is appointing its plenipotentiary representative to neutral countries.

The government proposes an immediate armistice to the governments and peoples of all the belligerent countries, and, for its part, considers it desirable that this armistice should be concluded for a period of not less than three months, i.e., a period long enough to permit the completion of negotiations for peace with the participation of the representatives of all peoples or nations, without exception, involved in or compelled to take part in the war, and the summoning of authoritative assemblies of the representatives of the peoples of all countries for the final ratification of the peace terms.

While addressing this proposal for peace to the governments and peoples of all the belligerent countries, the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of Russia appeals in particular also to the class-conscious workers of the three most advanced nations of mankind and the largest states participating in the present war, namely, Great Britain, France and Germany. The workers of these countries have made the greatest contributions to the cause of progress and socialism; they have furnished the great examples of the Chartist movement in England, a number of revolutions of historic importance effected by the French proletariat,²⁵ and, finally, the heroic struggle against the Anti-Socialist Law in Germany and the prolonged, persistent and disciplined work of creating mass proletarian organisations in Germany,²⁶ a work which serves as a model to the workers of the whole world. All these examples of proletarian heroism and historical creative work are a pledge that the workers of the countries mentioned will understand the duty that now faces them of saving mankind from the horrors of war and its consequences, that these workers, by comprehensive, determined, and supremely vigorous action, will help us to conclude

peace successfully, and at the same time emancipate the labouring and exploited masses of our population from all forms of slavery and all forms of exploitation. . .

Coll. Works, Vol. 26, pp. 249-252.

From: "REPORT ON LAND"
OCTOBER 26 (NOVEMBER 8)

...The first duty of the government of the workers' and peasants' revolution must be to settle the land question, which can pacify and satisfy the vast masses of poor peasants. I shall read to you the clauses of a decree your Soviet Government must issue. In one of the clauses of this decree is embodied the Mandate to the Land Committees, compiled on the basis of 242 mandates from local Soviets of Peasants' Deputies.

Decree on Land

(1) Landed proprietorship is abolished forthwith without any compensation.

(2) The landed estates, as also all crown, monastery, and church lands, with all their livestock, implements, buildings and everything pertaining thereto, shall be placed at the disposal of the volost²⁷ land committees and the uyezd²⁸ Soviets of Peasants' Deputies pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly.

(3) All damage to confiscated property, which henceforth belongs to the whole people, is proclaimed a grave crime to be punished by the revolutionary courts. The uyezd Soviets of Peasants' Deputies shall take all necessary measures to

assure the observance of the strictest order during the confiscation of the landed estates, to determine the size of estates, and the particular estates subject to confiscation, to draw up exact inventories of all property confiscated and to protect in the strictest revolutionary way all agricultural enterprises transferred to the people, with all buildings, implements, livestock, stocks of produce, etc.

(4) The following peasant Mandate... from 242 local peasant mandates... shall serve everywhere to guide the implementation of the great land reforms until a final decision on the latter is taken by the Constituent Assembly.

PEASANT MANDATE ON THE LAND

"The land question in its full scope can be settled only by the popular Constituent Assembly.

"The most equitable settlement of the land question is to be as follows:

"(1) *Private ownership of land shall be abolished for ever; land shall not be sold, purchased, leased, mortgaged, or otherwise alienated.*

"All land, whether *state, crown, monastery, church, factory, entailed, private, public, peasant, etc., shall be confiscated without compensation* and become the property of the whole people, and pass into the use of all those who cultivate it.

"Persons who suffer by this property revolution shall be deemed to be entitled to public support only for the period necessary for adaptation to the new conditions of life.

"(2) All mineral wealth—ore, oil, coal, salt, etc., and also all forests and waters of state importance, shall pass into the exclusive use of the state. All the small streams, lakes, woods, etc., shall pass into

the use of the communes, to be administered by the local self-government bodies.

"(3) Lands on which *high-level scientific* farming is practised—orchards, plantations, seed plots, nurseries, hothouses, etc.—*shall not be divided up, but shall be converted into model farms*, to be turned over for exclusive use *to the state or to the communes*, depending on the size and importance of such lands.

"Household land in towns and villages, with orchards and vegetable gardens, shall be reserved for the use of their present owners, the size of the holdings, and the size of tax levied for the use thereof, to be determined by law.

"(4) Stud farms, government and private pedigree stock and poultry farms, etc., shall be confiscated and become the property of the whole people, and pass into the exclusive use of the state or a commune, depending on the size and importance of such farms.

"The question of compensation shall be examined by the Constituent Assembly.

"(5) All livestock and farm implements of the confiscated estates shall pass into the exclusive use of the state or a commune, depending on their size and importance, and no compensation shall be paid for this.

"The farm implements of peasants with little land shall not be subject to confiscation.

"(6) The right to use the land shall be accorded to all citizens of the Russian state (without distinction of sex) desiring to cultivate it by their own labour, with the help of their families, or in partnership, but only as long as they are able to cultivate it. The employment of hired labour is not permitted.

"In the event of the temporary physical disability

of any member of a village commune for a period of up to two years, the village commune shall be obliged to assist him for this period by collectively cultivating his land until he is again able to work.

"Peasants who, owing to old age or ill-health, are permanently disabled and unable to cultivate the land personally, shall lose their right to the use of it but, in return, shall receive a pension from the state.

"(7) Land tenure shall be on an equality basis, i.e., the land shall be distributed among the working people in conformity with a labour standard or a subsistence standard, depending on local conditions.

"There shall be absolutely no restriction on the forms of land tenure—household, farm, communal, or co-operative, as shall be decided in each individual village and settlement.

"(8) All land, when alienated, shall become part of the national land fund. Its distribution among the peasants shall be in charge of the local and central self-government bodies, from democratically organised village and city communes, in which there are no distinctions of social rank, to central regional government bodies.

"The land fund shall be subject to periodical redistribution, depending on the growth of population and the increase in the productivity and the scientific level of farming.

"When the boundaries of allotments are altered, the original nucleus of the allotment shall be left intact.

"The land of the members who leave the commune shall revert to the land fund; preferential right to such land shall be given to the near rela-

tives of the members who have left, or to persons designated by the latter.

"The cost of fertilisers and improvements put into the land, to the extent that they have not been fully used up at the time the allotment is returned to the land fund, shall be compensated.

"Should the available land fund in a particular district prove inadequate for the needs of the local population, the surplus population shall be settled elsewhere.

"The state shall take upon itself the organisation of resettlement and shall bear the cost thereof, as well as the cost of supplying implements, etc.

"Resettlement shall be effected in the following order: landless peasants desiring to resettle, then members of the commune who are of vicious habits, deserters, and so on, and, finally, by lot or by agreement."

The entire contents of this Mandate, as expressing the absolute will of the vast majority of the class-conscious peasants of all Russia, is proclaimed a provisional law, which, pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly²⁹, shall be carried into effect as far as possible immediately, and as to certain of its provisions with due gradualness, as shall be determined by the uyezds Soviets of Peasants' Deputies.

(5) The land of ordinary peasants and ordinary Cossacks shall not be confiscated.

* * *

Voices are being raised here that the decree itself and the Mandate were drawn up by the Socialist-Revolutionaries³⁰. What of it? Does it matter who drew them up? As a democratic government, we

cannot ignore the decision of the masses of the people, even though we may disagree with it. In the fire of experience, applying the decree in practice, and carrying it out locally, the peasants will themselves realise where the truth lies. And even if the peasants continue to follow the Socialist-Revolutionaries, even if they give this party a majority in the Constituent Assembly, we shall still say—what of it? Experience is the best teacher and it will show who is right. Let the peasants solve this problem from one end and we shall solve it from the other. Experience will oblige us to draw together in the general stream of revolutionary creative work, in the elaboration of new state forms. We must be guided by experience; we must allow complete freedom to the creative faculties of the masses. The old government, which was overthrown by armed uprising, wanted to settle the land problem with the help of the old, unchanged tsarist bureaucracy. But instead of solving the problem, the bureaucracy only fought the peasants. The peasants have learned something during the eight months of our revolution; they want to settle all land problems themselves. We are therefore opposed to all amendments to this draft law. We want no details in it, for we are writing a decree, not a programme of action. Russia is vast, and local conditions vary. We trust that the peasants themselves will be able to solve the problem correctly, properly, better than we could do it. Whether they do it in our spirit or in the spirit of the Socialist-Revolutionary programme is not the point. The point is that the peasants should be firmly assured that there are no more landowners in the countryside, that they themselves must decide all questions, and that they themselves must arrange their own lives...

Coll. Works, Vol. 26, pp. 257-260.

From: "HOW TO ORGANISE COMPETITION?"

...The workers and peasants are still "timid", they have not yet become accustomed to the idea that *they* are now the *ruling* class; they are not yet resolute enough. The revolution could not *at one stroke* instil these qualities into millions and millions of people who all their lives had been compelled by want and hunger to work under the threat of the stick. But the Revolution of October 1917 is strong, viable and invincible because it *awakens* these qualities, breaks down the old impediments, removes the worn-out shackles, and leads the working people on to the road of the *independent* creation of a new life...

Workers and peasants, working and exploited people! The land, the banks and the factories have now become the property of the entire people! You *yourselves* must set to work to take account of and control the production and distribution of products—this, and this *alone* is the road to the victory of socialism, the only guarantee of its victory, the guarantee of victory over all exploitation, over all poverty and want! For there is enough bread, iron, timber, wool, cotton and flax in Russia to satisfy the needs of everyone, if only labour and its products are properly distributed, if only a *business-like, practical* control over this distribution by the entire people is established, provided only we can defeat the enemies of the people: the rich and their hangers-on, and the rogues, the idlers and the rowdies, *not only* in politics, but also in *everyday economic* life...

"It is not the gods who make pots"—this is the truth that the workers and peasants should get well drilled into their minds. They must understand that the whole thing now is *practical work*; that the his-

torical moment has arrived when theory is being transformed into practice, vitalised by practice, corrected by practice, tested by practice; when the words of Marx, "Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes", become particularly true—every step in really curbing in practice, restricting, fully registering the rich and the rogues and keeping them under control is worth more than a dozen excellent arguments about socialism. For, "theory, my friend, is grey, but green is the eternal tree of life"...³¹

This is the work in which *talented organisers* should come to the fore *in practice* and be promoted to work in state administration. There is a great deal of talent among the people. It is merely suppressed. It must be given an opportunity to display itself. It *and it alone*, with the support of the people, can save Russia and save the 'cause of socialism.

December 1917

Coll. Works, Vol. 26. pp. 409, 410, 413, 415.

THIRD ALL-RUSSIA CONGRESS OF SOVIETS OF WORKERS', SOLDIERS' AND PEASANTS' DEPUTIES JANUARY 10-18 (23-31), 1918

From: "REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS"
JANUARY 11 (24)

Comrades, on behalf of the Council of People's Commissars I must submit to you a report of its

activities for the two months and fifteen days that have elapsed since the establishment of Soviet power and the Soviet Government in Russia.

Two months and fifteen days—that is only five days more than the preceding workers' power lasted and ruled over a whole country, or over the exploiters and the capitalists, the power of the Paris workers at the time of the Paris Commune of 1871.³²

We must first of all remember this workers' power, we must cast our minds back and compare it with the Soviet power that was formed on October 25. And if we compare the preceding dictatorship of the proletariat with the present one we shall see at once what a gigantic stride the international working-class movement has made, and in what an immeasurably more favourable position Soviet power in Russia finds itself, notwithstanding the incredibly complicated conditions of war and economic ruin. . .

...The French workers had to pay an unprecedentedly heavy price for the first experience of workers' government, the meaning and purpose of which the overwhelming majority of the peasants in France did not know.

We find ourselves in immeasurably more favourable circumstances because the Russian soldiers, workers and peasants were able to create the Soviet Government, an apparatus which informed the whole world of their methods of struggle. It is this that puts the Russian workers and peasants in a position that differs from the power of the Paris proletariat. They had no apparatus, the country did not understand them; we were immediately able to rely on Soviet power, and that is why we never doubted that Soviet power enjoys the sympathy and

the warmest and most devoted support of the overwhelming majority of the people, and that therefore Soviet power is invincible.

Those who were sceptical of Soviet power and frequently, either consciously or unconsciously, sold and betrayed it for compromise with the capitalists and the imperialists, raised a deafening clamour about the power of the proletariat alone not being able to be maintained in Russia. As if any Bolsheviks or their supporters forgot even for a moment that in Russia only that power could last for any length of time that would be able to unite the working class and the majority of the peasants, all the working and exploited classes, in a single, inseparably interconnected force fighting against the landowners and the bourgeoisie.

We never doubted that only the alliance of the workers and the poor peasants, the semi-proletarians, mentioned in our Party Programme, can, in Russia, embrace the majority of the population and ensure firm support for the government. And after October 25 we were immediately able, in the course of several weeks, to overcome all difficulties and establish a government on the basis of this firm alliance. . .

I have no illusions about our having only just entered the period of *transition* to socialism, about not yet having reached socialism. But if you say that our state is a socialist Republic of Soviets, you will be right. You will be as right as those who call many Western bourgeois republics democratic republics although everybody knows that not one of even the most democratic of these republics is completely democratic. They grant scraps of democracy, they cut off tiny bits of the rights of the exploiters, but the working people are as much oppressed there as they are everywhere else. Nevertheless,

we say that the bourgeois system is represented by both old monarchies and by constitutional republics.

And so in our case now. We are far from having completed even the transitional period from capitalism to socialism. We have never cherished the hope that we could finish it without the aid of the international proletariat. We never had any illusions on that score, and we know how difficult is the road that leads from capitalism to socialism. But it is our duty to say that our Soviet Republic is a socialist republic because we have taken this road, and our words will not be empty words.

We have initiated many measures undermining the capitalists' rule. We know that our power had to unite the activities of all our institutions by a single principle, and this principle we express in the words: "Russia is declared to be a Socialist Republic of Soviets."...

Coll. Works, Vol. 26, pp. 455-456, 464-465.

**From: "CONCLUDING SPEECH ON THE
REPORT OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S
COMMISSARS"
JANUARY 12 (25)**

...The world has never seen anything like that which is now taking place here in Russia, in this vast country broken up into a number of separate states and containing an enormous number of heterogeneous nationalities and peoples. I refer to the immense organisational work in every uyezd and region, the organisation of the lower strata, the work of the masses themselves, the creative, constructive activity, which encounters obstacles raised

by various bourgeois representatives of imperialism. They, the workers and peasants, are engaged in an effort unprecedented in its titanic aims; together with the Soviets, they will smash capitalist exploitation, and bourgeois oppression will in the end be abolished once and for all.

Coll. Works, Vol. 26, pp. 476-477.

**From: "SUMMING-UP SPEECH AT THE
CONGRESS"
JANUARY 18 (31)**

...I am profoundly convinced that more and more diverse federations of free nations will group themselves around revolutionary Russia. This federation is invincible and will grow quite freely, without the help of lies or bayonets. The laws and the state system which we are creating over here are the best earnest of its invincibility...

Coll. Works, Vol. 26, p. 481.

**EXTRAORDINARY SEVENTH CONGRESS
OF THE RCP(B)³³
MARCH 6-8, 1918**

**From: "POLITICAL REPORT OF THE CENTRAL
COMMITTEE"
MARCH 7**

...Our slogan "All Power to the Soviets", which the masses had tested in practice by long historical experience, had become part of their flesh and blood.

That is why the Russian revolution was a con-

tinuous triumphal march in the first months after October 25, 1917.³⁴ As a result of this the difficulties which the socialist revolution immediately encountered, and could not but encounter, were forgotten, were pushed into the background. One of the fundamental differences between bourgeois revolution and socialist revolution is that for the bourgeois revolution, which arises out of feudalism, the new economic organisations are gradually created in the womb of the old order, gradually changing all the aspects of feudal society. The bourgeois revolution faced only one task—to sweep away, to cast aside, to destroy all the fetters of the preceding social order. By fulfilling this task every bourgeois revolution fulfils all that is required of it; it accelerates the growth of capitalism.

The socialist revolution is in an altogether different position. The more backward the country which, owing to the zigzags of history, has proved to be the one to start the socialist revolution, the more difficult is it for that country to pass from the old capitalist relations to socialist relations. New incredibly difficult tasks, organisational tasks, are added to the tasks of destruction. Had not the popular creative spirit of the Russian revolution, which had gone through the great experience of the year 1905, given rise to the Soviets as early as February 1917, they could not under any circumstances have assumed power in October, because success depended entirely upon the existence of available organisational forms of a movement embracing millions. The Soviets were the available form, and that is why in the political sphere the future held out to us those brilliant successes, the continuous triumphal march, that we had; for the new form of political power was already available, and all we had to do was to pass a few decrees,

and transform the power of the Soviets from the embryonic state in which it existed in the first months of the revolution into the legally recognised form which had become established in the Russian state—i.e., into the Russian Soviet Republic...

Coll. Works, Vol. 27, pp. 89-90.

From: "REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE
PROGRAMME AND ON CHANGING THE
NAME OF THE PARTY"
MARCH 8

...We have only just taken the first steps towards shaking off capitalism altogether and beginning the transition to socialism. We do not know and we cannot know how many stages of transition to socialism there will be. That depends on when the full-scale European socialist revolution begins and on whether it will deal with its enemies and enter upon the smooth path of socialist development easily and rapidly or whether it will do so slowly. We do not know this, and the programme of a Marxist party must be based on facts that have been established with absolute certainty. The power of our Programme—the programme that has found its confirmation in all the complications of the revolution—is in that alone. Marxists must build up their programme on this basis alone. We must proceed from facts that have been established with absolute certainty, facts that show how the development of exchange and commodity production became a dominant historical phenomenon throughout the world, how it led to capitalism and capitalism developed into imperialism; that is an absolutely definite fact that must first and foremost be recorded in our Pro-

gramme. That imperialism begins the era of the social revolution is also a fact, one that is obvious to us, and about which we must speak clearly. By stating this fact in our Programme we are holding high the torch of the social revolution before the whole world, not as an agitational speech, but as a new Programme...

Coll. Works, Vol. 27, p. 131.

From: "ROUGH OUTLINE OF THE DRAFT PROGRAMME"

The Revolution of October 25 (November 7), 1917 in Russia brought about the dictatorship of the proletariat, which has been supported by the poor peasants or semi-proletarians.

This dictatorship confronts the Communist Party in Russia with the task of carrying through to the end, of completing, the expropriation of the landowners and bourgeoisie that has already begun, and the transfer of all factories, railways, banks, the fleet and other means of production and exchange to ownership by the Soviet Republic;

utilisation of the alliance of urban workers and poor peasants, which has already abolished private ownership of land, and utilisation of the law on the transitional form between small-peasant farming and socialism, which modern ideologists of the peasantry that has put itself on the side of the proletarians have called socialisation of the land, for a gradual but steady transition to joint tillage and large-scale socialist agriculture;

consolidation and further development of the Federative Republic of Soviets as an immeasurably higher and more progressive form of democracy than bourgeois parliamentarism, and as the sole type of

state corresponding, on the basis of the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871 and equally of the experience of the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917-18, to the transitional period between capitalism and socialism, i.e., to the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat;...

March 1918

Coll. Works, Vol. 27, p. 153.

From: "THE CHIEF TASK OF OUR DAY"

... It has been Russia's lot to see most clearly, and experience most keenly and painfully the sharpest of sharp turning-points in history as it swings round from imperialism towards the communist revolution. In the space of a few days we destroyed one of the oldest, most powerful, barbarous and brutal of monarchies. In the space of a few months we passed through a number of stages of collaboration with the bourgeoisie and of shaking off petty-bourgeois illusions, for which other countries have required decades. In the course of a few weeks, having overthrown the bourgeoisie, we crushed its open resistance in civil war. We passed in a victorious triumphal march of Bolshevism from one end of a vast country to the other. We raised the lowest strata of the working people oppressed by tsarism and the bourgeoisie to liberty and independent life. We established and consolidated a Soviet Republic, a new type of state, which is infinitely superior to, and more democratic than, the best of the bourgeois-parliamentary republics. We established the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the poor peasantry, and began a broadly conceived system of socialist reforms. We awakened the faith of the millions upon millions of work-

ers of all countries in their own strength and kindled the fires of enthusiasm in them. Everywhere we issued the call for a world workers' revolution. We flung a challenge to the imperialist plunderers of all countries. . .

March 1918

Coll. Works, Vol. 27, pp. 159-160.

From: "THE IMMEDIATE TASKS OF THE
SOVIET GOVERNMENT"³⁵

...In bourgeois revolutions, the principal task of the mass of working people was to fulfil the negative or destructive work of abolishing feudalism, monarchy and medievalism. The positive or constructive work of organising the new society was carried out by the property-owning bourgeois minority of the population. And the latter carried out this task with relative ease, despite the resistance of the workers and the poor peasants, not only because the resistance of the people exploited by capital was then extremely weak, since they were scattered and uneducated, but also because the chief organising force of anarchically built capitalist society is the spontaneously growing and expanding national and international market.

In every socialist revolution, however—and consequently in the socialist revolution in Russia which we began on October 25, 1917—the principal task of the proletariat, and of the poor peasants which it leads, is the positive or constructive work of setting up an extremely intricate and delicate system of new organisational relationships extending to the planned production and distribution of the goods required for the existence of tens of millions of people. Such a revolution can be successfully car-

ried out only if the majority of the population, and primarily the majority of the working people, engage in independent creative work as makers of history. Only if the proletariat and the poor peasants display sufficient class-consciousness, devotion to principle, self-sacrifice and perseverance, will the victory of the socialist revolution be assured. By creating a new, Soviet type of state, which gives the working and oppressed people the chance to take an active part in the independent building up of a new society, we solved only a small part of this difficult problem. The principal difficulty lies in the economic sphere, namely, the introduction of the strictest and universal accounting and control of the production and distribution of goods, raising the productivity of labour and *socialising* production in practice.

...We, the Bolshevik Party, have *convinced* Russia. We have *won* Russia from the rich for the poor, from the exploiters for the working people. Now we must *administer* Russia. And the whole peculiarity of the present situation, the whole difficulty, lies in understanding *the specific features of the transition* from the principal task of convincing the people and of suppressing the exploiters by armed force to the principal task of *administration*. . .

...We have successfully fulfilled the first task of the revolution; we have seen how the mass of working people evolved in themselves the fundamental condition for its success: they united their efforts against the exploiters in order to overthrow them. Stages like that of October 1905, February and October 1917 are of world-historic significance.

We have successfully fulfilled the second task of the revolution: to awaken, to raise those very "lower ranks" of society whom the exploiters had pushed

down, and who only after October 25, 1917 obtained complete freedom to overthrow the exploiters and to begin to take stock of things and arrange life in their own way. The airing of questions at public meetings by the most oppressed and down-trodden, by the least educated mass of working people, their coming over to the side of the Bolsheviks, their setting up everywhere of their own Soviet organisations—this was the second great stage of the revolution.

The third stage is now beginning. We must consolidate what we ourselves have won, what we ourselves have decreed, made law, discussed, planned—consolidate all this in stable forms of *everyday labour discipline*. This is the most difficult, but the most gratifying task, because only its fulfilment will give us a socialist system. We must learn to combine the “public meeting” democracy of the working people—turbulent, surging, overflowing its banks like a spring flood—with *iron discipline* while at work, with *unquestioning obedience* to the will of a single person, the Soviet leader, while at work.

We have not yet learned to do this.

We shall learn it. . .

April 1918

Coll. Works, Vol. 27, pp. 238, 241-242, 271.

From: “TO CLARA ZETKIN” ³⁶

July 26, 1918

Esteemed Comrade Zetkin,

...We are extremely glad that you, Comrade Mehring ³⁷ and the other “Spartacus Comrades” ³⁸

in Germany are with us, “head and heart”. This gives us confidence that the best elements of the West-European working class—in spite of all difficulties—will nevertheless come to our assistance.

We here are now living through perhaps the most difficult weeks of the whole revolution. ³⁹ The class struggle and the civil war have penetrated deep among the population: everywhere there is a split in the villages—the poor are for us, the kulaks are furiously against us. The Entente has bought the Czechoslovaks, a counter-revolutionary revolt is raging, the bourgeoisie is making every effort to overthrow us. Nevertheless, we firmly believe that we shall escape this “usual” (as in 1794 and 1849) course of the revolution, and will conquer the bourgeoisie.

With great gratitude, very best greetings and sincere respect,

Yours,
Lenin

...P.S. I have just been brought our new State Seal. Here is the impression. The inscription reads: Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic. Workers of all countries, unite!

Coll. Works, Vol. 35, pp. 343-344.

From: “LETTER TO AMERICAN WORKERS” ⁴⁰

...The workers of the whole world, no matter in what country they live, greet us, sympathise

with us, applaud us for breaking the iron ring of imperialist ties, of sordid imperialist treaties, of imperialist chains—for breaking through to freedom, and making the heaviest sacrifices in doing so—for, as a socialist republic, although torn and plundered by the imperialists, keeping *out* of the imperialist war and raising the banner of peace, the banner of socialism for the whole world to see.

Small wonder that the international imperialist gang hates us for this, that it "accuses" us, that all the lackeys of the imperialists, including our Right Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks,⁴¹ also "accuse" us. The hatred these watchdogs of imperialism express for the Bolsheviks, and the sympathy of the class-conscious workers of the world, convince us more than ever of the justice of our cause.

A real socialist would not fail to understand that for the sake of achieving victory over the bourgeoisie, for the sake of power passing to the workers, for the sake of *starting* the world proletarian revolution, we *cannot* and must *not* hesitate to make the heaviest sacrifices, including the sacrifice of part of our territory, the sacrifice of heavy defeats at the hands of imperialism.⁴² A real socialist would have proved by *deeds* his willingness for "his" country to make the greatest sacrifice to give a real push forward to the cause of the socialist revolution. . .

That is why we are all so firmly convinced that no matter what misfortunes may still be in store for it, our Republic of Soviets is *invincible*.

It is invincible because every blow struck by frenzied imperialism, every defeat the international bourgeoisie inflict on us, rouses more and more sections of the workers and peasants to the strug-

gle, teaches them at the cost of enormous sacrifice, steels them and engenders new heroism on a mass scale.

We know that help from you will probably not come soon, comrade American workers, for the revolution is developing in different countries in different forms and at different tempos (and it cannot be otherwise). We know that although the European proletarian revolution has been maturing very rapidly lately, it may, after all, not flare up within the next few weeks. We are banking on the inevitability of the world revolution, but this does not mean that we are such fools as to bank on the revolution inevitably coming on a *definite* and early date. We have seen two great revolutions in our country, 1905 and 1917, and we know revolutions are not made to order, or by agreement. We know that circumstances brought *our* Russian detachment of the socialist proletariat to the fore not because of our merits, but because of the exceptional backwardness of Russia, and that *before* the world revolution breaks out a number of separate revolutions may be defeated.

In spite of this, we are firmly convinced that we are invincible, because the spirit of mankind will not be broken by the imperialist slaughter. Mankind will vanquish it. And the first country to *break* the convict chains of the imperialist war was *our* country. We sustained enormously heavy casualties in the struggle to break these chains, but we *broke* them. We are *free from* imperialist dependence, we have raised the banner of struggle for the complete overthrow of imperialism for the whole world to see. . .

August 20, 1918

Coll. Works, Vol. 28, pp. 65-66, 74-75.

**SPEECH AT A RALLY IN HONOUR OF THE
AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION
NOVEMBER 3, 1918 ⁴³**

BRIEF NEWSPAPER REPORT

Events have shown that the people's sufferings have not been in vain.

We are not only fighting Russian capitalism. We are fighting the capitalism of all countries, world capitalism—we are fighting for the freedom of all workers.

Hard as it was for us to cope with famine and our enemies, we now see that we have millions of allies.

They are the workers of Austria, Hungary and Germany. While we are gathered here, Friedrich Adler ⁴⁴ is very likely on his way to Vienna after his release from prison. The first day of the Austrian workers' revolution is probably being celebrated on the squares of Vienna.

The time is near when the first day of the world revolution will be celebrated everywhere.

Our labour and sufferings have not been in vain! The world revolution will triumph!

Long live the world proletarian revolution!

Coll. Works, Vol. 28, p. 131.

**RADIOGRAM FROM MOSCOW TO ONE AND
ALL**

To all frontier Soviets

According to the latest information, German soldiers have arrested a delegation of German generals on their way to negotiate an armistice. German

soldiers have entered into direct negotiations with French soldiers. Kaiser Wilhelm has abdicated. Chancellor Prince of Baden has resigned. The new Chancellor is to be the government Social-Democrat Ebert. General strike has swept all major cities of Southern Germany. The whole German navy is on the side of the revolution. ⁴⁵ All German ports in the North Sea and the Baltic are in the hands of the revolutionary navy. We have received from the Kiel Council of Soldiers' Deputies a radio message, addressed to the international proletariat, to the effect that the German navy is flying the red flag and that funeral services for those who fell for liberty are to be held today. All this will very probably be concealed from the German soldiers on the Eastern Front and in the Ukraine. By all the means at your disposal bring these facts to the knowledge of the German soldiers.

Chicherin ⁴⁶

People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs

Lenin

Chairman, Council of People's Commissars

Moscow

By radio

Coll. Works, Vol. 36, p. 495.

**From: "SPEECH AT THE FIRST ALL-RUSSIA
CONGRESS OF WORKING WOMEN"
NOVEMBER 19, 1918**

...Comrades, in a certain sense this Congress of the women's section of the workers' army has a special significance, because one of the hardest things in every country has been to stir the women

into action. There can be no socialist revolution unless very many working women take a big part in it.

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

One of the primary tasks of the Soviet Republic is to abolish all restrictions on women's rights...

Coll. Works, Vol. 28, p. 180.

From: "THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION AND
THE RENEGADE KAUTSKY"⁴⁷

...The Bolsheviks' tactics were correct; they were the *only* internationalist tactics, because they were based, not on the cowardly fear of a world revolution, not on a philistine "lack of faith" in it, not on the narrow nationalist desire to protect one's "own" fatherland (the fatherland of one's own bourgeoisie), while not "giving a damn" about all the rest, but on a correct (and, before the war and before the apostasy of the social-chauvinists and social-pacifists, a universally accepted) *estimation* of the revolutionary situation in Europe. These tactics were the only internationalist tactics, because they did the utmost possible in one country for the development, support and awakening of the revolution in *all countries*. These tactics have been justified by their enormous success, for Bolshevism (not by any means because of the merits of the Russian Bolsheviks, but because of the most profound sympathy of the *people* everywhere for tactics that are revolutionary in practice) has become *world Bol-*

shevism, has produced an idea, a theory, a programme and tactics which differ concretely and in practice from those of social-chauvinism and social-pacifism. Bolshevism *has given a coup de grâce* to the old, decayed International... Bolshevism *has created* the ideological and tactical foundations of a Third International,⁴⁸ of a really proletarian and Communist International, which will take into consideration both the gains of the tranquil epoch and the experience of the *epoch of revolutions, which has begun*.

Bolshevism has popularised throughout the world the idea of the "dictatorship of the proletariat", has translated these words from the Latin, first into Russian, and then into *all* the languages of the world, and has shown by the example of *Soviet government* that the workers and poor peasants, *even* of a backward country, even with the least experience, education and habits of organisation, *have been able* for a whole year, amidst gigantic difficulties and amidst a struggle against the exploiters (who were supported by the bourgeoisie of the *whole world*), to maintain the power of the working people, to create a democracy that is immeasurably higher and broader than all previous democracies in the world, and to *start* the creative work of tens of millions of workers and peasants for the practical construction of socialism.

Bolshevism has actually helped to develop the proletarian revolution in Europe and America more powerfully than any party in any other country has so far succeeded in doing. While the workers of the whole world are realising more and more clearly every day that the tactics of the Scheidemanns and Kautskys have not delivered them from the imperialist war and from wage-slavery to the impe-

to abandon routine and old habits of thought (even though they may have belonged to the socialist camp), imagined that this surprising swing towards proletarian Soviet democracy was due entirely to the peculiar conditions prevailing in Russia; they thought that perhaps the specific features of this democracy reflected, as in a distorting mirror, the peculiar features of former, tsarist Russia. If there was ever any foundation for such an opinion, there is certainly none whatever now. Comrades, the news received today gives us a picture of the Hungarian revolution⁵⁰...

Coll. Works, Vol. 29, pp. 145, 222, 223.

**WIRELESS MESSAGE OF GREETING TO THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE HUNGARIAN SOVIET
REPUBLIC
MARCH 22, 1919**

This is Lenin. Sincere greetings to the proletarian government of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, and especially to Comrade Béla Kun.⁵¹ I conveyed your greetings to the Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). They were received with tremendous enthusiasm. We shall send you the decisions of the Moscow Congress of the Third, Communist International,⁵² as well as a report on the military situation, as soon as possible. It is absolutely necessary to maintain constant radio communication between Budapest and Moscow. Accept my communist greetings and hearty handshake, *Lenin*.

Coll. Works, Vol. 29, p. 226.

**From: "SPEECHES ON GRAMOPHONE
RECORDS"**

What Is Soviet Power?

...We know very well that there are still many defects in the organisation of Soviet power in this country. Soviet power is not a miracle-working talisman. It does not, overnight, heal all the evils of the past—illiteracy, lack of culture, the consequences of a barbarous war, the aftermath of predatory capitalism. But it does pave the way to socialism. It gives those who were formerly oppressed the chance to straighten their backs and to an ever-increasing degree to take the whole government of the country, the whole administration of the economy, the whole management of production, into their own hands.

Soviet power is the road to socialism that was discovered by the masses of the working people, and that is why it is the true road, that is why it is invincible.

March 1919

Coll. Works, Vol. 29, pp. 248-249.

**From: "THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL AND ITS
PLACE IN HISTORY"**

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

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

intensifying revolutionary situation—of such a unique form of proletarian revolutionary organisation as the *Soviets*.

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

Soviet, or proletarian, democracy was born in Russia. Following the Paris Commune a second epoch-making step was taken. The proletarian and peasant Soviet Republic has proved to be the first stable socialist republic in the world. As a *new type of state* it cannot die. . .

April 15, 1919

Coll. Works, Vol. 29, pp. 310-311.

From: "GREETINGS TO THE HUNGARIAN WORKERS"

Comrades, the news we have been receiving from the Hungarian Soviet leaders fills us with enthusiasm and pleasure. Soviet government has been in existence in Hungary for only a little over two months, yet as regards organisation the Hungarian proletariat already seems to have excelled us. That is understandable, for in Hungary the general cultural level of the population is higher; furthermore, the proportion of industrial workers to the total population is immeasurably greater (in Budapest there are three million of the eight million population of present-day Hungary), and, lastly, in Hungary the transition to the Soviet system, to the dictatorship of the proletariat, has been incomparably easier and more peaceful.

This last circumstance is particularly important. The majority of the European socialist leaders. . .

have become so much a prey to purely philistine prejudices, fostered by decades of relatively "peaceful" capitalism and the bourgeois-parliamentary system, that they are unable to understand what Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat mean...

This dictatorship presupposes the ruthlessly severe, swift and resolute use of force to crush the resistance of the exploiters, the capitalists, landowners and their underlings. Whoever does not understand this is not a revolutionary, and must be removed from the post of leader or adviser of the proletariat.

But the essence of proletarian dictatorship is not in force alone, or even mainly in force. Its chief feature is the organisation and discipline of the advanced contingent of the working people, of their vanguard; of their sole leader, the proletariat, whose object is to build socialism, abolish the division of society into classes, make all members of society working people, and remove the basis for all exploitation of man by man. This object cannot be achieved at one stroke. It requires a fairly long period of transition from capitalism to socialism, because the reorganisation of production is a difficult matter, because radical changes in all spheres of life need time, and because the enormous force of habit of running things in a petty-bourgeois and bourgeois way can only be overcome by a long and stubborn struggle...

The abolition of classes requires a long, difficult and stubborn *class struggle*, which, *after* the overthrow of capitalist rule, *after* the destruction of the bourgeois state, *after* the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, *does not disappear* (as the vulgar representatives of the old socialism and the old Social-Democracy imagine), but merely

changes its forms and in many respects becomes fiercer.

The proletariat, by means of a class struggle against the resistance of the bourgeoisie, against the conservatism, routine, irresolution and vacillation of the petty bourgeoisie, must uphold its power, strengthen its organising influence, "neutralise" those groups which fear to leave the bourgeoisie and which follow the proletariat too hesitantly, and consolidate the new discipline, the comradely discipline of the working people, their firm bond with the proletariat, their unity with the proletariat—that new discipline, that new basis of social ties in place of the serf discipline of the Middle Ages and the discipline of starvation, the discipline of "free" wage-slavery under capitalism.

In order to abolish classes a period of the dictatorship of one class is needed, the dictatorship of precisely that oppressed class which is capable not only of overthrowing the exploiters, not only of ruthlessly crushing their resistance, but also of breaking ideologically with the entire bourgeois-democratic outlook, with all the philistine phrasemongering about liberty and equality in general (in reality, this phrasemongering implies, as Marx demonstrated long ago, the "liberty and equality" of *commodity owners*, the "liberty and equality" of the *capitalist and the worker*).

More, classes can be abolished only by the dictatorship of that oppressed class which has been schooled, united, trained and steeled by decades of the strike and political struggle against capital—of that class alone which has assimilated all the urban, industrial, big-capitalist culture and has the determination and ability to protect it and to preserve and further develop all its achievements, and make them available to all the people, to all the work-

ing people—of that class alone which will be able to bear all the hardships, trials, privations and great sacrifices which history inevitably imposes upon those who break with the past and boldly hew a road for themselves to a new future—of that class alone whose finest members are full of hatred and contempt for everything petty-bourgeois and philistine... of that class alone which "has been through the hardening school of labour" and is able to inspire respect for its efficiency in every working person and every honest man...

Lenin

May 27, 1919

Coll. Works, Vol. 29, pp. 387, 388, 390.

From: "‘LEFT-WING’ COMMUNISM—AN INFANTILE DISORDER"⁵³

X. Several Conclusions

Since the proletarian revolution in Russia and its victories on an international scale, expected neither by the bourgeoisie nor the philistines, the entire world has become different, and the bourgeoisie everywhere has become different too. It is terrified of "Bolshevism", exasperated by it almost to the point of frenzy, and for that very reason it is, on the one hand, precipitating the progress of events and, on the other, concentrating on the forcible suppression of Bolshevism, thereby weakening its own position in a number of other fields. In their tactics the Communists in all the advanced countries must take both these circumstances into account.

When the Russian Cadets⁵⁴ and Kerensky began furiously to hound the Bolsheviks—especially since April 1917, and more particularly in June and July 1917—they overdid things. Millions of copies of bourgeois papers, clamouring in every key against the Bolsheviks, helped the masses to make an appraisal of Bolshevism; apart from the newspapers, all public life was full of discussions about Bolshevism, as a result of the bourgeoisie's "zeal". Today the millionaires of all countries are behaving on an international scale in a way that deserves our heartiest thanks. They are hounding Bolshevism with the same zeal as Kerensky and Co. did; they, too, are overdoing things and *helping* us just as Kerensky did. When the French bourgeoisie makes Bolshevism the central issue in the elections, and accuses the comparatively moderate or vacillating socialists of being Bolsheviks; when the American bourgeoisie, which has completely lost its head, seizes thousands and thousands of people on suspicion of Bolshevism, creates an atmosphere of panic, and broadcasts stories of Bolshevik plots; when, despite all its wisdom and experience, the British bourgeoisie—the most "solid" in the world—makes incredible blunders, founds richly endowed "anti-Bolshevik societies", creates a special literature on Bolshevism, and recruits an extra number of scientists, agitators and clergymen to combat it, we must salute and thank the capitalists. They are working for us. They are helping us to get the masses interested in the essence and significance of Bolshevism, and they cannot do otherwise, for they have *already* failed to ignore Bolshevism and stifle it.

But at the same time, the bourgeoisie sees practically only one aspect of Bolshevism—insurrection, violence, and terror; it therefore strives to prepare itself for resistance and opposition primarily in

this field. It is possible that, in certain instances, in certain countries, and for certain brief periods, it will succeed in this. We must reckon with such an eventuality, and we have absolutely nothing to fear if it does succeed. Communism is emerging in positively every sphere of public life; its beginnings are to be seen literally on all sides. The "contagion" (to use the favourite metaphor of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois police, the one mostly to their liking) has very thoroughly penetrated the organism and has completely permeated it. If special efforts are made to block one of the channels, the "contagion" will find another one, sometimes very unexpectedly. Life will assert itself. Let the bourgeoisie rave, work itself into a frenzy, go to extremes, commit follies, take vengeance on the Bolsheviks in advance, and endeavour to kill off (as in India,⁵⁵ Hungary, Germany, etc.) more hundreds, thousands, and hundreds of thousands of yesterday's and tomorrow's Bolsheviks. In acting thus, the bourgeoisie is acting as all historically doomed classes have done. Communists should know that, in any case, the future belongs to them...

April-May 1920

Coll. Works, Vol. 31, pp. 100-101.

From: "SPEECH DELIVERED AT A
CONFERENCE OF CHAIRMEN OF UYEZD,
VOLOST AND VILLAGE EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEES OF MOSCOW GUBERNIA"⁵⁶
OCTOBER 15, 1920

...When our enemies say to us: even if you were to win in Russia, your cause will nevertheless perish because the other capitalist states will crush

you, we now have an answer—the highly important experience of the war with Poland,⁵⁷ which shows how things have actually turned out. Indeed, why did it happen that, within six months and even less, if we take April as the beginning of the offensive, France, Poland and Wrangel,⁵⁸ who were stronger than we are, were full of hatred of Bolshevism, and were determined to overthrow Soviet power, have been defeated, and the war has ended in our favour?⁵⁹ How could it have happened that Soviet Russia, exhausted by the imperialist and civil wars, surrounded by enemies, and cut off from every source of supplies and equipment—this Soviet Russia has proved the victor? We must reflect on this because, if we go deeper into this question, we begin to understand the mechanism, not only of the Russian but of the world revolution as well. We see confirmation of the fact that the Russian revolution is but a single link in the chain of the world revolution, and that our cause is strong and invincible because the cause of revolution is developing throughout the world; economic conditions are evolving in a way that is making our enemies weaker and us stronger with every day. The Polish war has again proved that this is neither exaggeration, boasting nor overenthusiasm...

Coll. Works, Vol. 31, pp. 321-322.

From: "FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
OCTOBER REVOLUTION"

The fourth anniversary of October 25 (November 7) is approaching.

The farther that great day recedes from us, the more clearly we see the significance of the prole-

tarian revolution in Russia, and the more deeply we reflect upon the practical experience of our work as a whole.

Very briefly and, of course, in very incomplete and rough outline, this significance and experience may be summed up as follows.

The direct and immediate object of the revolution in Russia was a bourgeois-democratic one, namely, to destroy the survivals of medievalism and sweep them away completely, to purge Russia of this barbarism, of this shame, and to remove this immense obstacle to all culture and progress in our country.

And we can justifiably pride ourselves on having carried out that purge with greater determination and much more rapidly, boldly and successfully, and, from the point of view of its effect on the masses, much more widely and deeply, than the great French Revolution over one hundred and twenty-five years ago.

Both the anarchists and the petty-bourgeois democrats (i.e., the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, who are the Russian counterparts of that international social type) have talked and are still talking an incredible lot of nonsense about the relation between the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the socialist (*that is*, proletarian) revolution. The last four years have proved to the hilt that our interpretation of Marxism on this point, and our estimate of the experience of former revolutions were correct. We have *consummated* the bourgeois-democratic revolution as nobody had done before. We are *advancing* towards the socialist revolution consciously, firmly and unswervingly, knowing that it is not separated from the bourgeois-democratic revolution by a Chinese Wall, and knowing too that (in the last analysis) *struggle alone* will determine

how far we shall advance, what part of this immense and lofty task we shall accomplish, and to what extent we shall succeed in consolidating our victories. Time will show. But we see even now that a tremendous amount—tremendous for this ruined, exhausted and backward country—has already been done towards the socialist transformation of society.

Let us, however, finish what we have to say about the bourgeois-democratic content of our revolution. Marxists must understand what that means. To explain, let us take a few striking examples.

The bourgeois-democratic content of the revolution means that the social relations (system, institutions) of the country are purged of medievalism, serfdom, feudalism.

What were the chief manifestations, survivals, remnants of serfdom in Russia up to 1917? The monarchy, the system of social estates, landed proprietorship and land tenure, the status of women, religion, and national oppression. Take any one of these Augean stables, which, incidentally, were left largely uncleansed by all the more advanced states when they accomplished *their* bourgeois-democratic revolutions one hundred and twenty-five, two hundred and fifty and more years ago (1649 in England); take any of these Augean stables, and you will see that we have cleansed them thoroughly. In a matter of *ten weeks*, from October 25 (November 7), 1917 to January 5, 1918, when the Constituent Assembly was dissolved, we accomplished a thousand times more in this respect than was accomplished by the bourgeois democrats and liberals (the Cadets) and by the petty-bourgeois democrats (the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries) *during the eight months* they were in power.

ings,⁶⁰ Martovs,⁶¹ Chernovs,⁶² Hillquits,⁶³ Longuets,⁶⁴ MacDonalds,⁶⁵ Turatis⁶⁶ and other heroes of "Two-and-a-Half"⁶⁷ Marxism were incapable of understanding *this* relation between the bourgeois-democratic and the proletarian-socialist revolutions. The first develops into the second. The second, in passing, solves the problems of the first. The second consolidates the work of the first. Struggle, and struggle alone, decides how far the second succeeds in outgrowing the first.

The Soviet system is one of the most vivid proofs, or manifestations, of how the one revolution develops into the other. The Soviet system provides the maximum of democracy for the workers and peasants; at the same time, it marks a break with *bourgeois* democracy and the rise of a *new*, epoch-making *type* of democracy, namely, proletarian democracy, or the dictatorship of the proletariat. . .

. . . We do not forget for a moment that we have committed and are committing numerous mistakes and are suffering numerous reverses. How can reverses and mistakes be avoided in a matter so new in the history of the world as the building of an unprecedented *type* of state edifice! We shall work steadfastly to set our reverses and mistakes right and to improve our practical application of Soviet principles, which is still very, very far from being perfect. But we have a right to be and are proud that to us has fallen the good fortune to *begin* the building of a Soviet state, and thereby to *usher in* a new era in world history, the era of the rule of a *new* class, a class which is oppressed in every capitalist country, but which everywhere is marching forward towards a new life, towards victory over the bourgeoisie, towards the dictatorship of the pro-

letariat, towards the emancipation of mankind from the yoke of capital and from imperialist wars.

The question of imperialist wars, of the international policy of finance capital which now dominates the whole world, a policy that must *inevitably* engender new imperialist wars, that must inevitably cause an extreme intensification of national oppression, pillage, brigandry and the strangulation of weak, backward and small nationalities by a handful of "advanced" powers—that question has been the keystone of all policy in all the countries of the globe since 1914. It is a question of life and death for millions upon millions of people. It is a question of whether 20,000,000 people (as compared with the 10,000,000 who were killed in the war of 1914-18 and in the supplementary "minor" wars that are still going on) are to be slaughtered in the next imperialist war, which the bourgeoisie are preparing, and which is growing out of capitalism before our very eyes. It is a question of whether in that future war, which is inevitable (if capitalism continues to exist), 60,000,000 people are to be maimed (compared with the 30,000,000 maimed in 1914-18). In this question, too, our October Revolution marked the beginning of a new era in world history. The lackeys of the bourgeoisie and its yes-men—the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks, and the petty-bourgeois, allegedly "socialist", democrats all over the world—derided our slogan "convert the imperialist war into a civil war". But that slogan proved to be the *truth*—it was the only truth, unpleasant, blunt, naked and brutal, but nevertheless the *truth*, as against the host of most refined jingoist and pacifist lies. Those lies are being dispelled. The Brest peace has been exposed. And with every passing day the significance and consequences of a peace that is even worse than

the Brest peace—the peace of Versailles⁶⁸—are being more relentlessly exposed. And the millions who are thinking about the causes of the recent war and of the approaching future war are more and more clearly realising the grim and inexorable truth that it is impossible to escape imperialist war, and imperialist peace (if the old orthography were still in use, I would have written the word *mir* in two ways, to give it both its meanings) which inevitably engenders imperialist war, that it is impossible to escape that inferno, *except by a Bolshevik struggle and a Bolshevik revolution.*

Let the bourgeoisie and the pacifists, the generals and the petty bourgeoisie, the capitalists, and the philistines, the pious Christians and the knights of the Second and the Two-and-a-Half Internationals vent their fury against that revolution. No torrents of abuse, calumnies and lies can enable them to conceal the historic fact that for the first time in hundreds and thousands of years the slaves have replied to a war between slave-owners by openly proclaiming the slogan: "Convert this war between slave-owners for the division of their loot into a war of the slaves of all nations against the slave-owners of all nations."

For the first time in hundreds and thousands of years that slogan has grown from a vague and helpless waiting into a clear and definite political programme, into an effective struggle waged by millions of oppressed people under the leadership of the proletariat; it has grown into the first victory of the proletariat, the first victory in the struggle to abolish war and to unite the workers of all countries against the united bourgeoisie of different nations, against the bourgeoisie that makes peace and war at the expense of the slaves of capital, the wage-workers, the peasants, the working people.

This first victory is *not yet the final victory*, and it was achieved by our October Revolution at the price of incredible difficulties and hardships, at the price of unprecedented suffering, accompanied by a series of serious reverses and mistakes on our part. How could a single backward people be expected to frustrate the imperialist wars of the most powerful and most developed countries of the world without sustaining reverses and without committing mistakes! We are not afraid to admit our mistakes and shall examine them dispassionately in order to learn how to correct them. But the fact remains that for the first time in hundreds and thousands of years the promise "to reply" to war between the slave-owners by a revolution of the slaves directed *against all the slave-owners has been completely fulfilled*—and is being fulfilled despite all difficulties.

We have made the start. When, at what date and time, and the proletarians of which nation will complete this process is not important. The important thing is that the ice has been broken; the road is open, the way has been shown.

Gentlemen, capitalists of all countries, keep up your hypocritical pretence of "defending the fatherland"—the Japanese fatherland against the American, the American against the Japanese, the French against the British, and so forth! Gentlemen, knights of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals, pacifist petty bourgeoisie and philistines of the entire world, go on "evading" the question of how to combat imperialist wars by issuing new "Basle Manifestos" (on the model of the Basle Manifesto of 1912).⁶⁹ *The first Bolshevik revolution has wrested the first hundred million people of this earth from the clutches of imperialist war and the imperialist world. Subsequent revolutions will de-*

liver the rest of mankind from such wars and from such a world.

Our last, but most important and most difficult task, the one we have done least about, is economic development, the laying of economic foundations for the new, socialist edifice on the site of the demolished feudal edifice and the semi-demolished capitalist edifice. It is in this most important and most difficult task that we have sustained the greatest number of reverses and have made most mistakes. How could anyone expect that a task so new to the world could be begun without reverses and without mistakes! But we have begun it. We shall continue it. At this very moment we are, by our New Economic Policy,⁷⁰ correcting a number of our mistakes. We are learning how to continue erecting the socialist edifice in a small-peasant country without committing such mistakes.

The difficulties are immense. But we are accustomed to grappling with immense difficulties. Not for nothing do our enemies call us "stone-hard" and exponents of a "firm-line policy". But we have also learned, at least to some extent, another art that is essential in revolution, namely, flexibility, the ability to effect swift and sudden changes of tactics if changes in objective conditions demand them, and to choose another path for the achievement of our goal if the former path proves to be inexpedient or impossible at the given moment.

Borne along on the crest of the wave of enthusiasm, rousing first the political enthusiasm and then the military enthusiasm of the people, we expected to accomplish economic tasks just as great as the political and military tasks we had accomplished by relying directly on this enthusiasm. We expected—or perhaps it would be truer to say that we presumed without having given it adequate con-

sideration—to be able to organise the state production and the state distribution of products on communist lines in a small-peasant country directly as ordered by the proletarian state. Experience has proved that we were wrong. It appears that a number of transitional stages were necessary—state capitalism and socialism—in order to *prepare*—to prepare by many years of effort—for the transition to communism. Not directly relying on enthusiasm, but aided by the enthusiasm engendered by the great revolution, and on the basis of personal interest, personal incentive and business principles, we must first set to work in this small-peasant country to build solid gangways to socialism by way of state capitalism. Otherwise we shall never get to communism, we shall never bring scores of millions of people to communism. That is what experience, the objective course of the development of the revolution, has taught us.

And we, who during these three or four years have learned a little to make abrupt changes of front (when abrupt changes of front are needed), have begun zealously, attentively and sedulously (although still not zealously, attentively and sedulously enough) to learn to make a new change of front, namely, the New Economic Policy. The proletarian state must become a cautious, assiduous and shrewd "businessman", a punctilious *wholesale merchant*—otherwise it will never succeed in putting this small-peasant country economically on its feet. Under existing conditions, living as we are side by side with the capitalist (for the time being capitalist) West, there is no other way of progressing to communism. A wholesale merchant seems to be an economic type as remote from communism as heaven from earth. But that is one of the contradictions which, in actual life, lead from a small-peasant

economy via state capitalism to socialism. Personal incentive will step up production; we must increase production first and foremost and at all costs. Wholesale trade economically unites millions of small peasants: it gives them a personal incentive, links them up and leads them to the next step, namely, to various forms of association and alliance in the process of production itself. We have already started the necessary changes in our economic policy and already have some successes to our credit; true, they are small and partial, but nonetheless they are successes. In this new field of "tuition" we are already finishing our preparatory class. By persistent and assiduous study, by making practical experience the test of every step we take, by not fearing to alter over and over again what we have already begun, by correcting our mistakes and most carefully analysing their significance, we shall pass to the higher classes. We shall go through the whole "course", although the present state of world economics and world politics has made that course much longer and much more difficult than we would have liked. No matter at what cost, no matter how severe the hardships of the transition period may be—despite disaster, famine and ruin—we shall not flinch; we shall triumphantly carry our cause to its goal.

October 14, 1921

Coll. Works, Vol. 33, pp. 51-59.

From: "SPEECH AT A PLENARY SESSION OF
THE MOSCOW SOVIET"
NOVEMBER 20, 1922

...Socialism is no longer a matter of the distant future, or an abstract picture, or an icon. Our opi-

nion of icons is the same—a very bad one. We have brought socialism into everyday life and must here see how matters stand. That is the task of our day, the task of our epoch... difficult as this task may be, new as it may be compared with our previous task, and numerous as the difficulties may be that it entails, we shall all—not in a day, but in a few years—all of us together fulfil it whatever the cost, so that NEP Russia will become socialist Russia...

Coll. Works, Vol. 33, p. 443.

From: "LETTER TO THE CONGRESS"⁷¹

...The enlistment of many workers to the Central Committee will help the workers to improve our administrative machinery, which is pretty bad. We inherited it, in effect, from the old regime, for it was absolutely impossible to reorganise it in such a short time, especially in conditions of war, famine, etc. That is why those "critics" who point to the defects of our administrative machinery out of mockery or malice may be calmly answered that they do not in the least understand the conditions of the revolution today. It is altogether impossible in five years to reorganise the machinery adequately, especially in the conditions in which our revolution took place. It is enough that in five years we have created a new type of state in which the workers are leading the peasants against the bourgeoisie; and in a hostile international environment this in itself is a gigantic achievement. But knowledge of this must on no account blind us to the fact that, in effect, we took over the old machinery of state from the tsar and the bourgeoisie and that now, with the onset of peace and the satisfaction of the minimum requirements against famine, all our work

must be directed towards improving the administrative machinery. . .

December 1922

Coll. Works, Vol. 36, pp. 596-597.

From: "ON CO-OPERATION" 72

It seems to me that not enough attention is being paid to the co-operative movement in our country. Not everyone understands that now, since the time of the October Revolution and quite apart from NEP (on the contrary, in this connection we must say—because of NEP), our co-operative movement has become one of great significance. There is a lot of fantasy in the dreams of the old co-operators. Often they are ridiculously fantastic. But why are they fantastic? Because people do not understand the fundamental, the rock-bottom significance of the working-class political struggle for the overthrow of the rule of the exploiters. We have overthrown the rule of the exploiters, and much that was fantastic, even romantic, even banal in the dreams of the old co-operators is now becoming unvarnished reality.

Indeed, since political power is in the hands of the working class, since this political power owns all the means of production, the only task, indeed, that remains for us is to organise the population in co-operative societies. With most of the population organised in co-operatives, the socialism which in the past was legitimately treated with ridicule, scorn and contempt by those who were rightly convinced that it was necessary to wage the class struggle, the struggle for political power, etc., will achieve its aim automatically. But not all comrades realise how vastly, how infinitely important it is now to organise the population of Russia in co-operative so-

cieties. By adopting NEP we made a concession to the peasant as a trader, to the principle of private trade; it is precisely for this reason (contrary to what some people think) that the co-operative movement is of such immense importance. All we actually need under NEP is to organise the population of Russia in co-operative societies on a sufficiently large scale, for we have now found that degree of combination of private interest, of private commercial interest, with state supervision and control of this interest, that degree of its subordination to the common interests which was formerly the stumbling-block for very many socialists. Indeed, the power of the state over all large-scale means of production, political power in the hands of the proletariat, the alliance of this proletariat with the many millions of small and very small peasants, the assured proletarian leadership of the peasantry, etc.—is this not all that is necessary to build a complete socialist society out of co-operatives, out of co-operatives alone, which we formerly ridiculed as huckstering and which from a certain aspect we have the right to treat as such now, under NEP? Is this not all that is necessary to build a complete socialist society? It is still not the building of socialist society, but it is all that is necessary and sufficient for it. . .

January 1923

Coll. Works, Vol. 33, pp. 467-468.

From: "OUR REVOLUTION"

I

I have lately been glancing through Sukhanov's notes on the revolution. What strikes one most is

the pedantry of all our petty-bourgeois democrats and of all the heroes of the Second International. Apart from the fact that they are all extremely faint-hearted, that when it comes to the minutest deviation from the German model even the best of them fortify themselves with reservations—apart from this characteristic, which is common to all petty-bourgeois democrats and has been abundantly manifested by them throughout the revolution, what strikes one is their slavish imitation of the past.

They all call themselves Marxists, but their conception of Marxism is impossibly pedantic. They have completely failed to understand what is decisive in Marxism, namely, its revolutionary dialectics. They have even absolutely failed to understand Marx's plain statements that in times of revolution the utmost flexibility is demanded, and have even failed to notice, for instance, the statements Marx made in his letters—I think it was in 1856—expressing the hope of combining a peasant war in Germany, which might create a revolutionary situation, with the working-class movement—they avoid even this plain statement and walk round and about it like a cat around a bowl of hot porridge.

Their conduct betrays them as cowardly reformists who are afraid to deviate from the bourgeoisie, let alone break with it, and at the same time they disguise their cowardice with the wildest rhetoric and braggartry. But what strikes one in all of them even from the purely theoretical point of view is their utter inability to grasp the following Marxist considerations: up to now they have seen capitalism and bourgeois democracy in Western Europe follow a definite path of development, and cannot conceive that this path can be taken as a model only *mutatis mutandis*, only with certain

amendments (quite insignificant from the standpoint of the general development of world history)...

"The development of the productive forces of Russia has not attained the level that makes socialism possible." All the heroes of the Second International, including, of course, Sukhanov, beat the drums about this proposition. They keep harping on this incontrovertible proposition in a thousand different keys, and think that it is the decisive criterion of our revolution.

But what if the situation, which drew Russia into the imperialist world war that involved every more or less influential West-European country and made her a witness of the eve of the revolutions maturing or partly already begun in the East, gave rise to circumstances that put Russia and her development in a position which enabled us to achieve precisely that combination of a "peasant war" with the working-class movement suggested in 1856 by no less a Marxist than Marx himself as a possible prospect for Prussia?

What if the complete hopelessness of the situation, by stimulating the efforts of the workers and peasants tenfold, offered us the opportunity to create the fundamental requisites of civilisation in a different way from that of the West-European countries? Has that altered the general line of development of world history? Has that altered the basic relations between the basic classes of all the countries that are being, or have been, drawn into the general course of world history?

If a definite level of culture is required for the building of socialism (although nobody can say just what that definite "level of culture" is, for it differs in every West-European country), why cannot we begin by first achieving the prerequisites

for that definite level of culture in a revolutionary way, and *then*, with the aid of the workers' and peasants' government and the Soviet system, proceed to overtake the other nations?

January 16, 1923

II

You say that civilisation is necessary for the building of socialism. Very good. But why could we not first create such prerequisites of civilisation in our country as the expulsion of the landowners and the Russian capitalists, and then start moving towards socialism? Where, in what books, have you read that such variations of the customary historical sequence of events are impermissible or impossible?

Napoleon, I think, wrote: "*On s'engage et puis...on voit.*" Rendered freely this means: "First engage in a serious battle and then see what happens." Well, we did first engage in a serious battle in October 1917, and then saw such details of development (from the standpoint of world history they were certainly details) as the Brest peace, the New Economic Policy, and so forth. And now there can be no doubt that in the main we have been victorious...

January 17, 1923

Coll. Works, Vol. 33, pp. 476-480.

NOTES

¹ The book *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats* subjects the theoretical views, political programme and tactics of the *Liberal Narodniks* to a searching criticism. Narodism is a doctrine and a political movement of Russian democratic intellectuals in the period from the 1860's to the 1890's. From the outset two trends took shape within Narodism, one revolutionary and the other liberal. In the sixties and the seventies the revolutionary Narodniks sought in various ways to carry out a peasant revolution. In the eighties and the nineties Narodism underwent a serious ideological and organisational crisis. In this period the liberal Narodniks, whose role had been insignificant earlier, came to the fore. They tried to substitute petty-bourgeois reforms for the revolutionary movement. At a time when capitalism had been established in Russia and the proletariat's movement was on the upsurge, the liberal Narodniks clung to the old propositions of Narodism, which had been historically valid in the sixties and the seventies. They continued to hold that for Russia capitalism spelled decline and regression, and denied the leading role of the working class in the revolution.

In his book Lenin for the first time set before the Russian Social-Democrats the task of creating a Marxist working-class party and advanced the idea of a revolutionary alliance of the working class and the peasantry.

² In preparing for the Second RSDLP Congress the Russian Social-Democrats were faced with the urgent question of drafting a Party programme. In July 1901, Lenin wrote: "The publication of a draft programme is *extremely* necessary, and would be of tremendous importance" (*Coll. Works*, Vol. 36, pp. 87-88). At Lenin's suggestion, the task of drawing up the first draft of the theoretical section of

the Party Programme was given to G. V. Plekhanov. This draft was discussed in January 1902. Seeing that the draft was unacceptable, Lenin set to writing a draft of his own. A special committee was set up to discuss the two drafts and approve the final text. On April 14 (New Style), 1902, a draft Programme was approved with account taken of Lenin's remarks, amendments and additions. The Party Programme was adopted at the Second RSDLP Congress held in July-August 1903.

Plekhanov, G. V. (1856-1918)—an outstanding figure in the Russian and international working-class movement, and the first exponent of Marxism in Russia.

³ In the book *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* Lenin discussed the specific features and motive forces of the 1905 revolution in Russia, the first bourgeois-democratic revolution in the epoch of imperialism, and outlined the strategic plan and tactical line of the Bolshevik Party in the revolution. A bitter struggle developed at the Second RSDLP Congress over organisational principles of the Party, between the revolutionary Marxists, supporters of Lenin, and the opportunists. During the election to the leading bodies of the Party the majority of the votes were won by Lenin's supporters; from then on they came to be known as the *Bolsheviks* (from "bol'shinstvo" meaning majority), while their opponents were called the *Mensheviks* (from "menshinstvo" meaning minority, see also Note 41). Later Lenin wrote that "as a current of political thought and as a political party, Bolshevism has existed since 1903" (*Coll. Works*, Vol. 31, p. 24).

In his book *Two Tactics* Lenin, on the basis of Marx and Engels's writings, elaborated a theory of the proletarian revolution. He advanced the idea of the development of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution, and made a thorough analysis of the hegemony of the proletariat in the bourgeois-democratic revolution, of the role of the proletariat's allies in the revolution, and of the role of the Marxist party as the leading force in the revolutionary workers' movement.

⁴ *The revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry* is a transitional type of state power which is established as a result of a democratic revolution and in which the working class exercises leadership. The idea of such a dictatorship was advanced by Lenin who thoroughly studied the peculiarities of develop-

ment of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the epoch of imperialism. In Russia such a dictatorship was needed to completely eliminate the monarchical system, which was an obstacle to the country's socio-political development, eradicate the vestiges of feudalism, and prevent the counter-revolutionary forces—the landlords and the monarchist bourgeoisie—from restoring the old order.

⁵ In the article *On the Slogan for a United States of Europe* Lenin formulated for the first time the highly important thesis that socialism could win first in a few or even in one single capitalist country, and described the operation of the law of uneven economic and political development of capitalism during its imperialist stage, as a result of which conditions for a socialist revolution could not ripen simultaneously in many countries. The slogan for a "United States of Europe" was actively propounded during the First World War (1914-18) by bourgeois politicians, who maintained that rivalry and military conflicts between imperialist powers were not inevitable. Lenin showed that between imperialist powers only temporary agreements were possible the aim of which was to protect the booty, carve up the colonies, and fight jointly against the forces of democracy and socialism. Lenin's analysis of this idea has been amply confirmed by history.

⁶ Lenin wrote his book *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* between January and June 1916.

In it Lenin reviewed the development of world capitalism over a period of 50 years following the publication of Marx's *Capital*. On the basis of the laws governing the rise, development and decline of capitalism, discovered by Marx and Engels, Lenin gave a scientific analysis of the economic and political essence of imperialism as the highest and the last stage of capitalism, showing that under imperialism all the contradictions of capitalist society inevitably become aggravated. Lenin showed the historical, objective inevitability and necessity of capitalism being superseded by a new and progressive social system—socialism. The book was published in German in 1921 and parts of it in French and English in 1923.

⁷ The article *A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism* is one of many articles by Lenin on the nationalities question. It was written in connection with an international discussion, which took place in 1915-16, on the question of self-determination of nations. At that time

many of the Left Socialists, who were opposed to the idea that nations had a right to self-determination, denied the need to struggle for democracy in the epoch of imperialism alleging that the struggle for democracy distracted the workers from the struggle for economic rights. Lenin rejected such theories describing them as "imperialist economism" and "a caricature of Marxism". The proletariat cannot carry out a socialist revolution unless it has prepared itself for it by waging a struggle for democracy. Therefore, Lenin wrote, "whoever expects a 'pure' social revolution will never live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is" (*Coll. Works*, Vol. 22, p. 356).

⁵ In his article *The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution* Lenin once again returned to the question of whether it is possible for socialism to win first in one country or in several countries.

Lenin's doctrine that socialism can be victorious first in one country or in several countries was a great discovery. It means that at some point the world would be split into two systems. And indeed this has come to pass and it is what has determined and continues to determine the essence of the modern epoch, the motive forces and prospects of the world revolutionary process, the tasks and methods of socialist construction in those countries where a proletarian revolution has been victorious, the foreign policy of socialist states, and the entire strategy of the international workers' and communist movement.

⁶ Kautsky, Karl (1854-1938)—one of the leaders of German Social-Democracy and the Second International. Kautsky joined the Socialist movement in 1874. In 1881, he met Marx and Engels and under their influence he became a supporter of Marxism. But from the very beginning he had been inconsistent and for this he was sharply criticised by Marx and Engels. He was the ideologist of *centrism* (Kautskyism) which sought to reconcile Marxism with reformism.

⁷ The article *The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution* contains the famous *April Theses* which provided answers to the most burning questions of the day such as ways in which Russia could withdraw from the imperialist war, a new form of state power, implementation of urgently needed economic measures as the first steps towards socialism, the combating of hunger and economic dislocation, and the tactics of the Party in working

for a socialist revolution. In the realm of inner-Party life the tasks formulated by Lenin were a revision of the Party Programme, convocation of a Party congress, and change of the Party's name to *Communist Party*.

¹¹ The reference is to the *February Revolution of 1917*, the second bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia. In the course of eight days tsarism was overthrown, and thus one of the world's most powerful monarchies ceased to exist. As Lenin wrote, "the filthy and blood-stained cart of the Romanov monarchy" was toppled at one stroke (*Coll. Works*, Vol. 23, p. 299).

There came into being a *dual power* in the country—the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry as represented by the Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies, and the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie as represented by the Provisional Government. No one could have foreseen such a situation with respect to the central question of a revolution, the question of in whose hands lies the power of government. The outcome of the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie depended to a very great extent on the attitude of the heterogeneous mass of the petty bourgeoisie (in particular the peasants), which constituted the bulk of the country's population. For a while the feeling of elation caused by the quick victory of the revolution and promises of democratic government made by the Provisional Government and the petty-bourgeois Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary parties (see Note 30), which at first had the majority in the Soviets, prevented the broad masses of the people that had been awakened by the revolution from seeing the wide discrepancy between the slogans of the revolution and the anti-popular policy of the Provisional Government, which had been joined by representatives of the big bourgeoisie and the landowners.

But nevertheless the February Revolution, which was accomplished by the workers and peasants, signified a giant step forward in the country's political development. It was an outstanding event in the life of the peoples of Russia and in the international working-class movement that bore out the correctness of the strategy and tactical slogans of the Bolshevik Party. As Lenin said, after the victory in February the development of the revolution greatly accelerated. Lenin then charted a concrete plan of working toward a socialist revolution. This plan was mapped out and substantiated in the *April Theses*, *Letters on Tactics*,

geoisie and the petty-bourgeois parties to undermine the faith of the mass of the people in the Bolshevik Party. For instance, they contended in the press that the Bolsheviks would never bring themselves to take power into their hands, or, having taken it, would not be able to retain it. Refuting the assertions of the enemies of the revolution, Lenin pointed out that in Russia all economic and political prerequisites for the victory of a socialist revolution existed and since this was so there was no force that could prevent the Bolsheviks from taking and retaining power. Lenin showed that the Bolshevik Party expressed the interests of the proletariat and the broad masses of the people and that with their support it could provide leadership for the proletarian state and organise the building of a new, socialist society.

"Sovietologists" insist to this day that the economic and political prerequisites for the success of the October Revolution did not exist, Russia being a backward country. It is true that the overcoming of Russia's backwardness required tremendous efforts on the part of the people who had accomplished the revolution. But in October 1917 the country's backwardness acted as a catalyst in finding a way of ending the political crisis. As Lenin said, "Our backwardness has put us in the forefront..." (*Coll. Works*, Vol. 27, p. 232). However, Lenin did not put the main emphasis on Russia's backwardness. He included Russia among countries with a medium level of capitalist development pointing to its contrasts.

"The most backward system of landownership and the most ignorant peasantry on the one hand, and the most advanced industrial and finance capitalism on the other!", as he put it (*Coll. Works*, Vol. 13, p. 442), Russia was among the countries with the highest degree of concentration of workers at large enterprises. Thus, 54 per cent of all industrial workers were employed at enterprises with more than 500 workers; the corresponding figure for the United States was 33 per cent.

At the same time, the October Revolution showed that an essential condition for a social revolution is not only a definite level of economic development, but also the intensity of social contradictions.

Equally untenable is the thesis of the "Sovietologists" according to which Lenin's approach to the accomplishment of a revolution was, unlike Marx's, utterly voluntaristic.

Like Marx and Engels, Lenin assigned the decisive role

in the revolutionary movement to the conscious activity of the masses, to the creative will of the working class and its vanguard, the Party. But Lenin never counterposed this consciousness and will to the objectively operating laws of revolutionary struggle. Practice, and practice alone, was for him the criterion of truth. Several months after the October Revolution, in the summer of 1918, Lenin, addressing a trade-union conference in Moscow, said: "You remember, particularly those of you who experienced both Russian revolutions, that no one in November 1904 could guarantee that within two months a hundred thousand St. Petersburg workers would march to the Winter Palace and start a great revolution."

"Recall December 1916. How could we guarantee that two months later the tsarist monarchy would be overthrown in the course of a few days? We in this country, which has experienced two revolutions, know and realise that the progress of the revolution cannot be foretold, and that revolution cannot be called forth. We can only work for the revolution" (*Coll. Works*, Vol. 27, pp. 480-81).

¹⁶ The Soviets came into being in the course of the 1905-07 revolution and were born by the revolutionary creative spirit of the people. The Soviets, which served as the guiding centres of the strike movement and which enjoyed the people's unreserved confidence, most fully expressed the vital interests of the people and were able to direct an open armed struggle of the working class and peasantry against tsarism. In the course of the February 1917 Revolution the Soviets, set up at the initiative of the working people as mass political elective organisations, were bodies of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.

¹⁷ Kulak—a wealthy peasant exploiting hired labourers.

¹⁸ The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)—at the time of its foundation (1898) it was called the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP). After the party's split at the Second Congress (1903) into the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks it was called the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks)—RSDLP(B). The Seventh Party Congress (1918) decided to name the party the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)—RCP(B). In December 1922 the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was formed, therefore after the Fourteenth Party Congress (1925) it came to be called the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)—AUCP(B); after the Nineteenth

Party Congress (1952) the Party is called the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

¹⁹ A counter-revolutionary revolt led by the tsarist general L. G. Kornilov, then Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Army, began on September 7 (New Style), 1917. Kornilov moved a cavalry corps against Petrograd, the capital. In Petrograd itself, the counter-revolutionary organisations were preparing for action. The conspirators aimed at capturing the capital, snatching the Bolshevik Party organisations, disbanding the Soviets, establishing a military dictatorship in the country, and getting ready for the restoration of the monarchy. The Provisional Government, which continued to spread constitutional illusions among the people, in fact paved the way for a military dictatorship and was a direct accomplice in hatching a counter-revolutionary coup.

The Bolshevik Party led the people's struggle against Kornilov while continuing, following Lenin's insistent recommendations, to expose the Provisional Government's policy. The workers of Petrograd promptly formed Red Guard units. Revolutionary committees were set up in several localities. On September 12 (New Style) the advance of the Kornilov troops was checked, and on September 13 the rout of the Kornilov revolt was officially announced. Under the pressure from the masses of people the Provisional Government had to order the arrest and trial of Kornilov and his accomplices. In the course of the fight against the Kornilov revolt a process of Bolshevisation of the Soviets began.

²⁰ The calamities brought on by the imperialist war cured the working class of the European countries of the chauvinistic intoxication and the "civic peace" illusions. Class battles ensued in Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, Italy and other countries. Strikes spread to many industries, assuming a mass character. The struggle was ever more actively joined in by the workers of the United States, Latin America and countries of the East. A great impetus was given to workers' actions by the February Revolution. Workers openly proclaimed solidarity with the revolution in Russia. The tide of revolution was particularly high in Germany. Of signal importance was the mutiny in the German navy, which showed clearly that a revolutionary crisis was coming to a head in the country.

For all their scope, however, most of these actions were spontaneous, which was due in the first place to the absence of well-organised and militant Marxist parties.

²¹ Acting in keeping with the decisions of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party on an armed insurrection, the Party organisations set about preparing the masses for decisive battles for the victory of the socialist revolution.

In the evening of October 24 (November 6), 1917, Lenin wrote a *Letter to Central Committee Members* calling for immediate and resolute action to overthrow the Provisional Government and take power. Later in the same evening he arrived secretly in the Smolny Institute, the headquarters of the insurrection that had got under way, leaving this note for his hostess at the secret address where he had been staying: "I am going where you did not want me to go. Good-bye. Ilych" (*Coll. Works*, Vol. 43, p. 638).

²² The Revolutionary Military Committee of the Petrograd Soviet was set up on October 25 (New Style), 1917, on instructions from the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party. Its members were drawn from the Party Central Committee, the St. Petersburg Party Committee, the capital's Soviet of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies, factory trade-union committees, and military organisations. It operated under the leadership of the Central Committee of the Party and was closely bound up with the Bolshevik military organisation in forming Red Guard detachments and arming the workers. The main task of the Revolutionary Military Committee was to prepare an armed uprising in accordance with the directives of the Bolshevik Party Central Committee. Its leading organisation, the Revolutionary Military Centre, was formed by the Central Committee at its meeting on October 29, 1917, and received daily instructions from Lenin. After the victory of the October Socialist Revolution and the formation of the Soviet Government at the Second Congress of Soviets, the main task of the Revolutionary Military Committee was to fight the counter-revolution and safeguard the revolutionary order. The Revolutionary Military Committee was dissolved on December 18, 1917.

²³ By October 24 (November 6), 1917, all the forces of the revolution had swung into action in the country. Lenin, and all Bolsheviks considered that at the moment the question of who would hold power was to be decided, not by a vote at the All-Russia Congress of Soviets, but in the course of an insurrection, with the subsequent transfer of government to the Congress.

Kerensky A. F. (1881-1970)—a Russian politician, head of the bourgeois Provisional Government. On the day of

the armed uprising in Petrograd (November 7) he left the capital for front and led a revolt against the Soviet power which was crushed by the revolutionary troops on November 13, 1917. In 1918 he emigrated to France; from 1940 he lived in the USA.

²⁴ *The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies* opened at 10:40 p.m., on November 7 (New Style), 1917, at Smolny Institute. Between three and four in the morning on November 8 the news of the capture of the Winter Palace, the residence of the Provisional Government, reached the Smolny Institute. The Congress adopted the appeal "To Workers, Soldiers and Peasants!" announcing the transfer of power in the country to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. The second meeting opened at 9:00 p.m., on November 8. Lenin made reports on peace and land. The Congress adopted the historic decrees on these two issues, and formed a workers' and peasants' government, the Council of People's Commissars, headed by Lenin.

²⁵ *The Chartist movement*. Chartism was the mass revolutionary movement of British workers in the thirties and forties of the 19th century which was sparked off by their grievous economic condition and the denial of political rights to them. The Chartists had a considerable impact both on the political history of Britain and on the development of the international working-class movement.

Mentioning the revolutions accomplished by the French proletariat, Lenin evidently had in mind the *Great French Revolution of 1789-94*, the *French Revolution of 1848*, and the *Paris Commune of 1871*.

The Great French Revolution had a vast historical significance. A popular bourgeois-democratic revolution in character, it put an end to the feudal-absolutist system more resolutely and thoroughly than any of the early bourgeois revolutions did and thereby furthered the development of the progressive, for that time, capitalist relations. It laid the foundation for the revolutionary-democratic traditions of the French people and had a strong and lasting influence on the subsequent history of not only France, but also of many other countries.

The revolution of 1848 in France was a bourgeois-democratic revolution which overthrew the bourgeois July Monarchy and established the *Second Republic (1848-52)*.

The Paris Commune of 1871—see Note 32.

²⁶ *The Anti-Socialist Law* was introduced in Germany in 1878 by the Bismarck government to fight the working-

class and socialist movement. It outlawed all organisations of the Social-Democratic Party, mass working-class associations and the working-class press, and provided for the confiscation of socialist literature. Social-Democrats were harassed and deported. In 1890, as a result of the massive pressure of the working-class movement, the Anti-Socialist Law was repealed.

Lenin must have had in mind two parties: (1) *The General German Workers' Union (1863-75)*, the first political organisation of German workers whose establishment (at Leipzig) became a step towards the organisational autonomy of the working-class movement and the winning away of German workers from the influence of the liberal bourgeoisie; (2) *The Social-Democratic Workers' Party (Eisenachers)*, founded at Eisenach in 1869, which adhered, on the whole, to the positions of scientific socialism and proletarian internationalism.

By the 1870's the working-class movement in Germany had undergone a further development. In 1875, at a congress in Gotha, the two parties united into a single party of the German working class, the *Socialist Workers' Party of Germany*. In the Reichstag election in 1877 the SWPG polled about half a million votes. The following year the government replied with the adoption of the Anti-Socialist Law, which remained operative for twelve years.

²⁷ *The volost* was a minor administrative-territorial unit in Russia.

²⁸ Several volosts made up an *uyezd*.

²⁹ *The Constituent Assembly*—"a representative institution of the population of Russia", whose convocation was announced by the bourgeois Provisional Government in its declaration of March 15 (New Style), 1917. However the election to the Constituent Assembly and its first meeting were held after the victory of the October Revolution, on January 18 (New Style), 1918. The counter-revolutionary majority in the Constituent Assembly refused to recognise Soviet power and its decrees. On January 19 (New Style), 1918, the bourgeois Constituent Assembly was dissolved, for it obviously failed to express the will of the popular masses of Russia.

³⁰ *Socialist-Revolutionaries (SRs)*—members of a petty-bourgeois party in Russia, which emerged at the end of 1901 and the beginning of 1902 as a result of the merging of various Narodnik groups and circles. The SRs in their doctrine ignored the class distinctions between the proletarian and petty proprietors, glossed over the stratification

of, and contradictions within, the peasantry, and rejected the proletariat's leading role in the revolution. The tactics of individual terrorism advocated by the SRs as the main form of struggle against the autocracy hampered organising the masses for revolutionary action. Following the February 1917 bourgeois-democratic revolution, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, along with the Mensheviks, became the mainstay of the Provisional Government. After the victory of the October 1917 Socialist Revolution they turned to open hostile activity against the Soviet state.

³¹ Here Lenin cites Mephistopheles' words from Goethe's *Faust*.

³² *The Paris Commune (1871)* was the first proletarian revolution in the history which destroyed the bourgeois state apparatus and transferred power to the working class.

The Commune, a revolutionary government which came into being in the course of an armed struggle, was the world's first experiment in a proletarian dictatorship. It remained in power for 72 days (March 18—May 28, 1871). The Commune decreed that all officials should be elected for a definite term and should be made responsible to the people. It armed workers, made factories abandoned by their owners the property of the people, separated the church from the state and the school from the church, and carried out other measures in the interests of the working people. But through lack of political maturity of the proletariat and the absence of a revolutionary Marxist party, the Commune made a number of mistakes which were the cause of its downfall.

Lenin who developed Marxism in a new epoch referred to the experience of the Paris Commune not once when he elaborated the theory of a socialist revolution and a Soviet socialist state.

³³ *The Extraordinary Seventh Congress of the RCP(B)*—the first congress of the Communist Party held after the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution. It was convened to discuss the question of the utmost importance for the country devastated by the long war—the immediate conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany. The main items on the Congress agenda were: the Central Committee's report; the issue of war and peace; revision of the Party's Programme and changing of the Party's name. Lenin delivered the political report of the Central Committee and the report on the revision of the Programme and changing the name of the Party.

³⁴ Lenin called the period from October 25 (November 7), 1917 till February-March 1918 a *triumphal march of Soviet power*. The working people were struggling for the establishment of Soviet power throughout Russia, overcoming the stubborn resistance of the exploiter classes. This triumphal march of Soviet power vividly demonstrated a genuinely popular character of the October Revolution.

³⁵ Lenin wrote *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government* at the request of the Party's Central Committee. The work was discussed and approved at the meetings of the Central Committee of the RCP(B) and the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of Soviets. On April 26, the Party's Central Committee made a decision to publish the work in the newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, and also as a separate pamphlet. The pamphlet went through more than ten editions in 1918 in Soviet Russia, and in the same year it was published in New York in English, and in Geneva in French; an abridged version of the work entitled *Am Tage nach der Revolution* appeared in Zurich in German. *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government* is Lenin's first major work written after the October Revolution. In it he for the first time mapped out a plan of socialist construction, discussed the most important tasks of the transition period from capitalism to socialism, and defined the basic principles of the economic policy of the Soviet state.

³⁶ *Zetkin, Clara* (1857-1933)—a prominent figure in the German and international workers' movement and the Communist Party of Germany. Being a member of the Left wing of German Social-Democracy, Clara Zetkin together with Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring and Karl Liebknecht vigorously opposed the opportunists. During the First World War she adhered to the positions of revolutionary internationalism. In 1916, Clara Zetkin joined the International Group, and then the Spartacus League. In 1919, she joined the Communist Party of Germany and became a member of the Party Central Committee. She was elected to the Executive of the Communist International at its Third Congress. Since 1924 to her death Clara Zetkin was permanent President of the International Class-War Prisoners' Aid Executive.

³⁷ *Mehring, Franz* (1846-1919)—a prominent figure in the German working-class movement, and one of the leaders and ideologists of the Left-wing German Social Democracy. He was an editor of *Die Neue Zeit*, a theoretical organ of the Party, and then of *Leipziger Volks Zeitung*. Mehring

strongly opposed opportunism and revisionism within the Second International and condemned Kautskyanism. He was a consistent internationalist and welcomed the October Socialist Revolution in Russia. Franz Mehring played an active part in founding the Communist Party of Germany.

³⁸ *Spartacists*—members of the Spartacus group, a revolutionary organisation of the German Left-wing Social-Democrats, founded during the First World War by Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring, Clara Zetkin, J. Marchlewski, L. Joguiches (Tyszká) and W. Pieck. The group conducted revolutionary propaganda among the masses, organised anti-war actions, led strikes, and exposed the imperialist character of the world war and the class treachery of the opportunist Social-Democratic leaders. In November 1918, in the course of the revolution in Germany, the Spartacists formed the Spartacus League and published their own programme on December 14, 1918. In 1919 the Spartacists founded the Communist Party of Germany.

³⁹ The second part of 1918 was one of the hardest periods in the history of the Soviet state. The Soviet Republic found itself in a ring of the civil-war fire, and was separated from its principal grain, raw material and fuel regions. The foreign interventionists and internal counter-revolutionaries joined forces to fight the Republic.

⁴⁰ The fact that the working people in the capitalist countries received distorted information on the events in Russia made Lenin write the *Letter to American Workers*. In it he described the great transformations taking place in Soviet Russia. At the same time the Constitution of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and the text of the Soviet Government's Note, which demanded to put an end to the intervention against Soviet Russia, were conveyed to President Woodrow Wilson. Thanks to the assistance of John Reed, a prominent American Socialist journalist, all this material was published in a number of American newspapers.

⁴¹ *Right-Socialist-Revolutionaries* (Right SRs)—the most reactionary wing of the Socialist-Revolutionaries. Aligning with the bourgeoisie, the Right SRs defended the interests of the kulaks and were openly hostile to Soviet power. In the years of foreign military intervention and the Civil War the Right SRs carried on counter-revolutionary subversive activity, took part in plots, and organised terrorist acts against leaders of the Soviet state and the Communist Party. A Right Socialist-Revolutionary, Fanny Kaplau, made an attempt on Lenin's life on August 30, 1918 and wounded

him. After the Civil War had ended and the counter-revolutionary revolts had been crushed, the Party of Right Socialist-Revolutionaries disbanded.

The Mensheviks—representatives of an opportunist trend in Russian Social-Democracy, who relied primarily on the urban petty bourgeoisie and a part of the middle-class intelligentsia. Even since 1905 the Mensheviks opposed the Bolshevik thesis of the leading role of the proletariat in the revolution, the alliance of the working class and the peasantry, and called for an agreement with the liberal bourgeoisie and advocated its leading role in the revolution. After the triumph of the October Revolution the Mensheviks completely sided with the counter-revolutionaries.

⁴² Lenin refers here to a peace treaty between Soviet Russia, on the one hand, and Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey, on the other, signed in Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918. Its terms were extremely harsh for Soviet Russia. According to the treaty, vast territories in the western part of the country were placed under the control of Germany and Austria-Hungary. The Ukraine was separated from Soviet Russia, becoming a state dependent on Germany. Turkey gained control of the cities of Kars, Batum and Ardagan. In August 1918, Germany imposed on Soviet Russia a supplementary treaty and a financial agreement containing new exorbitant demands. Despite its hard terms, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk gave the Soviet state a breathing space and an opportunity to start socialist construction and muster strength for the future struggle against the home and foreign counter-revolution and military intervention. Following the *November 1918 revolution in Germany*, which overthrew the monarchist regime, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was annulled.

⁴³ A bourgeois-democratic revolution triumphed in Austria-Hungary as a result of a broad democratic movement and the proletariat's actions in October and November 1918. The Habsburg empire broke up, and bourgeois states—Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia—were formed in its place; the remaining parts of the empire's territory were incorporated into Yugoslavia, Romania and Poland.

On November 12, 1918 *Austria* was proclaimed a republic. The Austrian proletariat won an eight-hour working day and a social insurance scheme. By legislation were enacted the equality of women and extended the rights of local self-government bodies. *Workers' and Soldiers' Councils* were set up in the course of the bourgeois-demo-

cratic revolution. Most of them, however, were not elected but were constituted from Social-Democratic Party functionaries who were opposed to the development of the revolution into a socialist revolution.

In Hungary, a bourgeois-democratic revolution took place in the small hours of October 31, placing power in the hands of the liberal bourgeoisie, which formed a coalition with the Social-Democratic Party. The new government took no steps to improve the condition of the workers and peasants, and the discontented working people began to form their own revolutionary organs of power, Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies. The Soviets enjoyed great popularity and in many regions of Hungary they were the actual government. On November 16, a republic was proclaimed. The old parliament was dissolved. The Communist Party of Hungary, formed as an organisation on November 20, 1918, advanced the slogan "All power to the Soviets!" Two major political actions by the Hungarian proletariat took place under its leadership. A revolutionary situation shaped up in the country. (See also Note 50.)

⁴⁴ Adler, Friedrich (1879-1960), leader of the Right wing of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party. On October 21, 1916, he committed a terroristic act, assassinating the Austrian Prime Minister, Count Karl von Stürgkh. After the revolution of 1918 he joined the camp of counter-revolution. A co-founder of the centrist "Two-and-a-Half International" (see Note 67).

⁴⁵ This refers to the revolution of November 1918 in Germany. The revolution began on November 3 with a mutiny, at Kiel, of navy men, who refused to obey the command's order to put to sea and "die with honour" in a battle with the British navy. The first soldiers' and workers' councils began to be set up on ships, in barracks and at factories. On November 9, in response to the Spartacists' call, a general strike was started in Berlin. It rapidly grew into an armed uprising which led to the fall of the monarchy. But the majority in the councils was seized by Right-wing Social-Democrats and Centrists. A provisional government that was formed, consisted of Right-wing and "independent" Social-Democrats. The government's programme did not go beyond the bounds of reforms within the framework of the bourgeois system.

At the First Congress of Soldiers' and Workers' Councils, held in Berlin, between 16 and 18 of December 1918, the Right-wing Social-Democrats' leaders secured the adoption

of a resolution on the transfer of legislative and executive power to the government and the holding of elections to a Constituent Assembly. This spelled the end of the Councils.

On December 30, 1918, at a founding congress advanced representatives of the German working class set up the Communist Party of Germany.

In order to render the Communist Party leaderless and crush the vanguard of the working class, the German bourgeoisie provoked the workers into a premature armed insurrection, which broke out in Berlin on January 6, 1919. The "independents" who led the insurrection betrayed it by entering into negotiations with the government. The insurrection was ruthlessly suppressed, while the leaders of the German working class, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, were brutally murdered on January 15.

Although the revolution in Germany did not develop into a proletarian revolution and failed to carry out the tasks of national and social emancipation of the German people, it played highly progressive role. As a result of this revolution the monarchy was overthrown and a bourgeois-democratic republic established in Germany. The revolution was of considerable help to Soviet Russia, enabling it to annul the plunderous Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

⁴⁶ Chicherin, G. V. (1872-1936)—a Soviet statesman and prominent diplomat. From 1918 to 1930 he was the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

⁴⁷ Lenin was prompted to write *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* by the appearance in 1918 of Kautsky's "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat". In his brochure Kautsky tried to revise the Marxist theory on the socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, slandered the Soviet state and in every way sought to besmirch the activity of the Bolshevik Party.

In his book Lenin exposed Kautsky's revisionism, and relying on the experience of the socialist revolution in Russia he developed a theory of the proletarian dictatorship. Lenin showed the historic necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat, described its functions and emphasised the historic importance of the Republic of Soviets as a political form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

⁴⁸ *The Third, Communist International* was founded at its First (Inaugural) Congress held from March 2 to 6, 1919, in Moscow.

By the time Communist parties and groups had been set up in many countries which meant that the Third

International had already existed and functioned, and the task was to unite these scattered detachments of the communist movement organisationally. An international meeting took place in Moscow, in January 1919, at which Lenin's proposal to convene shortly the inaugural congress of the Third International was approved. The meeting also adopted an appeal to 39 fraternal parties, groups and organisations calling them to discuss the establishment of a Communist International and take part in its inaugural congress.

On March 2, an international communist conference attended by 52 delegates opened in Moscow. The conference resolutions on the tasks of the Communist parties were unanimously approved by the delegates and taken as a guide to action. On March 4, more delegates arrived for the conference and the question of establishing a Communist International was taken up again. The conference passed a resolution on "constituting itself as the Third International and taking the name of the Communist International". From March 4 the international conference proceeded in the capacity of the First (Inaugural) Congress of the *Communist International*.

⁴⁹ The main questions under discussion at the *Eighth RCP(B) Congress* were: the Central Committee Report; the RCP(B) Programme; the Communist international; the military situation; and the Party's work in rural areas. Lenin delivered a report of the Central Committee and also reports on the Party Programme, on the work in rural areas and on the military question. The Congress adopted a new Party Programme drafted by a commission headed by Lenin. The Congress welcomed the setting up of the Third International and fully supported its platform.

⁵⁰ The news of the formation of the *Hungarian Soviet Republic* came to Soviet Russia over the radio on March 22, 1919.

The Soviet Republic in Hungary was established on March 21, 1919. The Hungarian socialist revolution was a peaceful one, for the bourgeoisie was unable to resist the people. Incapable of overcoming its internal and external difficulties, the bourgeoisie decided to hand over power for a while to the Right-wing Social-Democrats so as to prevent the development of the revolution. But the rank-and-file Social-Democrats called for unity with the Communists who advanced the following demands: the formation of a Soviet government, disarmament of the bourgeoisie, the creation of a Red Army and people's militia,

confiscation of the landed estates, the nationalisation of industry, and an alliance with Soviet Russia.

The Entente imperialists, hostile to the Hungarian revolution, instituted an economic blockade of the Soviet Republic in Hungary and organised an armed intervention against it.

The treachery of the Right-wing Social-Democrats, who entered into an alliance with international imperialism and the domestic counter-revolutionaries, was one of the causes of the Hungarian Soviet Republic's downfall.

⁵¹ *Kun, Béla* (1886-1939), a prominent figure in the Hungarian and international working-class movement, a co-founder and leader of the Communist Party of Hungary. When a prisoner-of-war in Russia during the First World War he conducted revolutionary propaganda among POWs. In 1916 he established contact with the RSDLP(B) organisation in Tomsk and joined the Bolshevik Party. In 1918 he was chairman of the federation of foreign groups of the RCP(B) in Soviet Russia. In the autumn of 1918 he returned to Hungary. In February of 1919 he was arrested, but regained freedom as a result of the socialist revolution that was accomplished in Hungary in March of the same year. In the government of the Hungarian Soviet Republic Béla Kun held the post of People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs and dealt with military matters. After the power of the Soviets was crushed he went to Austria and then to Russia, where he engaged in military and Party work.

⁵² The reference is to the First Congress of the Communist International.

⁵³ The book "*Left-Wing* Communism—an Infatigable Disorder" was written by Lenin for the opening of the Second Congress of the Communist International (July 19-August 7, 1920).

Developing Marx's and Engels's propositions on the strategy and tactics of a proletarian party and drawing on the experience of Bolshevism in Russia and of the struggle of revolutionary workers in other countries, Lenin evolved in his book an integral theory of the strategy and tactics, that is, the theory of the party's leadership in the proletariat's revolutionary struggle. The most important theses of this book served as the groundwork for the decisions of the Second Congress of the Communist International.

⁵⁴ *Cadets*—members of the Constitutional-Democratic Party, the leading party of the liberal-monarchical bourgeoisie in Russia, supporters of constitutional monarchy. The Cadet Party was founded in October 1905. It regarded

fight against the revolutionary movement as its chief task. During the First World War the Cadets actively supported the tsarist government's predatory foreign policy; following the February 1917 bourgeois-democratic revolution, the Cadets as members of the Provisional Government pursued an anti-popular, counter-revolutionary policy. After the victory of the October 1917 Socialist Revolution the Cadets became irreconcilable enemies of Soviet power.

⁵⁵ Lenin is evidently referring to the events in Amritsar, India, which took place on April 13, 1919. On that day British troops shot at a meeting of many thousands of working people who protested against the colonialists' terror. About one thousand people were killed and nearly two thousand wounded. The popular uprising sparked off by that slaughter was mercilessly suppressed.

⁵⁶ The *gubernia* was the largest administrative-territorial unit in Russia. It was divided into districts or *uyezds*.

⁵⁷ In April 1920 the imperialists of France, Britain and the United States organised a new military campaign against Soviet Russia, this time choosing bourgeois-landlord Poland as its instrument. The Soviet government proposed a peaceful settlement to the question of Poland's territorial claims, but the ruling quarters of Poland rejected the proposal.

The hostilities lasted till October 1920. The Soviet government once again proposed settling the conflict in a peaceful way, and this time war-weary Poland, despite pressure on the Entente's part, agreed to conclude peace.

In October 1920 a treaty on armistice and the preliminary conditions of peace was signed.

⁵⁸ *Wrangel, P. N.* (1878-1928)—a tsarist army general, baron, and rabid monarchist. During the foreign military intervention in Russia and the Civil War he was a puppet of the British, French and US imperialists, and a leader of the counter-revolutionaries in the south of the country. In April-November, 1920 Wrangel was commander-in-chief of the White-Guard armed forces in South Russia; he fled abroad after his forces were defeated by the Red Army.

⁵⁹ The first imperialist war broke out in 1914 and ended in 1918 with the conclusion of the Treaty of Versailles (see Note 68).

The Civil War and the foreign military intervention (1918-22). The proclamation of a socialist republic following the October uprising was met with fierce resistance on the part of the counter-revolutionary forces, which resorted to the organisation of rebellions, the establishment of "se-

parate governments" in the Ukraine, the Don area, the Caucasus, Siberia and other parts of the country, and armed actions against the revolution. Numerous White-Guard armies were formed, with former tsarist officers as their core. The western regions of Russia were seized by the German army, and in 1918 Britain, France, Japan, the United States and other Entente countries launched armed intervention, sending troops to Russia's North and Far East and the Black and Caspian sea coasts. The internal and external counter-revolution was routed thanks to the valiant efforts of the working people of the country led by the Communist Party. An important part in the revolutionary victory was also played by solidarity actions by the working people of the countries of the West.

⁶⁰ *Hilferding, Rudolf* (1877-1941), one of the opportunist leaders of the German Social-Democracy and the Second International. A centrist during the First World War. From 1917 he headed the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany. Held ministerial posts in the bourgeois governments of the Weimar Republic. After the advent to power of Hitler's Nazism emigrated to France.

⁶¹ *Martov L. (Tsederbaum, Yu. O.)* (1873-1923)—a leader of Menshevism. During the years of reaction and the following new revolutionary upsurge he upheld a liquidationist position. During the First World War he took a centrist stand, and after the October 1917 Socialist Revolution actively opposed Soviet power. In 1920 Martov emigrated to Germany.

⁶² *Chernov, V. M.* (1876-1952)—one of the leaders of the SR Party. From May to August 1917 he was Minister of Agriculture in the Provisional Government and organised brutal repressions against peasants who were seizing landed estates. After the October Socialist Revolution Chernov took part in organising anti-Soviet revolts. In 1920, he fled abroad where continued his anti-Soviet activities.

⁶³ *Hillquit, Morris* (1869-1933)—an American Socialist, a lawyer. Originally a supporter of Marxism, later he departed from it. In 1888 he joined the Socialist Labour Party. After the split in the party he was one of the founders of a reformist Socialist Party in the United States (1901). Since 1904 he was a member of the International Socialist Bureau and took part in the Second International Congress.

⁶⁴ *Longuet, Jean* (1876-1938)—a leader of the French Socialist Party and the Second International, a publicist. During the First World War he took a pacifist stand. He

was opposed to the French Socialist Party becoming affiliated to the Comintern and to the formation of a Communist Party in France. In 1921 Jean Longuet was elected a member of the Executive of the Two-and-a-Half International. Starting from 1923 he was a leader of the Labour and Socialist International. In the 1930's Longuet stood for united action of Socialists and Communists against fascism, and participated in international organisations which opposed fascism and war.

⁶⁵ *MacDonald, James Ramsay* (1866-1937)—a founder and leader of the Independent Labour Party and the Labour Party of Britain. He conducted an extremely opportunist policy. In the beginning of the First World War he took a pacifist stand and then openly supported the imperialist bourgeoisie. In 1918-20 Ramsay made attempts to obstruct the British workers' action against the anti-Soviet intervention. He was Prime Minister in 1924 and again from 1929 to 1931. In 1931-35 he headed the so-called national government whose policy was shaped by the Conservatives.

⁶⁶ *Turati, Filippo* (1857-1932)—a leader of the Italian workers' movement, one of the organisers of the Italian Socialist Party, and the leader of its Right, reformist wing. During the First World War he took a centrist stand, and was hostile to the October 1917 Socialist Revolution. After the split in the Italian Socialist Party (1922) he headed the reformist Unitary Socialist Party. In 1926 Turati emigrated from fascist Italy to France.

⁶⁷ Lenin refers to the *Two-and-a-Half International* (whose official name was the International Association of Socialist Parties), an international organisation of Centrist Socialist parties and groups that had been forced out of the Second International by the revolutionary masses. The organisation was formed at a conference held in Vienna in February 1921. While criticising the Second International in word, the International Association of Socialist Parties pursued an opportunist and splitting policy on all key issues of the proletarian movement and sought to offset the growing influence of the Communists among the working-class masses. As Lenin wrote, "The gentlemen of the Two-and-a-Half International pose as revolutionaries; but in every serious situation they prove to be counter-revolutionaries because they shrink from the violent destruction of the old state machine; they have no faith in the forces of the working class" (*Coll. Works*, Vol. 33, pp. 25-26).

In May 1923 the Second and the Two-and-a-Half Inter-

nationals merged into the so-called Labour and Socialist International.

⁶⁸ *The Peace Treaty of Versailles*, which concluded the First World War of 1914-18, was signed on June 28, 1919, by the USA, the British Empire, France, Italy, Japan and other allied powers, on the one hand, and Germany, on the other. This treaty consolidated the re-partition of the capitalist world in favour of the victors, and established a system of relationships between countries which was aimed at strangling Soviet Russia and suppressing the world revolutionary movement. In assessing the Peace Treaty of Versailles, Lenin wrote: "It is an unparalleled and predatory peace, which has made slaves of tens of millions of people, including the most civilised" (*Coll. Works*, Vol. 31, p. 326).

⁶⁹ *The Basle Manifesto* on the war was adopted at the Extraordinary International Socialist Congress held in Basle, Switzerland, on November 24-25, 1912. The Manifesto warned the peoples against the mounting danger of a world imperialist war, disclosed the predatory aims of the war and urged workers everywhere resolutely to combat it. The Manifesto included a paragraph from the *Stuttgart Congress* (1907) resolution formulated by Lenin, to the effect that should an imperialist war break out, Socialists must take advantage of the economic and political crisis it will cause so as to advance the socialist revolution.

⁷⁰ *The New Economic Policy (NEP)* was introduced by the Soviet state during the transitory period from capitalism to socialism. It gave certain freedom to free enterprise and trade, with the key economic positions being controlled by the state. This policy which was conducted from 1921 till the mid-1930's was to promote the building of the economic basis of socialism by making use of the market, private trade and monetary circulation. An opportunity to sell the surplus agricultural product made the peasant feel economically interested in raising the productivity of his labour and increasing farm output. This ensured food supplies to the town and provided the industry with raw materials. Free private trade would inevitably lead to a certain revival of capitalist elements, but without it it would have been impossible to raise agricultural production, restore state trade and build up industry, the economic basis of socialism, and then to assume the offensive on the capitalist elements and eliminate all capitalist vestiges in the country. The consistent pursuance of the New Economic Policy helped to accomplish these tasks.

⁷¹ *Letter to the Congress* includes notes dictated by Lenin on December 23-26, December 29, 1922, and January 4, 1923. The letter is permeated with concern for consolidating the ideological and organisational unity of the Party, a prime condition for which was, in Lenin's opinion, the cohesion and stability of its leading body, the Central Committee. In order to avoid the danger of a split in the Central Committee Lenin suggested increasing its membership to several tens and even to one hundred. He held that this would enhance the authority and role of the Central Committee as the collective body exercising leadership of the Party and the country.

⁷² The article *On Co-operation* was dictated by Lenin on January 4-6, 1923. In it he showed in what ways the peasants could be drawn into the work of building socialism. Drawing on the experience of the development of the co-operative movement and the first peasants' co-operatives in Soviet Russia, Lenin worked out a co-operative plan for refashioning the peasants' life along socialist lines. The main provisions of the plan were as follows: the laying of an adequate technical basis; the raising of the cultural level of the peasantry; the gradual drawing of the peasants to collective forms of farming through the promotion of different forms of co-operation; strict observance of the principle of voluntary participation in peasants' co-operatives; every possible assistance to the co-operatives on the part of the state; securing the broadest possible active and direct participation of the working class in the socialist transformation of the countryside.

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