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The Lessons of October.

By L. D. Trotzky.

October Must be Studied.

Although we did well in the October Revolution, the October Revolution has been by no means well treated in our press. We have up to the moment no single work which gives a complete picture of the October Revolt or draws attention to its most important political and organisational details. Not only that, but even the raw material which directly characterises the individual phases of the preparation for the revolt or the revolt itself (including also the most important documents), has up to the present not yet been issued. We issue very many historical-revolutionary and Party-historical documents and much material relating to the period before October, and we issue no little material relating to the period after October. But to October itself, we devote very much less attention. After we accomplished the overthrow, however, we apparently adopted the attitude that we no longer had to reckon with the possibility of a repetition of this overthrow. It seemed as though we could not expect to draw from the study of October, from the conditions of its immediate preparation, its carrying through and the first weeks of its consolidation, any direct and immediate benefits for the unpostponable tasks of the further work of reconstruction.

Such an estimation, even when half conscious, is nevertheless extremely incorrect and what is more, nationally limited. Even should we never have to repeat the October Revolution, this in no way means that we can learn nothing from its experience. We are a section of the International, and the proletariat of all other countries is still confronted with the solution of its "October" tasks.

And last year we had sufficiently convincing proofs that the experiences of our October were not only not gone over in flesh and blood, but that even the facts concerning it were unknown to, at least, the ripest Communist Parties of the West.

Certainly, one can point out that it is not possible to study October or even to issue the material relating to October, without at the same time stirring up old differences of opinion. Such an approach to the question would, however, be really too petty. Naturally, the differences of opinion of the year 1917 were of a far reaching nature and by no means the result of chance. But it would be too deplorable, after a lapse of several years, to attempt now to forge a weapon from them against those comrades who erred at that time. It would however be, still less permissible to keep silent about the

most important problems of the October overthrow, which are of international significance, from subordinate personal considerations.

Last year we suffered two cruel defeats in Bulgaria; first of all the Party missed a singularly favourable moment for revolutionary action (the peasant insurrection after the June coup of Zankov) from considerations of a doctrinaire fatalist character; and then endeavoured to make good this error by plunging the Party into the September insurrection without previously taking the necessary political and organisational preparatory measures.

The Bulgarian Revolution should have been the signal for the German Revolution. Unfortunately, the bad commencement in Bulgaria was followed by a still worse development in Germany itself. In the second half of last year (1923. Ed.) we experienced there a classical example of how a quite unique revolutionary situation of world historical importance can be allowed to pass unutilised. And once again, neither the Bulgarian nor the German events of the previous year have received an exhaustive and concrete estimation. The writer of these lines drafted a general scheme of the development of the German events of last year (Compare: the pamphlet, "East and West", the chapters, "At the Turning Point", "At what Stage do we find Ourselves?") and everything which has happened since then has completely corroborated this scheme. No one has attempted to give any other explanation. Schemes however are not sufficient, we need a concrete picture of the development of last years events in Germany, supported by actual material which will show us quite concretely the causes of this terrible historic defeat.

It is however difficult to speak of an analysis of the events in Bulgaria and Germany when we have not yet given a thoroughly worked out political and tactical picture of the October overthrow. We ourselves are not yet clear about what we have accomplished and how we accomplished it. After the October overthrow it seemed to us, in the heat of the fight, that the next events would unfold themselves in Europe on their own, and this in such a short time that no time would remain over for a theoretical treatment of the lessons of October. It has been shown however, that, owing to the lack of parties capable of leading the proletarian revolt, this overthrow has become impossible. The proletariat cannot conquer power by an elementary insurrection: even in highly

industrialised, highly cultured Germany, the elementary insurrection of the workers (in November 1918) was only capable of handing the power over to the bourgeoisie. A possessing class is capable of wresting power from the hands of another possessing class, and maintaining it whilst supporting itself upon its riches, its culture and its innumerable connections with the old state apparatus. With the proletariat, however, nothing can replace its party.

The actual period of the construction of outspoken Communist Parties (the "Struggle for the Masses", the "United Front" etc.) really begins only in the middle of 1921. The "October" tasks were indefinitely postponed, and with them the study of October. Last year, however, placed us once again face to face with the tasks of the proletarian insurrection. It is high time to collect all the documents, to issue the whole of the material and to proceed to the study of these questions. Naturally, we know that each people, each class and even each party, grows wise from its own experiences. This, however, in no way means that the experiences of other countries, other classes and parties have a lesser importance. Without a study of the great French Revolution, the revolution of 1848 and the Paris Commune, we could never have succeeded in carrying out the October overthrow, not even with our experiences from the year 1905. Even in this "nationally" limited attempt we based ourselves upon the experiences of earlier revolutions and continued their historic lines. And then the whole period of the counter-revolution was filled with the study of the lessons and results of 1905. In relation to the victorious revolution of 1917, we have not even carried out one tenth of such work. Naturally, we are not now living in the time of the reaction and also not in the emigration. The sources and means at present at our disposal cannot be compared with those of those difficult years. It is necessary, clearly and plainly, to set the task of the study of the October Revolution, both in our Party and in the whole International. The whole Party, and particularly its young generation, must work step by step through the experiences of October which represent the greatest incontestable and unequivocal test of the past and which open wide perspectives for the future. The lessons of last year in Germany represent for us not only a serious reminder, but also a loud warning.

One could, it is true, say that it is still no guarantee for the victory of our German Party even if it is acquainted in the most thorough manner with the course of the October overthrow. But such a superficial method of reasoning, in its essence philistine, will not bring us one step forwards. Naturally, the study of the October Revolution is not sufficient for the victory in other countries. Circumstances, however, can arise in which all the conditions for the revolution are given with the exception of a far-seeing and determined party leadership, which bases itself upon an understanding of the laws and methods of revolution. This was exactly the case in Germany last year, and it can be repeated also in other countries. Up to the present we have still no more important and deeper source for the study of the laws and the methods of the proletarian revolution than the experiences of our October. The leaders of the European Communist Parties who fail to study critically and concretely the history of the October overthrow, would be in the same situation as the general of an army who prepared himself under present day circumstances for new wars without studying the strategical, tactical, and technical experiences of the last imperialist war. Such a military leader would inevitably lead his army in the future to a defeat.

The chief instrument of the proletarian insurrection is the Party. Already, upon the basis of one years experience (from February 1917 to February 1918) in Russia, and upon the basis of further experiences in Finland, Hungary, Italy, Bulgaria and Germany, we can declare it as an almost generally applicable law, that with the transition from the revolutionary preparatory work to the immediate struggle for power, a Party crisis is unavoidable. The crises are caused inside the Party, generally speaking, at each serious turning point of the course of the development of the Party, either as harbingers or as consequences of the overthrow. The explanation for this lies in the fact that each period in the development of the Party possesses its own characteristic features and demands its own

definite methods of work and practice. A tactical change means a more or less fundamental break with these methods and practice: Here is the immediate root of the internal Party debates and crises.

"It has happened all too often", wrote Lenin in July 1917, "that when History makes a sharp curve, even the advanced parties need a more or less long period to adapt themselves to the new situation, and continue to repeat slogans which yesterday were still correct but which today have lost all meaning. They lost their meaning just as «suddenly» as the sharp historical curve took place". (Collected works, Russian edition, Vol. XIV/2 page 12.)

From this there arises the danger that if the turning point comes too sharply or too suddenly, and the previous period has caused the accumulation of too many elements of passivity and conservatism in the leading Party organs, the Party may prove itself incapable in the most decisive moments of fulfilling its rôle as leader, the rôle for which it has prepared itself for years or decades. The Party is then torn with crises and the movement sweeps past it — to defeat.

The revolutionary Party finds itself under the pressure of new political forces. In each period of its development it works out new means in order to oppose these forces and defend itself against them. The power of resistance of the Party is weakened in a tactical change of front and by the internal groupings and disputes connected with it. From this the possibility arises that the internal groupings in the Party which have been caused by the necessity of a tactical change of front, grow far beyond their original beginnings and serve as points of support for various class tendencies. More simply put: A party which does not keep pace with the historical tasks of its class will become an indirect tool of other classes, or at least will run this danger.

If what has been said above is correct in relation to each serious tactical change of front, it is all the more correct in relation to great strategical changes of front. In politics we understand by tactics, to use a military analogy, the art of carrying out individual operations; by strategy, the art of winning, that is to say to conquer power. Before the war, in the epoch of the Second International, we usually did not make such a distinction, and confined ourselves only to the conception of social democratic tactics.

And that was no accident: Social Democracy had a parliamentary, trade union, communal, co-operative, etc. tactic. The question of combining all forces and means, all types of weapons, for the achievement of victory over the enemy, was never essentially brought up in the epoch of the Second International because the task of the struggle for power was not presented. The revolution of 1905, for the first time after a long interruption, placed the basic and strategical questions of the proletarian struggle respectively in the foreground. Through this it ensured great advantages to the Russian revolutionary Social Democracy, that is to say, to the Bolsheviks. The great epoch of revolutionary strategy begins in the year 1917, first for Russia, then also for the whole of Europe. Strategy naturally in no way does away with tactics: The questions of the trade union movement, of parliamentary activity, etc. do not vanish from our field of vision, but now receive a new significance as subordinate methods of the combined struggle for power. Tactics are subordinate to strategy.

As the tactical changes usually lead to internal frictions in the Party, so the differences are still stronger and deeper which are caused by a strategical change of front. The sharpest change is, however, caused when the Party of the proletariat proceeds from preparation, from propaganda, from organisation and agitation to the immediate struggle for power, to the armed insurrection against the bourgeoisie. All undecided, sceptical, opportunist and Menshevist elements, all elements tending towards capitulation which exist inside the Party, oppose themselves to the insurrection, seek theoretical formulas for the opposition, and find them with the opportunistic enemies of yesterday. We shall often be able to observe this happening.

In the period from February to October there took place a last review and the choice of arms by the Party before the

decisive struggle on the basis of an extensive agitational and organisational work amongst the masses. In October, and after October, this armament was tested in the gigantic historical action. Should one wish to-day, a few years after October, to occupy oneself with the estimation of the various points of view in connection with the revolution in general and the Russian revolution in particular, and should one nevertheless ignore the experiences of 1917, that would mean a fruitless, scholastic and in no way Marxistic political analysis. This would be the same as though we were to engage in disputes upon the advantages of various methods of swimming, but at the same time resolutely refuse to turn our attention to the river where these methods were being put into practice by bathers. There is no better test for ideas upon the revolution than their application in the revolution itself. Just as the methods of swimming are best tested when the swimmer springs into the water.

“The Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry.”

February and October.

The October Revolution during the course of its progress and by its result, delivered a merciless blow at those scholastic parodies of Marxism which were very widely spread in Russian socialdemocratic circles, beginning with the “Freedom of Labour” group. These ideas found their completest expression with the Mensheviks. The essence of this pseudo-Marxism consisted in turning the unconditioned ideas of Marx — “The most advanced countries show the backward countries their future development” into a certain absolute, as Marx said, superhistorical law, and attempted to base the tactic of the working class upon this law. With such a formulation of the question, naturally, the struggle of the Russian proletariat for power, could not be discussed as long as the economically high developed countries had created no “precedent” for this. There is of course no doubt that each backward country will find in the history of the advanced countries a few features of its future development, but there can be no question of the development as a whole. On the contrary. The more the capitalist economy adopted an international character, the more peculiar became the fate of the backward countries in which elements of their backwardness united themselves with the last word of capitalist development. Engels wrote in the foreword to his “The Peasant War”:

“At a certain point, which does not need to come everywhere at the same time or at the same stage of development, it begins to notice, that its proletarian double is growing above its head.”

In the course of historical development the Russian bourgeoisie was compelled to make this observation earlier and in a more complete manner than any other. Lenin expressed the peculiarity of the Russian Revolution already upon the eve of 1905 in the formula “The democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.” In itself this formula, as was shown by the whole further development, could only be of importance as a stage to the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat supporting itself upon the peasantry. The Leninist formulation of the question was through and through revolutionary-dynamic. It stood in complete opposition to the Menshevik scheme according to which only a repetition of the history of the advanced countries in which the bourgeoisie is in power and the social democracy in opposition, could come into question for Russia.

But in certain circles of our Party, the stress in the Leninist formula was not laid upon the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, but on its democratic character, which was opposed to the socialist character of the revolution. And this meant: In backward Russia only a democratic revolution is possible. The socialist revolution must begin in the West. We only follow the path of socialism after England, France and Germany. Such a formulation of the question,

however, led inevitably to Menshevism, and this showed itself clearly in 1917 when the tasks of the revolution were no longer questions of prognosis, but questions of action.

To adopt the point of view, under acute revolutionary conditions, of a logically ordered democracy against socialism as something “premature”, meant to abandon politically the proletarian standpoint and to go over to a petty bourgeois standpoint, the standpoint of the left wing of the national revolution. The February revolution, if one regards it as an independent revolution, was a bourgeois revolution. As a bourgeois revolution, however, it came too late and showed no permanence. Torn up by contradictions which immediately found expression in the double relation of power, it had either to be the signal for an immediate proletarian revolution, as was the case, or to throw Russia back into a half-colonial existence, under this or that government of Russian bourgeois oligarchy.

The period following the February revolution could therefore be looked at from two points of view: Either as a period of consolidation, development or completion of the “democratic” revolution or as a period of preparation for the proletarian revolution. Not only the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries adopted this first point of view, but also a certain section of the leading elements of our own Party. The difference consisted in the fact that these latter were really striving to drive the democratic revolution as far left as possible. Basically considered, however, the method was the same: “Pressure” upon the ruling bourgeoisie in the expectation that this pressure would not lead beyond the framework of the bourgeois democratic regime. Had this policy predominated, then the development of the revolution would have taken place above the head of our Party and we would have finally experienced an insurrection of the working and peasant masses without the leadership of the Party, in other words: The July days on a gigantic scale, that is to say, no longer as an episode, but as a catastrophe. It is quite clear that the immediate consequence of such a catastrophe would have been the annihilation of the Party. This shows us the extent of the differences of opinion in all its depth.

The influence of the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries in the first period of the revolution was naturally not accidental. It represented the petty bourgeois, above all, peasant masses among the people and at the same time the immaturity of the revolution itself. It was just the immaturity of the revolution in the completely unusual circumstances created by the war which gave the leadership or at least the appearance of leadership into the hands of the petty bourgeois revolutionaries. This leadership or this appearance of leadership consisted in the defence by the petty bourgeois revolutionaries of the historical right of the bourgeoisie to power. This, however, does not mean, that the Russian revolution could only have gone along the way which it actually followed from February to October 1917. This path resulted not only from the class relations but also from those temporary conditions which the war had created. In consequence of the war, the millions of the peasantry were organised and armed. Before the proletariat succeeded in organising itself under its own banner, and in bringing the masses of the village behind it, the petty bourgeois revolutionaries found a natural support in the peasant army enraged by the war. With the weight of this army of many millions upon which everything directly depended, the petty bourgeois revolutionaries exercised a pressure upon the proletariat and in the beginning led it in their rear.

That the development of the revolution could have been a different one, however, on the same class basis, is best proved by the events which preceded the war. In July 1914 Petersburg was shaken by revolutionary strikes. The situation developed into open class struggle. The leadership of this movement belonged incontestably to the illegal organisation and legal press of our Party. Bolshevism consolidated its influence in a direct struggle against the liquidators and against the petty bourgeois parties in general. A further growth of the movement would have meant above all the growth of the Bolshevik Party. If in 1914 it had gone as far as workers soviets, then these in their very beginning would have been Bolshevik. The awakening of the village would have been under the direct and indirect leadership of the town soviets

led by the Bolsheviks. This does not necessarily mean that the Social Revolutionaries would have been compelled to disappear from the villages, no, in all probability the first stage of the peasant revolution would have taken place under the banner of the Narodniki (Social Revolutionaries). In the development of the events sketched by us, the Narodniki would have been compelled to put forward their left wing and to seek an alliance with the Bolshevik soviets in the towns. The immediate result of the insurrection would naturally in this case also have been dependent above all upon the spirit and the attitude of the army which was linked with the peasantry. It is impossible and also superfluous to speculate after the event whether the movement of 1914 and 15 would have led to victory if the war, which added a new and gigantic link to the chain of development, had not broken out. Very much suggests, however, that if the victorious revolution had continued to develop upon the line represented by the July events of 1914, the fall of Czarism would in all probability have led to the immediate seizure of power by the revolutionary workers of the soviets which would have drawn the masses of the peasantry through the medium (at first!) of the Left Narodniki into their circle of influence.

The war interrupted the advancing revolutionary movement, but later, however, it enormously increased its speed. Through the medium of the million headed army, the war offered the petty bourgeois parties quite a unique, not only social, but also organisational, basis: The whole peculiarity of the peasantry consists just in the fact that despite its numerical strength it is very difficult to place it on an organisational basis, even if it is revolutionary. The petty bourgeois parties, having climbed high upon the shoulders of a completed army organisation, imposed upon the proletariat and brought it also under the spell of the idea of the "Defence of the Fatherland". This is the reason why Lenin so bitterly attacked the old slogan, the "Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry" which under the new conditions would have meant a transformation of the Bolshevik Party into the Left wing of the bloc for the Defence of the Fatherland. Lenin regarded as the chief task the drawing of the proletarian advance guard from the quagmire of the "Defence of the Fatherland". Only under this condition could the proletariat, in the next phase, become the nucleus around which the masses of the toilers in the villages could group. What should however become of the democratic revolution or better with the democratic government of the proletariat and the peasantry?

Lenin disposes mercilessly of those "old Bolsheviks" who,

"played a lamentable role in the history of the Party, and not for the first time, in that they senselessly repeat a thoroughly learnt formula instead of studying the peculiarity of the new living actuality . . . We must adapt ourselves not to the old formula, but to the new reality." (Lenin, XIV/1 Pages 28 and 33.)

Lenin asks: "Is this actuality taken account of in the old Bolshevik formula of comrade Kamenev, 'the bourgeois democratic revolution is not ended'? No, answers Lenin, the formula is old, it is useless, it is dead and every effort to bring it back to life will be in vain."

Lenin certainly sometimes said, that in the first epoch of the February Revolution the soviets of the workers, soldiers and peasants realised the evolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat in the peasantry **up to a certain degree**. And this is true in so far as these Soviets at all embodied a power. But, as Lenin often explained, the soviets of the February period only embodied a half-power. They supported the power of the bourgeoisie whilst exercising a half-oppositional "pressure" upon it. Just this intermediate situation refused to permit them to go beyond the framework of a democratic coalition of the workers, peasants and soldiers. From the forms of the exercise of power this coalition tended, so far as it was not based upon conditions regulated by the state, but upon armed power and supported itself upon immediate revolutionary considerations, to the Dictatorship, although it had by no means sufficiently developed for this. Just in this democratic, unclearly defined, half-dominant coalition of the workers, peasants and soldiers, consisted the lack of permanency of the

opportunistic soviets. They had either to go under or to seize power in reality. They could not however, seize power in the form of a democratic coalition of the workers and peasants, representing many parties, but only in the form of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat led by a united Party and drawing with it the masses of the peasantry, in the first place the half proletarian elements of the peasantry.

In other words: One could only regard the democratic coalition of the workers and peasants as an immature structure not grown to real dominance, only as a tendency, not however as a fact. A further development in the direction of the seizure of power had inevitably to tear aside the democratic mask and to confront the majority of the peasantry with the necessity of following the workers, making it possible for the proletariat to realise their class dictatorship and in this way to introduce, side by side with a merciless and radical democratisation of social relations, a pure socialist encroachment of the state upon the rights of capitalist property. Whoever, under these circumstances, continued to cling to the old formula of the "democratic dictatorship" would have had to abandon power and lead the revolution into a blind alley.

The most important dispute around which all others grouped themselves, was the following: Should we fight for power or not? Should we seize power or not? This alone proves that we had no temporary differences of opinion, but that we represented two definite tendencies of principle. One of these tendencies, the basic one, was the proletarian and pointed to world revolution. The other was a "democratic", that is to say, a petty bourgeois tendency and led in the last resort to a subordination of the proletarian policy to the needs of the reforming bourgeois society. In all comparatively important questions of the year 1917, these two tendencies came into hostile conflict. Just the revolutionary epoch, that is, a time when the accumulated capital of the Party is directly put into circulation, had inevitably to disclose such forms of difference. To a greater or lesser degree, and with this or that variation, these tendencies will often appear in all countries during revolutionary periods. When by Bolshevism one understands essentially, such an education, such a steeling, such an organisation of the proletarian advance guard which makes it capable of conquering power with armed force, and when one regards the Social Democracy as a reformist-oppositional activity within the frame work of bourgeois society and an adaptation to its activity, that is to say, as an education of the masses in a spirit of the recognition of the unshakeability of bourgeois society, then it is clear, that even inside the Communist Party which does not leave the forge of history ready made, the struggle between the social democratic tendency and Bolshevism must show itself most clearly and most openly in the immediate revolutionary period when the question of the seizure of power becomes acute.

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The task of the seizure of power was first set to the Party after the 4th April, that is, after the arrival of Lenin in Petrograd. But also after this, the line of the Party was absolutely not united, inseparable and completely indisputable. Despite the decision of the April Conference in 1917, the opposition against the revolutionary course continued, sometimes open, sometimes concealed, during the whole of the preparatory period.

The study of the differences in the time between the February Revolution and the consolidation of the October insurrection, is not only of unique theoretical interest, but it is also of immeasurable practical significance. The differences which showed themselves in 1903 at the II. Conference of the Russian Social Democratic Party were called by Lenin in 1910 an "anticipation". It is very important to trace these differences, beginning from their source, that is in 1903, and even still earlier, for example, from the "Economism". This study is however only of value if it is logically carried out and if it includes that period in which these differences received their decisive testing through the events of October.

We cannot set ourselves the task of exhausting all the stages of this struggle within the limitations of this writing.

We hold it to be necessary however, to fill, if only partly, the crying gap in our literature relating to the most important period of development shown by our Party.

The centre of our differences was, as has already been said, the question of the conquest of power. This is above all the sign which indicates the character of a revolutionary (and not only a revolutionary) Party. In this period the question of the war was put forward and solved in close connection with that of the conquest of power.

We will consider both these questions according to their most important chronological phases: the standpoint of the Party and the Party press in the first period after the fall of Czarism up to the arrival of Lenin: The struggle for the theses of Lenin: the April Conference: the consequences of the July days, the Kornilov adventure, the Democratic Conference and the preliminary parliament: the question of the armed insurrection and the conquest of power (September-October): the question of the "homogeneous" socialist government.

The study of these differences will permit us, we hope, to draw conclusions which can be of importance for the other Parties of the Communist International also.

The Struggle against the War and against the "Defence of the Fatherland".

The fall of Czarism in February 1917 naturally meant a great stride forward. However, if one takes the February Revolution on its own, that is as a step towards October, it meant only that Russia came closer to the type represented by bourgeois-republican France. The petty bourgeois revolutionary parties, as was becoming to them, regarded the February Revolution not as a bourgeois revolution, but also not as a step to a proletarian one, but as some sort of "democratic" end in itself. Upon this they based also the ideology of the revolutionary defence of the Fatherland. They did not defend the rule of this or that class, but the "Revolution" and the "Democracy". But also in our own Party, the February Revolution led in the first period to an extremely strong disturbance of the political perspectives. In its essence, the "Pravda" in the March days stood nearer the standpoint of the revolutionary defence of the Fatherland than the standpoint of Lenin.

"If one army stood facing another" — so we read in one of its editorial articles — "then the most unreasonable policy would be if one of them would propose to lay down arms and go home. Such a policy would be no peace policy, but a policy of slavery, a policy which a free people would reject with indignation. No, a free people would hold out firmly at its post, and answer each bullet with another bullet, each shot with another shot. That is incontestable. We cannot permit such a disorganisation of the military forces of the revolution." ("Pravda", Nr. 9, 15th of March 1917 in the article: "Without Secret Diplomacy".)

Here it is a question not of oppressed and oppressing classes, but of "the free people"; not the class struggle for power, but the free people which "holds out firmly at its post". The idea and also its formulation is throughout in its spirit that of the defence of the Fatherland. In the same article it continues:

"Our slogan is not the disorganisation of the revolutionaries and the army which is becoming revolutionary, and not the meaningless 'down with the war'. Our slogan is pressure (!) upon the provisional government with the aim of forcing it to go openly before the whole world of democracy (!) with the attempt (!) to persuade all the belligerent countries to open immediately negotiations upon the methods for an ending of the world war. Until then, however, each one (!) must stay at his post (!)."

The programme to exercise a pressure upon the imperialist governments with the aim of making them "inclined" in a generous fashion to a step, was the programme of Kautsky and Ledebour in Germany, Jean Longuet in France and Macdonald in England, in no way, however, a programme for Bolshevism. The article does not merely begin with "warmly greeting" the famous manifesto of the Petrograd Soviet "To the Peoples of the Whole World" (this Manifesto is filled with the spirit of

the revolutionary defence of the Fatherland), but it also declares "with satisfaction" the solidarity of the editors with the resolutions of two Petrograd meetings. These resolutions were openly in the spirit of the defence of the Fatherland. It is only necessary to point out that one of these resolutions declared:

"If the German and Austrian democracy does not listen to our voice (that is the 'voice' of the Provisional Government and the opportunist Soviets. L. T.) then we will defend our home to the last drop of our blood. ("Pravda", Nr. 9, 15th of March, 1917.)"

The article quoted is no exception. On the contrary, it expresses perfectly clearly the standpoint of the "Pravda" before the return of Lenin to Russia. Thus in the next number of the paper in the article "Concerning the War", although it contained some critical remarks referring to the "Manifesto to the Peoples" declares:

"It is impossible not to welcome the yesterdays appeal of the Petrograd workers and soldiers soviets to the peoples of the whole world which contains the appeal to induce their own governments to end the war." ("Pravda", Nr. 10, 16th of March 1917.)

How is the way out of the war to be sought? In this connection we see the following answer:

"The way out of the war is through pressure on the Provisional Government with the demand that it declare itself ready to open immediate peace negotiations." (ibid.)

Very many of such and similar — concealed defence of the Fatherland and masked opportunistic — quotations could be made. At the same time, even a week earlier, Lenin, who was still in enforced exile in Zurich, in his "Letters from Abroad" condemned every allusion to a concession to the defence of the Fatherland and opportunism. (For this reason most of these "letters" did not find their way into the "Pravda".)

"It is absolutely inadmissible" — he wrote still on the 8th (21st) March when he was still compelled to see the forms of the revolutionary events through the distorting mirror of capitalist information — "to conceal from oneself and the people that this government wishes a continuation of the imperialist war that it is an agent of English capitalism, that it is striving for the restoration of the monarchy and the consolidation of the rule of the landowners and capitalists."

And on the 12th of March:

"To address ourselves to this government with the proposal to conclude peace would be as though we addressed ourselves to the proprietors of brothels with moral considerations."

Whilst the "Pravda" appealed for "pressure" upon the Provisional Government with the aim of inducing it in the interests of peace to go "before the whole world of democracy" Lenin wrote:

"For us to address ourselves to the Gutchkov-Miliukov Government with the proposal to conclude speedily an honest democratic and neighbourly peace, is the same as though a good village father (priest) would approach the landowners and businessmen with a proposal that they should lead 'god fearing' lives, love their neighbours as themselves and turn the right cheek when the left was struck."

On the 4th of April, one day after his arrival in Petrograd, Lenin energetically attacked the standpoint of the "Pravda" in the question of war and peace:

"No support of the Provisional Government" — he wrote — "exposure of the whole lying nature of all their promises, in particular in relation to their 'abandonment of all annexations'. Exposure instead of the 'demand' which cannot be permitted and which creates illusions,

that this government, the government of the capitalists, can cease to be imperialist."

It is no longer necessary to say that the appeal of the opportunists of the 14th of March which was welcomed in such a friendly manner by the "Pravda" was termed by Lenin "notorious" and "confused". It is the greatest hypocrisy to appeal to other peoples to break with their bankers whilst one forms a coalition government with ones own.

"The centre swears and insists" — said Lenin in his platform draft — "that it is Marxist and internationalist, that it is for peace and for 'pressure' upon the government, for every 'demand' to its own government to express the wish of the people for peace."

However, can a revolutionary party, one might object at first glance here, surrender a "pressure" against the bourgeoisie and its government? Naturally not. Pressure upon the bourgeois government is the road of reforms. The Marxist revolutionary party does not renounce reforms, but the way of reforms is only of value for questions of a secondary importance, not, however, for the fundamental questions. One cannot seize power along the path of reforms. One cannot force the bourgeoisie by "pressure" to change its policy in those questions upon which its whole fate depends. The war created a revolutionary situation just because it left no further room for a reformist "pressure". One had either to hold on with the bourgeoisie or to mobilise the masses against them with the aim of depriving them of power. In the first case one would be able to obtain this or that concession from the bourgeoisie in internal policy, that is to say, under the condition of an unlimited support for its imperialist foreign policy. Just for this reason, socialist reformism from the beginning of the war transformed itself openly into socialist imperialism. Just for this reason, real revolutionary elements were compelled to proceed to the creation of a new International.

The standpoint of the "Pravda" was not proletarian and revolutionary, but democratic, and — although not definitely — for the defence of the fatherland. We have overthrown Czarism. We exercise a pressure upon the democratic power. The latter must propose peace to the peoples. If German democracy is not in a position to exercise the necessary pressure upon its government, then we will defend the "home" to the last drop of blood. The peace perspectives were not put forward as an independent task of the working class which it was called to realise over the head of the bourgeois Provisional Government just because the conquest of power by the proletariat was not put forward as a practical revolutionary task. And it is really not possible to separate the one from the other.

The April Conference.

The speech of Lenin at the Finnish railway station on the socialist character of the Russian revolution affected many leaders of the Party like a bomb shell. The polemic between Lenin and the supporters of the "completion of the Democratic Revolution" commenced immediately upon the day of Lenin's arrival.

The armed April demonstration at which the slogan was issued, "Down with the Provisional Government", was the object of the sharp conflict. This circumstance gave various representatives of the Right wing the opportunity to accuse Lenin of Blanquism. The fall of the Provisional Government, which in this period was supported by the majority in the soviets, could only be obtained by disregarding the majority of the toilers. Formally, this objection could not appear as without foundation; but in its very nature, there was no shadow of Blanquism in Lenin's April policy. The question for him was, in how far the soviets continued to represent the actual spirit of the masses and whether or not the Party deceived itself when it leaned in its attitude upon the Soviet majority. The April demonstration, which turned out more "left" than it was originally planned, served as a feeler to test the spirit of the masses and their relation to the majority in the soviets. The test thus made led to the conclusion that a long pre-

paratory work was necessary. We see how sharply Lenin rebuked the Cronstadters who suddenly declared that they did not recognise the Provisional Government.

The opponents of the struggle for power approached this question in quite another manner. At the Party Conference in April, comrade Kamenev complained:

"In number 19 of the "Pravda" a resolution upon the overthrow of the Provisional Government was presented for the first time, by comrades (This apparently refers to Lenin, L. T.), which was published before the last crisis. This slogan was then rejected as a disorganising one and branded as adventurous. That means that our comrades have learnt something during this crisis. The proposed resolution (that is, the resolution which Lenin presented to the Conference, L. T.) repeats the same error".

This formulation of the question is extremely characteristic. After the sounding attempt, Lenin withdrew the slogan for the immediate overthrow of the Provisional Government, he withdrew it, however, only for a few weeks, or months according to the rapidity with which the indignation of the masses against the opportunists would increase. The opposition however, considered the slogan itself to be a mistake.

In the temporary retreat of Lenin there was not the slightest indication of a change of policy. He did not conclude that the democratic revolution was not yet at an end, but exclusively that the masses were not yet capable of overthrowing the Provisional Government and that therefore everything had to be done to make the working class capable of overthrowing it on the morrow.

The whole April Conference of the Party was devoted to this fundamental question. Shall we proceed to the conquest of power in the name of the socialist revolution or shall we help (anyone) to complete the democratic revolution? Unfortunately, the report of this April Conference has not yet been published till this day, although there was hardly a Party Conference in the history of our Party which was of such unique and immediate importance for the fate of the Revolution as this April Conference in 1917.

The standpoint of Lenin was: irreconcilable struggle against the idea of the defence of the Fatherland and its supporters, conquest of the majority in the soviets, overthrow of the Provisional Government, conquest of power through the soviets, a revolutionary peace policy, a programme of socialist overthrow inside the country and the international revolution outside. As opposed to this, the opposition stood as we already know, for the completion of the democratic revolution by means of a pressure on the Provisional Government, in which the soviets should remain "control organs" upon the bourgeois power. From this sprang another, much more reconcilable, attitude towards the defence of the Fatherland.

One of the opponents of the standpoint of Lenin objected at the April Conference:

"We speak of the workers' and soldiers' soviets as of the organisational centres of our forces and our power. . . . Its name alone shows that it represents a bloc of petty bourgeois and proletarian forces which still stands before uncompleted bourgeois democratic tasks. If the democratic revolution were completed, then this bloc could not exist . . . and the proletariat would carry on a revolutionary struggle against it . . . However, we recognise the soviets as organisational centres of our forces. In consequence, the bourgeois revolution is not yet completed, it has not yet outlived itself, and I believe, we must all recognise that after the completion of this revolution the power will really go over into the hands of the proletariat. (Speech of Comrade Kamenev.)

The schematic hopelessness of this outline is quite clear: The point is, that this "completion of the revolution" cannot take place without a change of power. In the speech quoted above the class skeleton of the revolution is completely ignored. The tasks of the Party are not determined by the actual relations of class forces, but on the basis of a formal statement of the character of the revolution as bourgeois or bourgeois democratic. We must go together with the petty

bourgeoisie in a bloc and carry out a control upon the bourgeois power so long as the bourgeois revolution is not completed. This is a pure Menshevist scheme. After a doctrinaire limitation of the tasks of the revolution by their characterisation (as a "bourgeois" revolution) one must necessarily come to the policy of controlling the Provisional Government and to the demand that this government set up a program of peace without annexations, etc. By the completion of the democratic revolution one understood a number of reforms through the Constituent Assembly in which the rôle of the Left Wing is allotted to the bolshevik Party. The slogan "All Power to the Soviets" would have been deprived of all actual meaning by such a conception. No one expressed this so logically and so well thought out at the April Conference as the late Nogin, who also belonged to the opposition.

"During the process of development the soviets lose the most important functions. A number of administrative functions will be handed over to the town, the self-administrative and other institutions. When we examine the further development of the state constitution, we cannot deny that a Constituent Assembly and after it a parliament will be convened So it becomes clear that the most important functions of the soviets gradually die. This, however, does not mean that the soviets will die a shameful death. They only surrender their functions. The realisation of the communal republic will not be attained with the soviets."

The third opponent finally approached the question from the point of view that Russia was still unripe for socialism:

"Can we reckon upon the support of the masses if we issue the slogan of 'the proletarian revolution?' Russia is the most petty bourgeois country in Europe. It is impossible to reckon upon the sympathy of the masses for the socialist revolution. And for this reason the more the Party represents the standpoint of the socialist revolution, the more will it become a propagandist circle. The West must take the initiative for the socialist revolution."

And further:

"Where does the sun of the socialist revolution rise? I believe that on the basis of all conditions, upon the basis of the petty bourgeois nature of our country, that we cannot take the initiative for the socialist revolution. No forces, no objective conditions for this exist in our country. In the West, however, this question will be put in much the same way as the question of the overthrow of Czarism is put to us."

Not all the opponents of the Leninist standpoint quite came to the conclusion of Nogin at the April conference. But all of them were logically compelled to adopt this conclusion a few months later upon the eve of October. Either leadership of the Proletarian Revolution or the rôle of the opposition in the bourgeois parliament — that is how the question stood inside our Party. It is quite clear that this second standpoint was actually Menshevist or, more correctly expressed, a standpoint which the Mensheviks were compelled to abandon after the February insurrection. Actually, the Menshevist greenhorns had babbled for years that the future revolution would be a bourgeois revolution, that the government of the bourgeois revolution would only be able to fulfil bourgeois tasks, that the social democracy would not be able to take over the tasks of the bourgeois democracy and would be compelled to "push the bourgeoisie to the Left" and themselves to remain in opposition. Martinov developed this theme with a particularly tiresome thoroughness. At the outbreak of the bourgeois revolution in 1917 the Mensheviks very quickly found themselves in the government. Of all their "principles" only one political conclusion remained, i. e. that the proletariat dared not take power. It is, however, quite clear that those Bolsheviks who held Menshevik ministerialism up to scorn and at the same time opposed the conquest of power by the proletariat were in reality themselves approaching the pre-revolutionary standpoint of the Mensheviks.

The revolution led to political reorientations in two directions: The Rights became cadets, the cadets involuntarily be-

came republicans — that was a formal orientation to the Left; the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks became a ruling bourgeois party — that was an orientation to the Right. In such manner bourgeois society sought to create a new skeleton of power, stability and order. Whilst, however, the Mensheviks went from a formal socialist standpoint over to a vulgar democratic one, the Right Wing of the Bolsheviks went over to the formal socialist standpoint, that is to say, to the previous positions of the Mensheviks.

The same regrouping took place in the question of the war also. The bourgeoisie with the exception of a few doctrinaires, tirelessly repeated the formula: "Without annexations and indemnities". All the more so as there was very little hope of any annexations. The Mensheviks and the Zimmerwaldian tendency of the Social Revolutionaries criticised the French socialists on account of their defence of their bourgeois republican fatherland, but they themselves became immediately defenders of the fatherland as soon as they felt themselves in a bourgeois republic: From their passive-internationalist standpoint they went over to an active-patriotic one. At the same time the Right Wing of the Bolsheviks adopted a passive-internationalist standpoint, the standpoint of a "pressure" upon the Provisional Government in the interests of a democratic peace "without annexations and indemnities". The formula of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry collapsed politically and theoretically at the April conference. And two hostile standpoints resulted: A democratic one which hid itself behind formal socialist reservations and a socialist revolutionary real Bolshevik and Leninist standpoint.

The July Days. — The Kornilov Adventure. The Democratic Conference and the Preliminary Parliament.

The decisions of the April conference led the Party upon the fundamentally correct path. The differences in the higher circles of the Party were, however, not yet liquidated. On the contrary. In the course of events they took on still more concrete forms, and in the decisive moments of revolution, in the October days, they became most intense.

The attempt, at the initiative of Lenin, to arrange a demonstration for the 10th of June was condemned as an adventure by those comrades who were dissatisfied with the character of the April action. In consequence of the prohibition of the Soviet Congress, the demonstration of the 10th of June did not take place. On the 18th of June, however, the Party took revenge: The joint demonstration in Petrograd which was arranged upon the basis of a rather uncautious initiative of the opportunists, took place almost completely under Bolshevik slogans. But the government also attempted to undertake something. It began the idiotic and hare-brained offensive at the front. That was a decisive moment. Lenin warned the Party against uncautious steps. On the 21st of June he wrote in the "Pravda":

"Comrades, an action now would be useless. We would have to pass through a new stage in our revolution." (Vol. XIV/1, Page 276.)

However, the July days came, one of the most important mile stones both on the path of the revolution and also on the path of our internal Party differences.

The spontaneous action of the Petrograd masses played the decisive rôle in the July movement. Without doubt Lenin placed himself the question in July: Has the time not yet come? Has the spirit of the masses not yet grown beyond their soviet superstructure? Do we not run the risk of being hypnotised by the soviet legality and hanging behind the mood of the masses and being separated from them? It is very probable that individual purely military actions were undertaken on the initiative of individual comrades during the July days, who were honestly of the opinion that their standpoint

did not deviate from the Leninist estimation of the situation. Lenin said later: "In July we committed rather many stupidities". In reality, however, this action led to a new and more extensive testing in a new and higher stage of the movement. We were compelled to commence a cruel retreat. The Party, in so far as it prepared itself for insurrection and the seizure of power, together with Lenin, saw in the July action only an episode in which we paid dearly for a test of strength with the forces of our opponents, an episode however, which could not prejudice the whole line of our action. On the other hand, those comrades who were hostile to the policy of the conquest of power were compelled to see a damaging adventure in the July episode. The mobilisation of the Right elements of our Party increased and their criticism became ever more energetic. In accordance with this the tone of the defence against this criticism altered. Lenin wrote:

"All this endless lamentation, all these considerations — whether or not we should take part (in the attempt to give the far more than justified dissatisfaction and indignation of the masses a 'peaceful and organised' character!) — lead either to renegadism if they come from Bolsheviks or they represent a usual phenomenon amongst the petty bourgeoisie, the expression of the usual fear and confusion of the petty bourgeois." (Vol. XIV/2, Page 28.)

The word "Renegade" used in such a moment shows the differences in a tragic light. Later this hard word appears ever more often.

The opportunist treatment of the question of power and the question of war led naturally also to a similar attitude with regard to the international. The attempt was made on the part of the Right to induce the Party to participate in the Stockholm Conference of the Social Patriots. On the 16th August, Lenin wrote:

"The speech of comrade Kamenev in the Central Committee on the 6th August in connection with the Stockholm Conference must call forth the sharpest opposition of every Bolshevik remaining true to the Party and its principles." (Vol: XIV/2, Page 56.)

And further, in connection with the phrase that the banner of the revolution would be unfolded at the Stockholm Conference, he writes:

"That is an empty declaration in the spirit of Tschernov and Tseretelli. That is a crying untruth. Not the banner of revolution, but the banner of compromise, of bargaining, of mutual amnesty of the socialist imperialists, the bankers' negotiations over the division of the annexations — this banner will be unfolded at Stockholm." (Ibid 5. 37.)

The path to Stockholm was actually the path to the II. International, just as the participation in the preliminary parliament was the path to the bourgeois republic. Lenin stood for the boycott of the Stockholm Conference, just as he later stood for the boycott of the preliminary parliament. In the heat of the engagement he never forgot for one moment the task of the creation of a new, Communist International.

Already on the 10th April Lenin advocated the alteration of the name of the Party. All objections against the new name he rejected as "arguments of routine, of idleness and indolence of thought". He insisted, "It is high time to fling away the dirty shirt, it is high time for us to put on clean linen". Despite this however, the opposition of the higher circles of the Party was so strong that a whole year passed, during which Russia was flinging off the dirty linen of the bourgeois rule, before the Party could decide to change its name and return to the traditions of Marx and Engels.

The rôle of Lenin during the whole course of 1917 finds a symbolical expression in this affair of the changing of the name of the Party: In the sharpest turnings of history, he continually led a great struggle in the Party against the yesterday in the name of to-morrow. And for a time the opposition of yesterday, which fought under the banner of "tradition" grew with extreme intensity.

The events of the Kornilov adventure, which resulted in a considerable alteration of the situation to our advantage, moderated the differences for a time, but did not remove them. In these days a tendency showed itself in the Right wing of the Party to approach the majority of the soviets on the basis of a defence of the revolution and partly also of the Fatherland. Lenin replied to this at the beginning of September in a letter to the Central Committee:

"In my opinion, he wrote, those comrades lose all their principles who sink to a defence of the Fatherland*) or (as other Bolsheviks) to a bloc with the Social Revolutionaries and down to a support of the Provisional Government. This is fundamentally wrong, it is a lack of principle. We will only defend the country after the power has gone over into the hands of the proletariat" And further:

"We must not support the Kerensky Government even now. That would be a lack of all principle. One can object. Should we then not fight against Kornilov? Of course, yes. But that is not one and the same thing. There is a limit, which some Bolsheviks exceed by falling into 'Opportunism' and allowing themselves to be swept along by the stream of events." (Vol: XIV/2, Page 97.)

The next stage in the development of the differences was the Democratic Conference, (from the 14th to 22nd September), and the preliminary parliament 7th October which arose from it. The task of the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries consisted in binding the Bolsheviks through the soviet legality and in painlessly transforming this legality into bourgeois-parliamentary legality. The Rights went to meet these efforts. We have already seen how they imagined the further progress of the Revolution: The soviets gradually surrender their functions to the respective organisations, to the Duma, to the self-administrative bodies, to the trade unions and finally to the Constituent Assembly, and then drop out of the picture. By way of the preliminary parliament the political attention of the masses should be directed from the soviets as a "temporary" institution already obsolete, to the Constituent Assembly as the coronation of the democratic revolution. However, the Bolsheviks were already in the majority in the Petrograd and Moscow soviets: Our influence in the army grew no longer daily, but hourly. It was no longer a question of a prognosis, no longer of perspectives, but literally a question of what policy we should have to adopt the morrow.

The attitude of the completely ruined opportunist parties at the democratic conference expressed their petty meanness. However, our proposal to leave the democratic conference demonstratively, as something obviously pernicious, met with a strong opposition from the Right elements of the fraction who were still at that time influential in the upper circles of our Party. The conflict upon this question was the signal for the struggle in the question of the boycott of the preliminary parliament. On the 24th September, that is after the democratic conference, Lenin wrote:

"The Bolsheviks should have left the conference as a protest and also to avoid the trap, the object of which was to divert the attention of the people from serious questions to the conference." (Vol: XIV/2, Page 144.)

The debates inside the Bolshevik fraction of the democratic conference upon the question of the boycott of the preliminary parliament had an extremely great significance, despite the comparatively limited nature of their scope. Actually, this was the most extensive and apparently most successful attempt of the Right to lead the Party upon the path of the "completion of the democratic Revolution". These debates were apparently not taken down in stenogram, in any case there is no stenographic report to hand. Up to the moment also, no notes of the secretary have been found. Some extremely scanty material was found by the publisher of the present collected works amongst my papers.

*) Apparently the reference to names has been left out as can be seen from the further construction of the sentence. L. T.

Comrade Kamenev presented arguments which later represented in a sharper and clearer form the contents of the well-known letter of Zinoviev and Kamenev to the Party organisations. (11th October.) Nogin presented the best formulation in principle: The boycott of the preliminary parliament is an appeal for insurrection, that is to say, for a repetition of the July days. A few other comrades proceeded from a general argument of the social democratic parliamentary tactic and said approximately:

"No one would dare to propose to us a boycott of parliament, but it is proposed that we boycott a similar institution only because it is called a **preliminary parliament.**"

The basic conception of the Right was that the Revolution must unavoidably lead from the soviets to bourgeois parliamentarism, and that the "preliminary parliament" represented a natural link in this chain, and that it would be useless to reject participation in this preliminary parliament when we were prepared to occupy the left benches in parliament. One should complete the democratic revolution and "prepare" oneself for the socialist one. But how prepare? Through the school of bourgeois parliamentarism: for the advanced countries show the backward countries the course of their development. The fall of Czarism was recognised as revolutionary, as it actually took place; the conquest of power by the proletariat however, was conceived in a parliamentary fashion upon the basis of the completion of the democracy. Long years of democratic government must lie between the bourgeois and the proletarian revolution. The struggle for participation in the preliminary parliament was the struggle for the "Europeanisation" of the labour movement to join this movement more quickly into the chain of the democratic "struggles for power", that is into the chain of social democracy. The fraction at the democratic conference, which numbered more than a hundred members, was at that time quite like a Party conference. More than half of the fraction spoke for participation in the preliminary parliament. This fact alone was sufficient to cause unrest, and from this moment, Lenin actually sounded the alarm uninterruptedly.

In the days of the democratic conference, Lenin wrote:

"It would be the greatest mistake, the greatest parliamentary cretinism to treat the democratic conference as a parliament. For even if it were to declare itself as a parliament, as the sovereign parliament of the Revolution, it could nevertheless **decide nothing**. The decision lies **somewhere else**, in the working class quarters of Petrograd and Moscow." (Vol: XIV/2, Page 138.)

How Lenin estimated the participation or non-participation in the preliminary parliament can be seen from many of his statements and particularly from his letter to the Central Committee of the 29th September, in which he speaks of such "crying mistakes of the Bolsheviks as the shameful decision to participate in the preliminary parliament". For him this decision expressed the same democratic illusions and petty bourgeois vacillations, in the fight against which he had developed and completed his conceptions of the proletarian revolution. It is not true that many years must lie between the bourgeois and the proletarian revolution. It is not true that the only or the most fundamental or the compulsory school for the preparation for the conquest of power is the school of parliamentarism. It is not true that the way to power can only lead over bourgeois democracy. These are all empty abstractions, doctrinaire schemes the political role of which is to bind the advance guard of the proletariat hand and foot, to convert it into an oppositional political shadow of the bourgeoisie by means of the "democratic" state mechanism: That is indeed the social democracy. The policy of the proletariat must not be conducted according to a school curriculum, but according to the actual commandments of the class struggle. It is not a question of entering the Preliminary Parliament but of organising the insurrection and seizing power. The rest will easily follow. Lenin even proposed to call an extraordinary Party Conference to set up the boycott of the Preliminary Parliament as a platform. From now on, in all his letters and

articles, one thought predominated: No entry into the Preliminary Parliament as the "revolutionary" tail of the opportunists, but into the streets for the struggle for power.

The October Overthrow.

The convening of an extraordinary conference proved to be unnecessary. The pressure of Lenin assured the necessary turn to the left of the forces both in the Central Committee and in the fraction in the preliminary parliament. On the 10th October the Bolsheviks leave the preliminary parliament. In Petrograd a conflict arises between the Soviet and the Government upon the question of transferring the troops of the garrison, which sympathised with the Bolsheviks, to the front. On the 16th October the Revolutionary Military Committee is formed as the legal Soviet organ of the insurrection. The Right wing of the Party attempts to hinder the development of events. The struggle between the tendencies inside the Party and also the class struggle in the country enters the decisive phase. The attitude of the Right is expressed most completely and in principle in the letter of Zinoviev and Kamenev "On the Present Situation". The letter, written on the 11th (24th) October, that is to say, two weeks before the overthrow, and sent to the most important Party organisations, takes a decisive attitude against the decision of the Central Committee upon the armed insurrection. It warns against an underestimation of the enemy but itself underestimates the forces of the revolution tremendously and even denies the existence of the will to struggle amongst the masses (two weeks before the 25th October!). The letter states:

"We are deeply convinced that the declaration of the armed insurrection now means to hazard not only the fate of our Party, but also the fate of the Russian and the international revolution."

If there is to be no insurrection and no conquest of power, what then? The letter answers this question also rather clearly and definitely: "By means of the army and the workers we hold a revolver to the temple of the bourgeoisie" and under this revolver they will not be able to frustrate the Constituent Assembly.

"The prospects of our Party in the election for the Constituent Assembly are excellent The influence of Bolshevism is growing With correct tactics we can obtain a third or perhaps even more of the seats."

The letter takes therefore, openly the course of an "influential" opposition in the bourgeois Constituent Assembly. This purely social democratic course is masked by the following considerations:

"The soviets, which have grown into the life of the country, cannot be destroyed The Constituent Assembly also can only support itself upon the soviets in its revolutionary work. The Constituent Assembly and the Soviets, that is the combined type of state institution which we are approaching."

It is very interesting for a characterisation of the whole policy of the Rights, that the theory of the "combined" state institutions which coalesced the soviets and the Constituent Assembly, was repeated eighteen months later in Germany by Rudolph Hilferding, who fought in the same manner against the seizure of power by the proletariat. The Austro-German opportunist did not know that he was committing a plagiarism.

The letter, "On the Present Situation", contradicted the assertion that the majority of the people already stood behind us, and in this it conceived the majority in a completely parliamentary manner.

"In Russia a majority of the workers and a considerable section of the soldiers is with us" — says the letter. "Everything else is doubtful. We are all convinced, for instance, that if the elections for the Constituent Assembly come now, the majority of the peasants will vote for the S. R.'s. Is that then a mere chance?"

In this formulation of the question lies the fundamental mistake, in not realising that the peasantry has indeed powerful revolutionary interests and can make strong efforts to realise these interests, but however, is not able to take up an independent political attitude: It can either vote for the bourgeoisie through the agency of the S. R.'s or it can actually ally itself with the proletariat.

It depended just upon our policy, which of the two it would do. If we go into the preliminary parliament in order to win an oppositional influence ("a third or more of the seats") in the Constituent Assembly, then we put the peasantry almost mechanically in such a situation that it must attempt to safeguard its interests through the Constituent Assembly, and in consequence, not through the opposition, but through the majority of the Assembly. On the other hand, the conquest of power by the proletariat would immediately create the revolutionary arena for the peasant war against the landowners and the officials. If we wanted to use the words so very much used amongst us, the letter contains at the same time both **an underestimation and also an overestimation** of the peasantry; an underestimation of its revolutionary possibilities (under proletarian leadership!) and an overestimation of its political independence. This double mistake, this simultaneous underestimation and overestimation of the peasantry, comes on its part from an underestimation of our own class and its Party, that is, a social democratic conception of the proletariat. There is nothing unexpected here. All shades of opportunism lead finally to an incorrect estimation of the revolutionary forces and possibilities of the proletariat.

Whilst rejecting the conquest of power, the letter attempts to frighten the Party with the prospect of the revolutionary war.

"The mass of the soldiers supports us not for the slogan of war, but on account of the peace slogan . . . If we were now to take over the power alone and in consequence of the world situation be forced to conduct a revolutionary war, then the soldiers would abandon us. Of course the best section of the young soldiers would remain with us, but the masses of the soldiers would leave us."

These arguments are in the highest degree instructive. We see here already, the fundamental considerations in favour of the signature of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. Here, however, these arguments are directed against the conquest of power. It is quite clear that the standpoint expressed in the letter "On the Present Situation" made the acceptance of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty very much easier for the supporters of this view. Nothing remains for us but to repeat here what we have already said in another place: it was not the temporary capitulation of Brest-Litovsk in itself which characterised the political genius of Lenin, but the conjunction of October with Brest-Litovsk. That must not be forgotten.

The working class fights and grows in the consciousness that its opponent outweighs it. This is expressed daily at every step. The opponent has riches, power, all the means of ideological influence, all instruments of repression. The familiarity with the idea that the enemy outweighs us in forces is the basis of the whole life and whole work of the revolutionary Party in the preparatory period. The consequences of this or that incautious or premature action remind us every time in a cruel manner of the forces of the enemy. However, a moment comes when this habit of regarding the enemy as the stronger changes into the chief hindrance to victory. The present weakness of the bourgeoisie hides itself in the shadow of its yesterday's strength. "You underestimate the forces of the enemy." Around this idea group all the elements which are hostile to the armed insurrection.

"It is the duty of each one who wishes not only to speak of the insurrection", wrote the opponents of the insurrection, two weeks before the victory — "to consider its prospects soberly. We hold it to be our duty also here to say, that at present it would be the most damaging thing to underestimate the strength of the enemy and to overestimate our own strength. The power of the enemy is stronger than it appears. The decision is in

Petrograd, and just here the enemies of the proletarian Party have gathered considerable forces: 5,000 junkers, excellently armed and organised who on account of their class situation are willing to fight and are able to fight, further, the staff, the shock troops, cossacks, a considerable part of the garrison and then a considerable part of the artillery which lies around Petrograd like a fan. Apart from that, the enemy will probably attempt with the help of the Central Executive to bring troops back from the front". ("On the Present Situation.")

It is understood, that in a civil war where one does not count simply the battalions, but takes their possible attitude into consideration, this reckoning can never be absolutely reliable and exact. Even Lenin was of the opinion that the enemy had considerable forces at his disposal in Petrograd and he therefore proposed that the insurrection should begin in Moscow where, in his opinion, it could be carried out without bloodshed. Such mistakes of detail in an estimation made before the event are unavoidable even under the most favourable circumstances and it is more correct to assume the less favourable. What interests us here however, is the fact of the immense overestimation of the strength of the enemy, and the complete distortion of the proportions under conditions where the enemy actually no longer had any armed forces at his disposal.

This question, as the experience in Germany showed, is of immense importance. As long as the slogan of the insurrection had a predominantly if not exclusively agitational meaning for the leaders of the German Party, they simply ignored the question of the armed forces of the enemy (Reichswehr, Fascist troops, police). It seemed to them as though in a permanently growing revolutionary flood, the military question would settle itself. As soon however, as the task confronted them, the comrades, who previously considered the armed forces of the enemy as unimportant, immediately went to the other extreme. They took all the figures relating to the armed forces of the bourgeoisie in all trust and belief, added them carefully to the forces of the Reichswehr and the police, then rounded off the sum from above (up to half a million or more) and thus obtained a compact mass, armed to the teeth, which was quite sufficient to cripple all their own efforts.

The German counter-revolution undoubtedly possessed considerable forces, in any case it was better organised and prepared than our Kornilov and half-Kornilov troops. But also the active forces of the German revolution are quite different. The proletariat constitutes the overwhelming majority of the population of Germany. With us, at least in the first stage, Petrograd and Moscow were decisive. In Germany, however, the insurrection would have immediately had dozens of powerful proletarian points of support. Viewed from this point of view the forces of the enemy were not nearly so dreadful as would appear from the statistics in round figures. In any case, those tendentious calculations which were and are made after the defeat of the German October with the view of justifying the policy which led to the defeat, must be categorically rejected. In this connection, our Russian example has an irreplaceable significance. Two weeks before our bloodless victory in Petrograd — and we could also have accomplished this two weeks earlier — the experienced politicians of our Party saw the junkers against us who were willing to strike and capable of striking, and also the shock troops and the cossacks and the considerable section of the Garrison and the artillery which surrounded us fan-wise, and the troops who were returning from the front. In reality however, nothing, actually nothing existed. Let us imagine for a moment that the opponents of the insurrection had been victorious in the Party and in its Central Committee: the rôle of the leadership in the civil war then stands in all its clearness before us: the revolution would have been condemned in advance to defeat if Lenin had not appealed to the Party against the Central Committee, which he intended to do and which would without doubt have led to success.

Every Party, however, will not have its Lenin under the respective conditions. It is not difficult to imagine how history would have been written if the tendency which rejected the

light had got the upper hand in the Central Committee. The semi-official writers of history would naturally present the thing in such a light that the insurrection in October 1917 would appear the purest nonsense, and the reader would be given hair-raising statistics upon the strength of the junkers, cossacks, shock troops and the artillery in battle array, and upon the army corps approaching from the front. Without testing them in the fire of the insurrection, these forces would be represented in a much more terrible fashion than they actually were. That is the lesson which must be deeply impressed upon the consciousness of every revolutionary.

The incessant, untiring and tenacious influence of Lenin in the Central Committee in September and October was called forth by his constant fear that we might miss the right moment. Nonsense, answered the Right, our influence will continually grow. Who was right? And what does it mean, to miss the right moment? Here we come to the question of where the Bolshevik estimation of the way and the methods of the Revolution, which is active and strategic and through and through energetic, collides with the social democratic Menshevik, through and through fascist estimation. What does it mean, to miss the right moment? The most favourable condition for the insurrection is manifestly given when a maximum regrouping of forces in our favour is present. Naturally, here it is a question of the relations of forces in the sphere of consciousness, that is of the political super-structure, not however, of the basis which one can regard as more or less unalterable for the whole epoch of the revolution. The relations of forces are changing on one and the same economic basis with an equal class division of society, in connection with the mood of the proletarian masses, with the collapse of their illusions, with the accumulation of their political experience, with the shattering of the confidence of the intermediary classes and groups in the state power and finally with the weakening of the self-confidence of the latter. In the revolution, these are all developing processes.

The whole art of tactics consists in seizing the moment when the conditions are most favourable for us. The Kornilov insurrection finally created these conditions. The masses, who had lost their confidence in the majority parties in the soviets, were face to face with the danger of the counter-revolution. They believed that it was now for the Bolsheviks to find a way out of the situation. Neither the elementary decomposition of the state power, nor the elementary stream of the impatient and exacting masses following the Bolsheviks could be permanent. The crisis had to be decided one way or the other. Now or never, repeated Lenin.

And to this the Right replied:

"It would be a deep historical untruth to formulate the question of the transfer of the power into the hands of the proletariat as, now or never. No! The Party of the proletariat will grow, ever broader masses will become acquainted with its programme. And only in one case can this success be annihilated, and that is if the Party, under the present circumstances, takes the initiative for action. . . . We must raise our warning voices against such a pernicious policy." ("On the Present Situation.")

This fatalist optimism must be studied with the greatest attention. It is not national, and it is still less individual. Even last year in Germany we could observe the same tendency. In the main, however, behind this waiting fatalism there is hidden uncertainty and even incapacity to act but, this is masked by the comforting prophecy: We are becoming ever more influential; the farther we go the more our strength grows. A great mistake! The strength of a revolutionary Party only grows till a certain moment. After this moment, however, the process can change into its contrary: As a result of the passivity of the Party the hopes of the masses are converted into disappointment. And in the meantime the enemy recovers from his panic and exploits the disappointment of the masses. We were able to see just such a decisive swing in Germany in October 1923. We were not very much removed from a similar swing of events in Russia in 1917. It would have been enough perhaps if we had let another few weeks go by unused. Lenin was right: now or never!

"The decisive question, however," — so the opponents of the insurrection lunged forward their last and strongest argument—, is whether the spirit amongst the workers and soldiers of the capital is really such that they themselves now see their salvation in the class struggle and will pour into the streets. No! That is not the spirit. . . . The existence of a fighting spirit amongst the broad masses of the town proletariat, a spirit which drives them into the streets, could guarantee that their initiative, that their action would draw with it also those greatest and most important organisations (the unions of the railwaymen, the post and telegraph employees etc.) in which the influence of our Party is weak. But as this spirit does not even exist in the factories and in the barracks, it would be self-deception to attach any expectations to it." ("On the Present Situation.")

These lines, which were written on the 11th October, contain a special and quite real significance if we remember that the leading German comrades, in order to explain their last year's retreat without struggle, have mentioned just this unwillingness of the masses to fight. Just for this reason, the victorious insurrection in general is best secured if the masses have time to collect sufficient experiences to prevent them falling head over heels into the struggle and to make them wait patiently and demand a decisive and shrewd leadership in the struggle. In October 1917, the firm conviction had seized upon the masses of the workers, or at least their leading section on the basis of the experiences of the April insurrection, the July days and the Kornilov adventure, that it was no longer a case of individual elementary protest demonstrations, no longer a case of test actions, but a case for a decisive insurrection for the seizure of power. Accordingly, the mood of the masses becomes more concentrated, more critical and profound.

The transformation from a joyful spontaneity, filled with illusions, to a critical consciousness unavoidably causes a certain postponement of the revolution. This progressive crisis in the mood of the masses can only be overcome by a corresponding policy on the part of the Party, that is above all by the fact that the Party is really prepared and capable of leading the proletarian insurrection. On the other hand, a Party which carried on a revolutionary agitation for a long time and withdrew the masses from the influence of the opportunists, would paralyse the activity of the masses, cause disappointment and dissolution amongst them and annihilate the revolution if, after it had been raised by the confidence of the masses, began to quibble, to practice trickery and to wait. On the other hand it thus furnishes itself the excuse after the defeat to refer to the inactivity of the masses. The letter "On the Present Situation" led us directly upon this path. Fortunately, our Party under the leadership of Lenin decisively liquidated such a spirit in our leading circles. Only thanks to this circumstance was it able to carry out a successful Revolution.

Now after we have characterised the nature of the political questions in connection with the preparation of the October Revolution, and attempted to elucidate the meaning of the differences which arose upon this basis, all that remains for us is to present even if only superficially, the most important moments of the internal Party struggle in the last decisive weeks.

The decision upon the armed insurrection was carried by the Central Committee on the 10th October. On the 11th October the letter described above "On the Present Situation" was sent to the most important Party organisations. On the 18th (31st) October, that is a week before the overthrow, the letter of Kamenev appeared in the "Novaya Shishn". (The new Life.)

"Not only myself and comrade Zinoviev and a number of other practical Party officials" — so reads the letter — "find that it would be an inadmissible and for the proletariat and the Revolution fatal step, to take the initiative now for the armed insurrection, now, under the present relations of forces, independently, and a few days before

the Soviet Congress!" ("Novaya Shisn", No. 156. 18th Oct. 17.)

On the 25th October (7th November) power was conquered in Petrograd and a soviet government formed. On the 4th (17th) November, a number of responsible officials resigned from the Central Committee of the Party and from the Council of People's Commissars and put forward the ultimatory demand that a coalition government should be formed from the soviet parties.

"Apart from this" — they wrote — "there is only one possibility: the formation of a purely Bolshevik government by means of political terror."

And in another document from the same time, it reads:

"We cannot take the responsibility for this fatal policy of the Central Committee which is being carried out against the will of a very large section of the proletariat and the soldiers, which demand a speedy end to the bloodletting between the various sections of the democracy. For this reason therefore we surrender our Mandates as members of the Central Committee in order to gain the right to express our opinion openly before the masses of the workers and soldiers and to demand from them that they support our slogan: "Long live the Government of the Soviet Parties!"' ("The October Overthrow" — Archive of the Revolution 1917. Pages 407—410.)

That is, those comrades who were against the armed insurrection and the conquest of power and who described it as an adventure, after the successful insurrection, proposed to hand back the power to those parties in the struggle against which the proletariat had conquered the power. Upon what grounds should the victorious Bolshevik Party hand back power to the Mensheviks and the S. R's — and it was exactly a question of handing back the power!—? The comrades of the opposition answered this:

"We believe that the creation of such a government is necessary in order to avoid further bloodshed, the approaching famine and the destruction of the Revolution by the followers of Kaledin, to ensure the convening of the Constituent Assembly at the fixed time and to ensure also that the peace programme adopted by the All-Russian Congress of the Workers and Soldiers Soviets will be actually carried out." (Ibid Pages 407—410.)

In other words it was a question therefore of finding a way to bourgeois parliamentarism through the door of the soviets. If the development of the revolution did not lead through the preliminary parliament but took the way through October, then the task, according to the opposition, consisted in saving the Revolution from the Dictatorship with the help of the Mensheviks and the S. R's and drawing it into the channels of the bourgeois régime. It was a question, no more and no less, of the liquidation of October. Naturally, in such circumstances there could be no talk of an agreement.

On the following day, on the 5th (18th) November, a further letter with the same tendency was published:

"I cannot keep silent out of regard for Party discipline when Marxists, against reason and the elementary facts, will not reckon with the objective conditions which demand — if a collapse should be avoided —, an agreement with all socialist Parties . . . I cannot out of regard for Party discipline sacrifice myself to a personal cult and make the political agreement with all socialist parties, which ratify our most essential demands, dependent upon the presence of this or that person in the ministry, and in this way lengthen the bloodshed, if only for a minute." ("Rabotchaya Gazetta" No. 204. 5th November 1917.)

In conclusion the author of the letter (Lozovsky) declares that it is necessary to fight for the convening of a Party conference of solve the question,

"of whether the Party of the Bolsheviks shall remain a Marxist Party of the working class, or finally adopt a policy which has nothing in common with revolutionary Marxism." (Ibid.)

The situation really seemed to be hopeless. Not only the bourgeoisie and the landowners, not only the so-called "revolutionary democracy" in the hands of which many key organisations still remained (the Railway Union, the Army Committees, the Civil Servants, etc.) but also influential officials of our own Party, members of the Central Committee and of the Council of People's Commissars, openly condemned the attempt of the Party to maintain power in order to be able to realise its programme.

One could really have regarded the situation as hopeless if one had judged the events only superficially. What remained for us? To accept the demand of the opposition meant to liquidate October. Then however it would have been senseless ever to have carried it through. Only one thing remained for us: to go forward placing all our hopes in the revolutionary will of the masses. On the 7th of November the decisive declaration of the Central Committee of our Party, drawn up by Lenin, and filled with a genuine revolutionary spirit, appeared in the "Pravda. This declaration was drafted in clear, simple and unequivocal terms; it was intended for the Party members working amongst the masses. This appeal put an end to all doubt upon the further policy of the Party and its Central Committee.

Shame to all those of little faith, shame to all hesitators and doubters, to all those who have allowed themselves to be confused by the bourgeoisie, to all those who have allowed themselves to be misled by the howl of the direct and indirect helpers of the bourgeoisie! Amongst the masses of the Petrograd, Moscow, and other workers and soldiers there is not the shadow of hesitation. Our Party stands firmly and unitedly at its post to defend the interests of the toilers, above all of the workers and poor peasants." ("Pravda", Nr. 182 of the 7th (20th) November 1917.)

The acutest Party crisis was overcome. The internal struggle, however, still did not cease. The fighting line remained the same. Its political importance, however, decreased. We find an extremely interesting statement in the report of Uritzky to the session of the Petrograd Committee of our Party of the 12th of November upon the convening of the Constituent Assembly.

"The differences inside our Party are not new. That is the same tendency which one could observe formerly in the question of the insurrection. At present a few comrades see in the Constituent Assembly something which is to crown the revolution. They adopt the attitude of the offended and say that we proceeded tactlessly, etc. They are opposed to the control of the meeting of the Constituent Assembly and its relation of forces by the Bolshevik members. They have a purely formal standpoint and do not take into consideration that such a control permits a survey over what is going on in connection with the Constituent Assembly; through it we have the possibility of determining our attitude to the Constituent Assembly. . . . Our standpoint is now that we are defending the interests of the proletariat and the poorest peasantry. A few comrades, however, believe, that we are making a bourgeois revolution the coronation of which is to be the Constituent Assembly."

With the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly one can regard as closed, not only a great chapter in the history of Russia but also a not less important chapter in the history of our Party. After overcoming the internal resistance, the Party of the proletariat not only conquered power, but also maintained it.

The October Insurrection and the Soviet "Legality".

In September, in the days of the Democratic Conference, Lenin demanded the immediate transition to the insurrection:

"In order to handle the insurrection in a Marxist manner, that is as an art we must, without losing a minute, organise a staff for the insurrectionary troops, apportion our forces, place the reliable regiments at the most

important points, encircle the Alexander Theatre (The seat of the Democratic Conference Ed.), take the Peter and Paul fortress, arrest the General Staff and the Government, and send such troops against the Junkers and the die-hard Division who are prepared sooner to fall than permit the enemy to approach the centre of the town: we must mobilise the armed workers and appeal to them for the last despairing struggle, immediately occupy the telegraph and telephone centres, and quarter our insurrectionary staff in the head telephone exchange so that it has telephonic connections with all factories, all regiments and all support points of the armed struggle etc. That serves naturally only as an example, only as an **illustration** of the fact that in a given moment one cannot remain true to Marxism, to the Revolution **unless one regards the insurrection as an art.** (Lenin. Vol: XIV/2, Page 140.)

This formulation of the question assumes that the preparation and the carrying out of the insurrection is done through and in the name of the Party and only then the victory is confirmed by the Soviet Congress. The Central Committee did not accept this proposal. The insurrection was lead through the channels of the Soviets and was connected agitationaly with the Second Soviet Congress. This difference demands a detailed explanation. It is naturally not a question of principle, but purely one of technique, although one of great practical importance.

We have already spoken above of the strained anxiety with which Lenin regarded a postponement of the insurrection. The agitation which formally connected the insurrection with the approaching Second Congress of the Soviets, in view of those vacillations which had already shown themselves in the leadership of the Party, could only seem to Lenin as a crime, as an intolerable postponement, as a concession to the hesitancy and to the hesitating loss of time. From the end of September onwards, Lenin returned again and again to this idea.

"With us in the Central Committee and amongst the leaders of the Party, — he wrote on the 29th September — there is the tendency or opinion that we should wait for the Soviet Congress as opposed to the standpoint of the immediate seizure of power, the immediate insurrection. This tendency or opinion must be fought." At the beginning of October, Lenin wrote:

"Hesitation is a crime, to wait for the Soviet Congress is a childish play with formality, a stupid play with formality, and treachery to the Revolution."

In the theses for the Petrograd Conference of the 8th October, Lenin said:

"We must struggle against the constitutional illusions and hopes placed upon the Soviet Congress. We must abandon the prejudiced opinion that we should unconditionally wait for it" etc.

Finally Lenin wrote on the 24th October:

"It is more than clear that a postponement of the insurrection now would mean actually the same as death. History would never pardon the revolutionaries for a postponement, revolutionaries who can (and also certainly will win now) whilst to-morrow they would hazard much and could even lose everything."

All these letters in which every sentence has been hammered out upon the anvil of the revolution are characteristic of Lenin and are of more than ordinary interest for an estimation of the situation. Their leading idea is the anger, the protest and the indignation at the fatalist, waiting social democratic menshevik attitude towards the revolution, which was regarded as an endless chain. If time is at all an important factor in politics, then in war or revolution it is a hundred times more important. One cannot do everything also to-morrow what is possible to settle to-day. An insurrection, the overthrow of the enemy, the seizure of power can be possible to-day, to-morrow however, impossible. The seizure of power means nevertheless a turning point in history: can such an event then depend upon twenty four hours? Yes,

it can. When matters have come as far as the armed insurrection, then the events no longer permit themselves to be measured by the long rule of politics, but by the shorter rule of war. To lose a few weeks, a few days, sometimes even a single day, means under certain circumstances an abandonment of the Revolution, Capitulation. If the Leninist alarm had not been given, that pressure, that criticism, that strained and passionately revolutionary mistrust, then the Party would not have built its front in the decisive moment, for the opposition in the leadership of the Party was too great; and in war and civil war, the staff plays a great rôle.

It is also however, quite clear that the preparation and the carrying out of the insurrection under the cover of the Second Soviet Congress and under the slogan of its defence, was of incalculable advantage to us. From the moment when we, of the Petrograd Soviet, raised a protest against the order of Kerensky dispatching two thirds of the garrison to the front, we practically entered the state of armed insurrection. Lenin, who was outside Petrograd, did not recognise this circumstance in its full significance. In all his letters from that time, as far as I can recollect, there is no word about this event. In the meantime, however, the commencement of the insurrection of the 25th October was already two thirds if not more, decided upon in that moment when we opposed the order for the departure of the Petrograd troops, formed our Revolutionary Military Committee (16th October) and sent our commissars to all sections of the troops and to all institutions, and in this way, not only completely isolated the Petrograd Military Staff, but also the Government. Actually, that was already an armed if unbloody insurrection of the Petrograd regiments under the leadership of the Revolutionary Military Committee against the Provisional Government under the slogan of preparation for the defence of the Second Soviet Congress which was to decide the fate of the power.

The advice of Lenin to commence the insurrection in Moscow, where, in Lenin's opinion, the course would be bloodless, was caused by the circumstance that in consequence of his illegality he had not the possibility of estimating the powerful change that had taken place, not only in the spirit of the masses, but also in the organisational connections, in the whole military machine and hierarchy after the "silent" insurrection of the garrison of the capital in the middle of October. From that moment on when the battalions upon the order of the Revolutionary Military Committee refused to leave the town and did not leave it, we had a victorious insurrection in the capital which could hardly be hidden by the remains of the bourgeois democratic state apparatus. The insurrection of the 25th October had only a supplementary character. It was just for this reason, that it took such a painless course. On the other hand the struggle in Moscow had a much more prolonged and bloody character, despite the fact that the soviet power in Petrograd was already being consolidated. It is clear that if the insurrection in Moscow had taken place before the Petrograd overthrow, then it would have unavoidably taken on a still more protracted character and its outcome would have been very doubtful. The failure in Moscow however, would also have had serious consequences for Petrograd. Naturally, the victory would not have been out of the question also in this way. But the way actually taken by the events proved itself to be considerably more economical, more advantageous and more successful.

We had the possibility of adapting the seizure of power in a greater or lesser degree to the time of the meeting of the Second Soviet Congress, only because the "silent", almost "legal" armed insurrection was already two thirds if not nine tenths an accomplished fact, at least in Petrograd. We call this insurrection "legal" in the sense that it grew from the "normal" conditions of the double relation of power. Even under the rule of the opportunists, it often happened in the Petrograd Soviet that the soviet controlled or altered decisions of the Government. This lay in the constitution of that regime known to history as the "Kerensky Era". When we Bolsheviks came to power in the Petrograd Soviet we only continued this double power and deepened its methods. We brought into our sphere of influence the control of the order commanding the garrison to the front. Through this we masked the actual insurrection of the Petrograd garrison by the traditions

and methods of the legal double relation of power. Not content with this, we adapted the question of power in our agitation to the time of the Second Soviet Conference, and we developed and deepened the already existing traditions of the double relation of power and prepared the extension of the soviet legality for the Bolshevik insurrection on a national scale.

We did not put the masses to sleep with constitutional soviet illusions; under the slogan of the struggle for the Second Congress, we won the bayonets of the revolutionary army and consolidated them organisationally. In the meantime we succeeded to a greater degree than we had expected, in catching our opportunist enemies in the trap of legality. Political cunning, particularly during the revolution, is always dangerous; usually one cannot deceive the enemy, but one can confuse the masses one is leading. If our "cunning" succeeded a hundred per cent, it was because it was no artificial invention of overclever strategists who wished to avoid the civil war, but because it sprang naturally from the conditions of the decomposition of the opportunist Government, from its crying contradictions. The Provisional Government wished to get rid of the Garrison. The soldiers did not want to go to the front. We gave this unwillingness political expression, we gave it a revolutionary aim and a legal cloak. Through this we obtained a unique unanimity inside the garrison and closely linked it up with the Petrograd working class. On the other side, our opponents in the hopelessness of their situation and in the confusion of their ideas, tended to take the soviet cover for the essence. They wished to be deceived and we gave them this opportunity in full.

The struggle around the soviet legality went on between us and the opportunists. In the consciousness of the masses the soviets were the source of power, Kerensky, Tseretelli and Skobelev came from the Soviets. But we were also closely connected with the soviets through our chief slogan: "All power to the Soviets!" The bourgeoisie derived its legal continuity from the State Duma. The opportunists derived theirs from the soviets, but with the intention of destroying them; we also similarly from the soviets, but with the intention of transferring all power to them. The opportunists could not yet break the soviet continuity and they hurried therefore to build a bridge from it to parliamentarism. For this purpose they convened the Democratic Conference and the Preliminary Parliament. The participation of the soviets in the Preliminary Parliament was at the same time a sanction of this path. The opportunists attempted to trap the revolution with the bait of soviet legality and then to draw it into the channels of bourgeois parliamentarism.

But we also had an interest that the soviet legality should serve us. At the end of the Democratic Conference we wrested an agreement from the opportunists to convene the Second Soviet Congress. This Congress caused them extremely great difficulties, on the one hand they could not oppose the convening of it without breaking with the soviet legality, on the other hand, however, they were quite aware that according to its composition, this Congress boded no good for them. All the more decidedly therefore, we appealed to the Second Congress as the master in the country and adapted all our preparatory work to the task of supporting and defending the Soviet Congress against the unavoidable attacks of the counter-revolution. If the opportunists caught us with the soviet legality through the Preliminary Parliament which arose from the soviets, then we caught them also with this soviet legality through the Second Conference. The arrangement of an armed insurrection under the open slogan of the seizure of power through the Party, and the preparation and then the carrying out of the insurrection under the slogan of the defence of the rights of the Soviet Congress, are fundamentally different things. The adaption of the task of the conquest of power to the Second Soviet Congress was the result of no naive hopes of any sort that the Soviet Congress would be able to solve the question of power alone. Such soviet fetishism was far removed from us. The whole work, not only the political, but also the organisational and military technical work, which was necessary for the conquest of power, proceeded with full steam. The legal cloak for this work was always the reference to the coming Congress which was to bring the solution to the question of power. We adopted the

offensive along the whole line, but maintained the appearance, however, as though we were defending ourselves.

On the other hand. If the Provisional Government had only wanted to defend itself energetically and seriously, then it would have attacked the Soviet Congress, forbidden its convening and in this way have given its opponents an extremely unfavourable pretext for itself for the armed insurrection. That was not sufficient however. Not only did we put the Provisional Government into an unfavourable political situation, but we lulled their lazy and immovable ideas into a sense of security. These people really believed that with us it was a question of a soviet parliamentarism, of a new congress where a new resolution upon the question of power would be presented, according to the example of the resolutions of Petrograd and Moscow Soviets whereupon the Government, basing itself upon the Preliminary Parliament and the forthcoming Constituent Assembly, would turn aside and put us into an absurd situation. We have the reliable testimony of Kerensky that the thoughts of the wisest amongst the wise petty bourgeois worked in this direction. He relates in his memoirs how, in the night of the 25th October, there were stormy debates in his cabinet with Dan and the others upon our insurrection which was then proceeding at full speed ahead.

"Above all Dan declared to me" — says Kerensky — "that they were far better in touch with the situation than I and that, under the influence of my 'reactionary staff' I overestimated the events. Then he informed me that the resolution of the majority of the soviets of the republic which was so unpleasant for the ambition of the Government' was extremely useful and of great significance for the 'change of mood amongst the masses'. The effect of this resolution is 'already showing itself' and the influence of the Bolsheviks will quickly decrease. On the other hand, according to his words, the Bolsheviks, in negotiations with the leaders of the soviet majority, had declared themselves ready to 'submit to the majority of the soviets' and declared also that they would be 'ready to-morrow' to take all measures to strangle the insurrection which had broken out 'without their will or sanction'. Finally Dan recalled that the Bolsheviks would disband their military staff 'to-morrow already' (always to-morrow!) and then declared that all the measures undertaken by me for the suppression of the insurrection only 'angered the masses' and that with my 'interference' I only prevented the leaders of the majority in the soviets from successfully continuing the negotiations with the Bolsheviks upon the liquidation of the insurrection. . . . For the sake of completion it must be added that just at the time when Dan was making these important communications to me, the troops of the 'Red Guard' were occupying one government building after another. And almost immediately after Dan and his comrades left the Winter Palace, the Minister for Culture, Kartashev, was arrested in the Million Street on his way home from a session of the Provisional Government and taken to Smolny, where Dan also went to continue the peaceful negotiations with the Bolsheviks.

"One must admit that the Bolsheviks acted with the greatest energy and cleverness at that time. Whilst the insurrection was in full swing and the 'Red Army' was actively engaged everywhere in the town, a few Bolshevik leaders appointed for this purpose, attempted not without success, to bring the representatives of the 'revolutionary democracy' to look without seeing, and to hear without understanding. These artists spent the whole night through with endless debates about various formulas which allegedly were to form the basis for the reconciliation and the liquidation of the insurrection. By these methods of 'negotiations' the Bolsheviks won an immense amount of time and it was not possible for the Mensheviks and the S. R.'s to mobilise their forces in time. This was to be proved." (A. Kerensky, "From Afar" Page 197/198.)

Yes, this was to be proved. The opportunists were, as we can see from this description, completely trapped with the bait of soviet legality. The assumption of Kerensky that specially

appointed Bolshevik leaders misled the Mensheviks and the S. R.'s upon the alleged forthcoming liquidation of the insurrection, is not actually correct. The fact was, those Bolsheviks who really wanted a liquidation of the insurrection and who believed in the formula of a socialist Government based upon the agreement of all parties, were they who participated most actively in the negotiations. Objectively however, these negotiators undoubtedly rendered a certain service to the insurrection, for through their own illusions they fostered the illusions of the enemy. However, they were only able to render this service to the Revolution because the Party carried through the insurrection despite all their advice and warnings, with unweakened energy to the end.

But in order that these widely extended encircling manoeuvres could be successful, a number of quite unusual circumstances, both great and small, had to come together. Above all, an army was necessary which was no longer prepared to fight. The whole course of the Revolution, particularly its first period from February until October, would as we have already said, have gone very differently if a many million peasant army, dismembered and dissatisfied, had not existed at the time of the Revolution. Only upon this assumption could we carry out the experiment with the Petrograd Garrison which was decisive for the October victory. There can be no possibility of making a law from the unique combination of this "bloodless", almost unnoticed insurrection, with the defence of the soviet legality against the attacks of Kornilov. On the contrary, one can say with conviction that this experience will never and nowhere repeat itself in this form. Nevertheless, it is necessary to study it carefully. It enlarges the viewpoint of every revolutionary and shows him the manifold nature of the methods and means which can be utilised when the aim is kept clearly before the eye. The situation correctly estimated and the struggle carried through decisively and to its logical end.

In Moscow the insurrection had a much more prolonged character and demanded much more expenditure of forces and much greater sacrifices. This can be explained to a certain extent by the fact that the Moscow Garrison had not been subjected to anything like the same revolutionary preparation as had the Petrograd Garrison in connection with the ordering of the latter to the front. We have already said and we repeat, that the armed insurrection in Petrograd took place of two different periods: in the first half of October, when the Petrograd regiments who obeyed the order of the Soviet, which was completely in accord with their own feelings, and suffered no punishment although they refused to obey the order of the highest command. And then on the 25th October when only a supplementary insurrection was necessary which cut the umbilical cord of the state institution created by the February Revolution. On the other hand, in Moscow the insurrection took place without a break. That was really the chief reason for its prolonged character. But there was also another cause: the indecision of the leadership. In Moscow we saw how they went from military operations to negotiations and then returned to the armed struggle.

If hesitation in the leadership, which is observed by the followers, is at all dangerous in politics, then during a time of armed insurrection it is deadly dangerous. The dominating class already loses confidence in its strength (without this no hope of victory can exist) but the state apparatus is still in its hands. It is the task of the revolutionary class to capture the state apparatus. For this it needs confidence in its own strength. When the Party has led the workers along the path of insurrection, then it must take all the consequences of this step. In war one must act in a war like manner, here, hesitation and waste of time are less permissible than at any other time. In war a short measure is used. To mark time, if only for a few hours, means that the dominant class recovers a part of its self-confidence and that the insurrectionaries are deprived of a corresponding part of theirs. Through this is directly decided that relation of forces which in its turn decides the result of the struggle. From this point of view the military operations in Moscow must be studied in relation to the political leadership.

It would be extremely important to mention still a number

of points where the civil war proceeded under special circumstances, for instance, complicated by the nationalist element. Such a study on the basis of a careful preparation of the material must necessarily extremely enrich our ideas upon the mechanics of the civil war and in this way facilitate the elaboration of definite methods and rules with a sufficiently general character so that they can be compiled into a sort of "Rules" of the civil war. But without waiting for the conclusions of such a detailed enquiry, one can say that the fate of the civil war in the provinces depended to a great degree upon the result in Petrograd, despite the delay in Moscow. The February Revolution destroyed the old state apparatus. The Provisional Government inherited it but was however incapable of renewing or consolidating it. In consequence the state apparatus worked between February and October only on account of the remains of bureaucratic laziness. The bureaucratic province was accustomed to arrange its affairs according to Petrograd: it did this in February and it repeated it again in October.

Our greatest advantage consisted in the fact that we prepared the overthrow of a government which had had no time to consolidate itself. The extreme vacillation and lack of self-confidence inside the state apparatus of February greatly facilitated our work and awakened the self-confidence of the masses and their confidence in the Party.

In Germany and in Austria after the 9th November 1918 there was a similar situation. There however, the social democracy filled up the gaps in the state apparatus and assisted the bourgeois republican regime to maintain itself. If it is not possible even now to present this regime as a model of permanence and stability nevertheless, it has lasted already for six years. With regard to the other capitalist countries, they will not have the advantage of the quick following of the bourgeois and proletarian revolution. Their February lies very far back. It is true that in England there are still remnants of feudalism, but there can be no question of any independent bourgeois revolution. The ridding of the country from the Monarchy, the Lords etc. will be accomplished with the broom of the English proletariat as soon as it has seized power. The Proletarian Revolution in the West will have to deal with a fully fledged bourgeois state. That however does not necessarily mean that this state will have a consolidated apparatus at its disposal, for the possibility of the proletarian insurrection demands first of all a rather far reaching process of dissolution of the capitalist state. With us the October Revolution proceeded in a struggle against a state apparatus which, after February, had not had time to consolidate itself, the insurrection in other countries will find itself opposed to a state apparatus in an advanced stage of dissolution.

It must be accepted as a general rule — we accepted this already at the Fourth World Congress of the C. I. — that the strength of the resistance of the bourgeoisie to the revolution in the old capitalist countries will be much greater than was the case with us; the victory of the proletariat will take place with much greater difficulty; as compensation for this however, the seizure of power will immediately ensure it a much more consolidated and firm position than we had after October. With us the civil war only really commenced to play a rôle in the most important towns and industrial centres after the seizure of power and it filled the first three years of the soviet power. Very much suggests that the conquest of power in countries of central and western Europe will cost considerably greater efforts, but that after the conquest of power the proletariat will have an incomparably greater freedom of action. Naturally, these perspectives can only have a conditional character. Very much will depend upon the order taken by the revolution in the various countries of Europe, upon the prospects of military intervention, upon the state of the economic and military forces of the Soviet Union in the given moment, etc. In any case, this fundamental, and I believe, incontestable theory according to which the process of the conquest of power in Europe and in America will meet with a much more serious, tenacious and planned resistance from the ruling class than was the case with us, makes it all the more our duty to regard the armed insurrection and in general the civil war as an art.

Once more upon the Soviets and the Party in the Proletarian Revolution.

In Russia the workers Soviets, both in 1905 and 1917, grew from the movement itself, as the natural organisational form of the movement at a certain stage of the struggle. For the young European parties however, which have taken over the Soviets more or less as a "doctrine" as a "principle", there is always the danger that a fetichlike attitude may be taken towards the Soviets as being some sort of end in themselves for the Revolution. And nevertheless, despite the great advantages of the Soviets as an organisational form of the struggle for power, cases are possible in which the insurrection will be started upon another basis by other organisational forms (factory councils, trade unions) and the Soviets will only come into existence as organs of power during the process of the insurrection or even after the victory.

It is exceedingly instructive to regard the struggle which Lenin opened against organisational fetishism, after the July days in connection with the Soviets, from this point of view. According to the degree in which the social-revolutionary and menshevik soviets in July became organisations openly driving the soldiers into the offensive and suppressing the Bolsheviki, so the revolutionary movement of the working masses could and had to seek new paths. Lenin pointed to the factory councils as an organisation for the struggle for power. (More details upon this is are contained, for instance, in the memoirs of comrade Orjonikitsa.) It is very probable that the movement would have gone just this way had not the Kornilov action come and forced the opportunist Soviets to self-defence, and gave the Bolsheviks the possibility of inspiring the Soviets with new revolutionary life and bringing them into close contact with the masses through the left, the Bolshevik wing.

This question is, as the recent experience in Germany showed, of extreme international importance. It was in Germany that the Soviets were several times called into being as organs of the insurrection — without insurrection; as organs of power — without power. This led in 1923 to the movement of the broad proletarian and semi-proletarian masses grouping itself around the factory councils, which essentially fulfilled all those functions which had to be fulfilled in Russia by the Soviets in the period immediately before the struggle for power. In August-September 1923 the proposal was made by some comrades to proceed immediately to the formation of Soviets in Germany. After long and energetic debates, this proposal was rejected, and that was correct. Having regard to the fact that the factory councils had already actually become the concentration points for the revolutionary masses, the Soviets, during the preparatory period, could only have proved themselves pointless as parallel organisations. They would only have diverted the thoughts aside from the material tasks of the insurrection (army, police, armed factory hundreds, railways etc.) to empty organisational forms. On the other hand, the creation of Soviets, as such, before the insurrection and apart from the immediate tasks of the insurrection, would have meant only an empty proclamation: "we are attacking you!" The Government, which was compelled to "tolerate" the factory councils insofar as they had become the rallying point of great masses, would have immediately directed the heaviest blow against the first Soviet, as against the official organ of the "attempt" to conquer power. The communist would have been compelled to defend the Soviets as a purely organisational undertaking. The decisive struggle would not have developed itself around the conquest or defence of actual positions, and not at a time chosen by us in which the insurrection would spring from the conditions of the mass movement, no, the struggle would have taken place around the "banner" of the Soviets at a time chosen by the enemy and forced upon us.

From this it is quite clear that the whole preparatory work for the insurrection could have adapted itself with complete success to the organisational form of the factory councils which had already succeeded in becoming mass organisations and which continually grew and strengthened and could ensure the Party complete freedom of manoeuvre in relation to the time for the insurrection. It is clear that at a definite point of the development, the Soviets would have come into existence. It

is questionable however, if under the circumstances mentioned above, they would have come into existence as the immediate organs of the insurrection in the heat of the combat, for this would have meant the danger of creating two revolutionary centres in the most acute moment of the situation. An English proverb says that one should not change horses whilst crossing the stream. It is possible that after the victory the Soviets would have sprung into existence at all the decisive points in the country. In any case, the successful insurrection would have led unavoidably to the creation of Soviets as the organs of power.

One must not forget that in Russia the Soviets did not come into existence in the "democratic" stage of the Revolution, that they were, so to speak, legalised at this stage and that we then inherited and utilised them. This will not repeat itself in the Proletarian Revolutions of the West. There the Soviets will be formed in the majority of cases upon the appeal of the communists, that is, as the direct organs of the proletarian insurrection. Naturally, the possibility is also not excluded that the dissolution of the bourgeois state apparatus will be rather far gone even before the proletariat will be able to conquer power, and this would then create the preliminary condition for the formation of the Soviets as the open organs for the preparation of the insurrection. This will however, be hardly the general rule. Cases where it is only possible in the very last days to form Soviets as the immediate organs of the insurrectionary masses are the more probable.

Finally, such cases are very probable in which the Soviets will be formed after the outbreak of the insurrection, or even after the victory, as organs of the new power. One must remember all these variations in order to avoid falling into organisational fetishism and changing the Soviets from a pliable living form of the struggle, as they should be, into an organisation of "principle", fastening itself upon the movement from the outside and disturbing its correct development.

Much has been written in our press of late to the effect, that, for instance, we do not know through what door the Proletarian Revolution will come in England: through the Communist Party or through the trade unions. Such a formulation of the question, which has the appearance of possessing a broad historical perspective, is fundamentally false and dangerous, because it disregards the chief lesson of the last years. The failure of the Revolution after the end of the war was only due to the fact that there were no Parties. This conclusion can be drawn in relation to all Europe. One can judge this question still more concretely when one considers the fate of the revolutionary movement in the individual countries. With regard to Germany, the matter in this connection is quite clear: the German Revolution could have been victorious both in 1918 and 1919, if it had had a correct Party leadership. In 1917 we saw that for example, in relation to Finland: there the revolutionary movement developed under uniquely favourable circumstances, under the cover and direct support of revolutionary Russia. But the Finnish Party, the leading majority of which was social democratic, caused the Revolution to fail.

This lesson presents itself no less clearly from the experiences in Hungary. There, the communists together with the left social democrats did not conquer power, but received it from the hands of the terrified bourgeoisie. The victorious Hungarian Revolution — without struggle, without victory — was from its first step on, without any militant leadership. The Communist Party amalgamated with the Social Democratic Party and proved thereby that it was no Communist Party, and in consequence it was incapable, despite the will to struggle of the Hungarian proletariat, of maintaining the power which it had so easily obtained. Without the Party, outside the Party, with the avoidance of the Party, with a substitute for the Party, no victory of the Proletarian Revolution is possible. That is the chief lesson of the last decade.

It is true that the English trade unions can become a powerful lever for the Proletarian Revolution. They can, for instance, under certain circumstances and for a definite time, replace even the workers Soviets. They cannot however, play such a rôle without the Communist Party and certainly not against it, but solely under the condition that the communist influence in the trade unions is decisive. This lesson — in

relation to the rôle and significance of the Party in the Proletarian Revolution—has been bought by us too dearly to give it up lightly, or even to weaken its significance.

In the bourgeois revolution, class-consciousness, clearness of aim and systematic action played a far inferior rôle than they are called upon to play in the Revolution of the proletariat and even already do play. The driving force of the revolution was then also the masses, but considerably less organised and conscious than now. The leadership found itself in the hands of various fractions of the bourgeoisie which controlled all wealth and education and the organisations bound up with these advantages, (towns, universities, press etc.). The bureaucratic Monarchy defended itself empirically and proceeded gropingly. The bourgeoisie utilised the moment as quickly as it could, it used the movement of the lower sections and flung all its social weight into the scale in order to conquer power.

The proletarian Revolution is different owing to the very fact that the proletariat is not only the most important attacking power, but also through its advance-guard, the leading power. That rôle played in the bourgeois revolutions by the economically powerful bourgeoisie, its organisations, its municipalities, its universities etc., can, in the Proletarian Revolution, only fall to the lot of the Party of the proletariat. The importance of its rôle increases with the increasing class-consciousness of the enemy. In the course of its century-long rule, the bourgeoisie has gone through a political training which is incomparably higher than that of the old bureaucratic monarchy. If parliamentarism has been for the proletariat to a certain degree a preparatory school for the revolution, then it has also been to a still greater degree a school of counter-revolutionary strategy for the bourgeoisie. It is sufficient to point to the fact that by means of parliamentarism, the bourgeoisie has so led the social democracy that it is to-day the chief support of private property. The epoch of the social revolution, as its first steps have shown, will be the epoch of not only strenuous and merciless, but also of thought out and calculated struggles, and that in a far greater degree than was the case with us in 1917.

Just for this reason, we must approach the problems of the civil war, and particularly the problems of the armed insurrection, in a quite different fashion than we have previously done. With Lenin we repeat the words of Marx that insurrection is an art. This thought will however, become an empty phrase unless we reinforce the Marxist formula by a study of the basic element of the art of civil war upon the basis of the gigantic experiences passed through in recent years. It must openly be said: the force of social democratic tradition which has not yet been overcome expresses itself in our Party in a superficial attitude to the questions of the armed insurrection. The Party which looks away from the questions of the civil war in the hope that everything will arrange itself in the decisive moment, will certainly suffer defeat. The experiences of the proletarian struggles from the year 1917 onwards must be collectively worked through.

* * *

The history of the Party groupings and tendencies in the year 1917 described above represent at the same time an important section of the experiences of the civil war, and it is, we believe, of immediate importance for the policy of the whole Communist International. We have already said and repeat it again that the study of the differences of opinion may in no way be regarded as though it were directed against those comrades who pursued a false policy. On the other hand it would be intolerable to wipe the greatest chapter out of the history of our Party only because not all members of the Party kept pace with the revolution of the proletariat. The Party may and must know the whole past, in order to estimate it correctly and to give all events their particular significance. The tradition of the revolutionary Party does not come from silence, but through critical clearness.

History provided our Party with quite incomparable revolutionary advantages. The traditions of the heroic struggle against Czarism, the customs and methods of revolutionary self-sacrifice, which is closely connected with the conditions of illegality, the widely extended theoretical attention to the revolutionary experiences of humanity, the struggle against Menshevism, the struggle against the Narodniki, the struggle against

reconciliation tendencies, the great experiences of the Revolution of 1905, the theoretical work upon these experiences during the years of the counter-revolution, the treatment of the problems of the international working class movement from the standpoint of the revolutionary lessons of 1905 — all these in their entirety gave to our Party a unique steeling, the greatest theoretical acuteness and the unexampled revolutionary vigour. And nevertheless, even in this Party, in its leadership, immediately before the decisive action a group of experienced revolutionary old Bolsheviks was formed which placed itself in the sharpest opposition to the proletarian insurrection and during the most critical period of the Revolution from February 1917 until approximately February 1918, adopted an essentially social democratic standpoint in all fundamental questions.

The unique and unexampled influence of Lenin even at that time, was necessary to save the Party and the Revolution from the great confusion which resulted from these circumstances. This must under no circumstances be forgotten, if we want the Communist Parties of other countries to learn something from us. The problem of selecting the leading persons has an extremely great significance for the Western European parties. The experience of the German October, which did not take place, proclaims that particularly clearly. But this selection must proceed from the point of view of **revolutionary action**. During this year Germany provided sufficient examples of the testings of leading party members in the moment of the immediate struggle. Without this criterion everything else is unreliable. During this year France was much poorer even in partial revolutionary convulsions. Despite this, however, some sparks of the civil war flew into its political life and the Central Committee of the Party and the leaders of the trade union movement were compelled to react energetically to unpostponable and burning questions. (For instance the bloody meeting on the 21st of January 1924.) The attentive study of such sharp episodes provides indispensable material for the estimation of the party leadership, the attitude of various party organs and individual leading officials. To ignore such lessons, to fail to draw the necessary conclusions with regard to the selection of persons, would mean to go to unavoidable defeat, for the victory of the proletarian revolution is not possible without a decisive, determined and courageous party leadership.

Every party, even the most revolutionary, will unavoidably produce an organisational conservatism, otherwise it could be deprived of the necessary consistency. It is here a question of nuance. In a revolutionary party, the absolutely necessary dash of conservatism must be joined with complete freedom from all routine, with initiative in manoeuvring and with energetic swing. These characteristics can be best tested at the turning point of historical development. We saw further back the words of Lenin which said that with a sudden alteration of the circumstances and the tasks resulting from them, even the most revolutionary parties continue to pursue yesterday's policy and in this way become a drag upon the revolutionary development, or threaten to do so. And the conservatism of the party and its revolutionary initiative finds its most concentrated expression in the organs of the party. The "sharp turn", however, still stands before the European Communist Parties: the turn from the preparatory work to the conquest of power. This is the most exacting, unpostponable and dangerous turn. To miss this moment means the greatest defeat which a party can suffer.

The experiences of the European, above all the German, struggles of last year show us, regarded in the light of our own experience, that there are two types of leaders who are inclined to drag back the party just in the moment when it must make the greatest leap forwards. The first type is inclined to see overwhelming difficulties, hindrances and obstacles in the path of the revolution, and to regard each situation with the firm intention, even if not always conscious, of avoiding the action. With this type Marxism changes into a method of explaining the impossibility of revolutionary action. The purest and most advanced type is to be seen in the representatives of the Russian Mensheviks. But this type goes beyond Menshevism and finds itself suddenly in the most decisive moments at responsible posts in the most revolutionary party. The representatives of the other type distinguish themselves by a superficial agitational character. This type sees absolutely

no hindrances and difficulties in the way unless it runs its head into them. It has the capacity for going around actual difficulties with the help of mere oratory, it regards all questions with the greatest optimism ("they take the matter light-heartedly"), which inevitably changes into the opposite as soon as the hour for decisive action has struck.

For the first hairsplitting revolutionary type the difficulties for the seizure of power consist only in the accumulation and enlargement of all those difficulties which it is accustomed to see in its way. For the second type, the superficial opportunists, the difficulties of revolutionary action always come suddenly. In the preparatory period the attitude of the two is different: The one is a sceptic upon whom one cannot rely too much in the revolutionary sense; the other, however, can appear as an unbridled revolutionary. In the decisive moment, however, both join hands and turn against the insurrection. The whole preparatory work is only valuable in so far as it makes it possible for the party and above all its leading organs, to decide the moment for the insurrection and to lead the insurrection itself. For the task of the Communist Party is the conquest of power, for the purpose of transforming society.

Recently much has been spoken and written upon the necessity for the "Bolshevisation" of the Comintern. This task is quite incontestable and unpostponable, particularly after the terrible experiences of last year in Bulgaria and in Germany. Bolshevism is no doctrine (that is to say, not only a doctrine), but a system of revolutionary education for the proletarian insurrection. What is the Bolshevisation of the Communist Parties? It is such an education of the Parties, such a selection of their leading personalities, that they do not miss the moment of their October. "For this is the law and the prophets."

Two Words upon the Following Book.

The first stage of the "democratic" revolution lasted from the February overthrow to the April crisis, and to the solution of this crisis on the 6th of May by the creation of a coalition government in which the Mensheviks and the Narodniki participated. The compiler of this book took no part in the events of the whole of this first period as he arrived in Petrograd only on the 5th of May, directly on the eve of the formation of the coalition government. The first stage of the revolution and its perspectives are elucidated in the articles written in America. I believe that in all essentials they agree with the analysis of the revolution given by Lenin in his "Letters from Abroad".

From the first day of my arrival in Petrograd I worked in complete conformity with the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks. Naturally, I supported completely and absolutely the Leninist policy of the conquest of power by the proletariat. No shadow of any difference of opinion in the question of the peasantry existed between Lenin and myself. Lenin at that time ended the first stage of the struggle against the Right Bolsheviks and their slogan "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry". Before I formally joined the party I participated in the working out of a number of decisions and documents which were published in the name of the party. The only consideration which postponed my formal entry into the party for three months was my wish to speed the unity of the best elements of the "Meshrayonzy" (an "interfractional" organisation standing between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks to which at that time Comrade Trotzky belonged and which joined the Bolsheviks in July 1917. Ed.) and of the revolutionary internationalists (the Left Wing of the Mensheviks at that time under the leadership of Martov, Ed.) in general. I pursued this policy also in complete agreement with Lenin.

The editor of the following book drew my attention to a reference made in one of my articles written at that time in favour of unity, upon the organisational "sectarianism" of the Bolsheviks. One of the most profound curates of the type of Comrade Sorin naturally rushed to connect this phrase directly with the differences over § 1 of the Statutes. After I have recognised my actual and amongst them also my great organisational mistake, in word and deed, I regard it as superfluous to commence a conflict upon this point. The unprejudiced reader will, however, find a much simpler and immediate explanation of the expression mentioned in the concrete circumstances of the moment. A very great mistrust of the organisational policy of the Petrograd Committee remained from the past amongst the "Meshrayonzy" workers. Arguments in relation to the "sectarianism" with references, as is usual in such cases, to all sorts of "irregularities" were common amongst the "Meshrayonzy". My reply in the article had the following train of thought: The sectarianism as an inheritance of the past certainly exists. In order that it should become less, however, the Meshrayonzy must give up their separate existence.

My purely polemical "proposal" to the first Soviet Congress to form a government from 12 Peshechonov people (Peshechonov was the leader of the "People's Socialists", a party standing between the Cadets and the Social Revolutionaries. Ed.) was characterised by somebody. I think by Suchanov, partly as a sympathetic attitude to Peshechonov and partly as a special policy deviating from the line of Lenin. This is naturally the purest nonsense. When our party demanded that the Soviets under the leadership of the Mensheviks and the Social-Revolutionaries should seize power, it "demanded" by this a Ministry of Peshechonov people: for finally there was no difference of principle between Peshechonov, Tchernov and Dan. They were all equally suited for facilitating the transformation of power from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat. Perhaps Peshechonov knew the statistics better and made a more objective impression than Tseretelli or Tchernov. A dozen of Peshechonov people meant a government of a dozen representatives of the petty bourgeois democracy instead of the coalition. When the Petrograd masses under the leadership of our Party issued the slogan "Down with the ten capitalist ministers" by this they demanded that Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries should take their place. "Turn out the Cadets, you bourgeois democrats take the power into your hands, but twelve (or as many as is usual) Peshechonov people into the Government and we promise you to remove you from your post as 'peacefully' as possible when the time comes, and it will soon come." There was no special line here, that was the same line which Lenin often formulated. I consider it necessary to lay special stress upon the warning of the publisher of the following book, Comrade Lenzner: "A considerable section of the speeches contained in this book were not quoted from stenographic reports, even from poor ones, but from the half-ignorant and half-malicious reports of the opportunist press. A superficial glance through a few of such documents, however, caused me to relinquish my original plan, to correct and to supplement them. Let them stay as they are. Of their kind they are also documents of the epoch even if "from the other side".

The following book could not have appeared in the press had it not been for the careful and competent work of Comrade Lenzner who compiled the notes with Comrades Heller, Krishanovsky, Rovenskaya and J. Rumer. I express my comradely thanks to all these comrades.

I wish to mention especially the great work of my closest co-worker, Comrade M. S. Glasmann both in the preparation of this and also of my other books. I write these lines with a feeling of the deepest sorrow upon the tragic death of this excellent comrade, worker and man.

Kislovodsk, September 15th, 1924.

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