



There are two groups of Marxists. Both work under the flag of Marxism and consider themselves "genuinely" Marxist. Nevertheless, they are by no means identical. More, a veritable gulf divides them, for their methods of work are diametrically opposed to each other.

The first group usually confines itself to an outward acceptance, to a ceremonial avowal of Marxism. Being unable or unwilling to grasp the essence of Marxism, being unable or unwilling to put it into practice, it converts the living, revolutionary principles of Marxism into lifeless, meaningless formulas. It does not base its activities on experience, on what practical work teaches, but on quotations from Marx. It does not derive its instructions and directions from an analysis of living reality, but from analogies and historical parallels. Discrepancy between word and deed is the chief malady of this group. Hence the disillusionment and perpetual grudge against fate, which time and again lets it down and makes a "dupe" of it. The name for this group is Menshevism (in Russia), opportunism (in Europe). Comrade Tyszka (Jogiches) described this group very aptly at the London Congress 1 when he said that it does not stand by, but lies down on the point of view of Marxism.

The second group, on the contrary, attaches prime importance not to the outward acceptance of Marxism, but to its realization, its application in practice. What this group chiefly concentrates its attention on is determining the ways and means of realizing Marxism that best answer the situation, and changing these ways and means as the situation changes. It does not derive its directions and instructions from historical analogies and parallels, but from a study of surrounding conditions. It does not base its activities on quotations and maxims, but on practical experience, testing every step by experience, learning from its mistakes and teaching others how to build a new life.

That, in fact, explains why there is no discrepancy between word and deed in the activities of this group, and why the teachings of Marx completely retain their living, revolutionary force. To this group may be fully applied Marx's saying that Marxists cannot rest content with interpreting the world, but must go further and change it. 2 The name for this group is Bolshevism, communism.

The organizer and leader of this group is V. I. Lenin.

## **I. Lenin as the organiser of the Russian Communist Party**

The formation of the proletarian party in Russia took place under special conditions, differing from those prevailing in the West at the time the workers' party was formed there. Whereas in the West, in France and in Germany, the workers' party emerged from the trade unions at a time when trade unions and parties were legal, when the bourgeois revolution had already taken place, when bourgeois parliaments existed, when the bourgeoisie, having climbed into power, found itself confronted by the proletariat—in Russia, on the contrary, the formation of the proletarian party took place under a most ferocious absolutism, in expectation of a bourgeois-democratic revolution; at a time when, on the one hand, the Party organizations were filled to overflowing with bourgeois "legal Marxists" who were thirsting to utilize the working class for the bourgeois revolution, and when, on the other hand, the tsarist gendarmerie was robbing the Party's ranks of its best workers, while the growth of a spontaneous revolutionary movement called for the existence of a staunch, compact and sufficiently secret fighting core of revolutionaries, capable of directing the movement to the overthrow of absolutism.

The task was to separate the sheep from the goats, to dissociate oneself from alien elements, to organize cadres of experienced revolutionaries in the localities, to provide them with a clear programme and firm tactics, and, lastly, to gather these cadres into a single, militant organization of professional revolutionaries, sufficiently secret to withstand the onslaughts of the gendarmes, but at the same time sufficiently connected with the masses to lead them into battle at the required moment.

The Mensheviks, the people who "lie down" on the point of view of Marxism, settled the question very simply: inasmuch as the workers' party in the West had emerged from non-party trade unions fighting for the improvement of the economic conditions of the working class, the same, as far as possible, should happen in Russia; that is, the "economic struggle of the workers against the

employers and the government" in the localities was enough for the time being, no all-Russian militant organization should be created, and later . . . well, later, if trade unions did not arise by that time, a non-party labour congress should be called and proclaimed as the party.

That this "Marxist" "plan" of the Mensheviks, utopian though it was under Russian conditions, nevertheless entailed extensive agitational work designed to disparage the notion of the Party principle, to destroy the Party cadres, to leave the proletariat without its own party and to surrender the working class to the tender mercies of the liberals—the Mensheviks, and perhaps a good many Bolsheviks too, hardly suspected at the time.

The immense service Lenin rendered the Russian proletariat and its Party was that he exposed the whole danger of the Mensheviks' "plan" of organization at a time when this "plan" was still in embryo, when even its authors perceived its outlines with difficulty, and, having exposed it, opened a furious attack on the laxity of the Mensheviks in matters of organization and concentrated the whole attention of the Party's practical workers on this question. For the very existence of the Party was at stake; it was a matter of life or death for the Party.

To establish an all-Russian political newspaper as a rallying centre of Party forces, to organize staunch Party cadres in the localities as "regular units" of the Party, to organize these cadres into one entity through the medium of the newspaper, and to weld them into an all-Russian militant party with sharply-defined limits, with a clear programme, firm tactics and a single will—such was the plan that Lenin developed in his famous books, *What Is To Be Done?* 3 and *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back.* 4 The merit of this plan lay in the fact that it fully conformed to Russian realities, and that it generalized in masterly fashion the organizational experience of the best of the practical workers. In the struggle for this plan, the majority of the Russian practical workers resolutely followed Lenin and were not deterred by a possible split. The victory of this plan laid the foundation for that close-knit and steeled Communist Party which has no equal in the world.

Our comrades (not only the Mensheviks!) often accused Lenin of an excessive inclination towards controversy and splits, of being relentless in his struggle against conciliators, and so on. At one time this was undoubtedly the case. But it will be easily understood that our Party could not have rid itself of internal weakness and diffuseness, that it could not have attained its characteristic vigour and strength if it had not expelled the non-proletarian, opportunist elements from its midst. In the epoch of bourgeois rule, a proletarian party can grow and gain strength only to the extent that it combats the opportunist, anti-revolutionary and

anti-party elements in its own midst and within the working class. Lassalle was right when he said: "The party becomes strong by purging itself." 5

The accusers usually cited the German party, in which "unity" at that time flourished. But, in the first place, not every kind of unity is a sign of strength, and secondly, one has only to glance at the late German party, rent into three parties,<sup>6</sup> to realize the utter falsity and fictitiousness of "unity" between Scheidemann and Noske, on the one hand, and Liebknecht and Luxemburg, on the other. And who knows whether it would not have been better for the German proletariat if the revolutionary elements of the German party had split away from its anti-revolutionary elements in time? . . . No, Lenin was a thousand

times right in leading the Party along the path of uncompromising struggle against the anti-Party and anti-revolutionary elements. For it was only because of such a policy of organization that our Party was able to create that internal unity and astonishing cohesion which enabled it to emerge unscathed from the July crisis during the Kerensky regime, to bear the brunt of the October uprising, to pass through the crisis of the Brest period unshaken, to organize the victory over the Entente, and, lastly, to acquire that unparalleled flexibility which permits it at any moment to re-form its ranks and to concentrate hundreds of thousands of its members on any big task without causing confusion in its midst.

## **II. Lenin as the leader of the Russian Communist Party**

But the merits of the Russian Communist Party in the field of organization are only one aspect of the matter. The Party could not have grown and become strong so quickly if the political content of its work, its programme and tactics had not conformed to Russian realities, if its slogans had not fired the masses of

the workers and had not impelled the revolutionary movement forward. Let us pass to this aspect of the matter.

The Russian bourgeois-democratic revolution (1905) took place under conditions differing from those that prevailed during the revolutionary upheavals in the West, in France and Germany, for example. Whereas the revolution in the West took place under the conditions of the manufacturing period of capitalism and of an undeveloped class struggle, when the proletariat was weak and numerically small and did not have its own party to formulate its demands, while the bourgeoisie was sufficiently revolutionary to win the confidence of the workers and peasants and to lead them into the struggle against the aristocracy—in Russia, on the other hand, the revolution began (1905) under the conditions of the machine-industry period of capitalism and of a developed class struggle, when the Russian proletariat, relatively numerous and welded together by capitalism, had already fought a number of battles with the bourgeoisie, had its own party, which was more united than the bourgeois party, and its own class demands, while the Russian bourgeoisie, which, moreover, subsisting on government contracts, was sufficiently scared by the revolutionary temper of the proletariat to seek an alliance with the government and the landlords against the workers and peasants. The fact that the Russian revolution broke out as a result of the military reverses suffered on the fields of Manchuria only accelerated events without essentially changing the state of affairs.

The situation demanded that the proletariat should take the lead of the revolution, rally the revolutionary peasants around itself and wage a determined fight against tsardom and the bourgeoisie simultaneously, with a view to establishing complete democracy in the country and ensuring its own class interests.

But the Mensheviks, the people who "lie down" on the point of view of Marxism, settled the question in their own fashion: since the Russian revolution is a bourgeois revolution, and since it is the representatives of the bourgeoisie that lead bourgeois revolutions (see the "history" of the French and German revolutions), the proletariat cannot exercise hegemony in the Russian revolution, the leadership should be left to the Russian bourgeoisie (the very bourgeoisie that was betraying the revolution); the peasantry should also be handed over to the tutelage of the bourgeoisie, while the proletariat should remain an extreme Left opposition.

And that vulgar medley of the tunes of the wretched liberals the Mensheviks passed off as the last word in "genuine" Marxism! . . .

The immense service Lenin rendered the Russian revolution was that he utterly exposed the futility of the Mensheviks' historical parallels and the whole danger of the Menshevik "scheme of revolution" which surrendered the cause of the workers to the tender mercies of the bourgeoisie. The revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, instead of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie; boycott of the Bulygin Duma 7 and armed uprising, instead of participating in the Duma and carrying on organic work within it; the idea of a "Left bloc," when the Duma was after all convened, and the utilization of the Duma platform for the struggle outside the Duma, instead of a Cadet Ministry and the reactionary "cherishing" of the Duma; the fight against the Cadet Party as a counter-revolutionary force, instead of forming a "bloc" with it—such was the tactical plan which Lenin developed in his famous pamphlets, *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* 8 and *The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party*. 9

The merit of this plan lay in the fact that it bluntly and resolutely formulated the class demands of the proletariat in the epoch of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia, facilitated the transition to the socialist revolution, and contained in embryo the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The majority of the Russian practical workers resolutely and unswervingly followed Lenin in the struggle for this tactical plan. The victory of this plan laid the foundation for those revolutionary tactics thanks to which our Party is now shaking the foundations of world imperialism.

The subsequent development of events; the four years of imperialist war and the shattering of the whole economic life of the country; the February Revolution and the celebrated dual power; the Provisional Government, which was a hotbed of bourgeois counter-revolution, and the Petrograd Soviet of Deputies, which was the form of the incipient proletarian dictatorship; the October Revolution and the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly; the abolition of bourgeois parliamentarism and the proclamation of the Republic of Soviets; the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war and the offensive of world imperialism, together with the professed "Marxists," against the proletarian revolution; and, lastly, the pitiable position of the Mensheviks, who clung to the Constituent Assembly and who were thrown overboard by the proletariat and driven by the waves of revolution to the shores of capitalism — all this only confirmed the correctness of the principles of the revolutionary tactics formulated by Lenin in his *Two Tactics*. A party with such a heritage could sail boldly forward, without fear of submerged rocks.

In our time of proletarian revolution, when every Party slogan and every utterance of a leader is tested in action, the proletariat makes special demands of its leaders. History knows of proletarian leaders who were leaders in times of

storm, practical leaders, self-sacrificing and courageous, but who were weak in theory. The names of such leaders are not soon forgotten by the masses. Such, for example, were Lassalle in Germany and Blan-qui in France. But the movement as a whole cannot live on reminiscences alone: it must have a clear goal (a programme), and a firm line (tactics).

There is another type of leader—peacetime leaders, who are strong in theory, but weak in matters of organization and practical work. Such leaders are popular only among an upper layer of the proletariat, and then only up to a certain time. When the epoch of revolution sets in, when practical revolutionary slogans are demanded of the leaders, the theoreticians quit the stage and give way to new men. Such, for example, were Plekhanov in Russia and Kautsky in Germany.

To retain the post of leader of the proletarian revolution and of the proletarian party, one must combine strength in theory with experience in the practical organization of the proletarian movement. P. Axelrod, when he was

a Marxist, wrote of Lenin that he "happily combines the experience of a good practical worker with a theoretical education and a broad political outlook" (see P. Axel-rod's preface to Lenin's pamphlet: *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*<sup>10</sup>). What Mr. Axelrod, the ideologist of "civilized" capitalism, would say now about Lenin is not difficult to guess. But we who know Lenin

well and can judge matters objectively have no doubt that Lenin has fully retained this old quality. It is here, incidentally, that one must seek the reason why it is Lenin, and no one else, who is today the leader of the strongest and most steeled proletarian party in the world.

Signed: J. Stalin

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## **Notes**

1. The London Congress—the Fifth Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, which met from April 30 to May 19, 1907, in London.

2. See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Moscow 1951, p. 365.

3. See V. I. Lenin, *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 5, pp. 319-494.

4. See V. I. Lenin, *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 7, pp. 185-392.

5. These words, which occur in a letter from Lassalle to Karl Marx dated June 24, 1852, were taken by V. I. Lenin as an epigraph to his *What Is To Be Done?* (see *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 5, p. 319).

6. The three parties resulting from the split of the old German Social-Democratic Party were: the Social-Democratic Party, the Independent Social-Democratic Party and the Communist Party of Germany.

7. The Bulygin Duma—a consultative representative assembly which the tsarist government intended to convene in 1905. The law instituting the Duma and the regulations governing the elections to it were drafted by a commission of which Minister of the Interior Bulygin was the chairman, and were published simultaneously with the tsar's Manifesto of August 6, 1905. The Bolsheviks proclaimed an active boycott of the Bulygin Duma. ". . . The Bulygin Duma was never convened. It was swept away by the revolutionary storm before it was convened." (V. I. Lenin, Works, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 23, p. 239.)

8. See V. I. Lenin, Works, 4th Russ. ed, Vol. 9, pp. 1-119.

9. See V. I. Lenin, Works, 4th Russ ed., Vol. 10, pp. 175-250.

10. V. I. Lenin wrote the pamphlet, *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*, at the end of 1897, while he was in exile. The first edition, with a preface by P. Axelrod, was published in Geneva in 1898 by the League of Russian Social-Democrats (see V. I. Lenin, Works, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 2, pp. 299-326).