

The Russian Revolution
and
Leninism or Marxism?

by Rosa Luxemburg

New Introduction by Bertram D. Wolfe

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INTRODUCTION

By Bertram D. Wolfe

ROSA Luxemburg and V. I. Lenin were born in the same year, 1870, and their lives were destined to touch and cross at many points. Though they were both called "revolutionary" socialists, their diverse temperaments and their differing attitudes on the nature of socialist leadership, on party organization, and on the initiative and self-activity of the working class, kept them poles apart. Indeed, the two short works which make up the present volume are sharply critical appraisals of Lenin's penchant for personal dictatorship over his party, the dictatorship of his Central Committee over its locals, and the dictatorship of his party and its leaders over the working class and society as a whole. These critiques from Rosa Luxemburg's pen are among the most important works to have come out of the Socialist or Second International, for, without ever using the word or the concept, totalitarianism, Rosa Luxemburg had a prescient feeling for the totalitarian potential in Lenin's views. Today, as we look at the party and the state which Lenin founded, we can no longer doubt that in this controversy Rosa Luxemburg was prophetically right.

PORTRAIT OF ROSA LUXEMBURG

Most of the political life of Lenin and Luxemburg was lived out in the old pre-war Second International, founded in 1899, which collapsed in the holocaust of war in 1914. That vanished world of international socialism possessed no more original, ardent, dynamic, and attractive figure than that of Rosa Luxemburg.

She was born in an "enlightened" Jewish merchant's family in the small town of Zamosc, in Russian Poland, near the Russian border. To say then that a Jewish family was "enlightened" was to suggest that it had broken out of the circle of ghetto culture and traditions and absorbed the general culture of the country. Rosa's parents were at home in Polish, Russian, and German literature and thought. This cosmopolitan background made the young girl take easily to internationalism. Lenin, too, used the term "internationalist" frequently. But, whereas she was to be active and a leader in the affairs of three parties, the Polish, the Russian, and the German, and in the International Congresses and Bureau, Lenin, wherever he lived, remained a Russian in exile, with gaze fixed on Russian affairs and Russian party squabbles.

Physically, the girl Rosa did not seem made to be a tragic heroine or a leader of men. A childhood hip ailment had left her body twisted, frail, and slight. She walked with an ungainly limp. But when she spoke, what people saw were her large, expressive eyes (beautiful eyes judging by her photographs), glowing with compassion, sparkling with laughter, burning with combativeness, flashing with irony and scorn. When she took the floor at congresses or meet-

ings, her slight frame seemed to grow taller and more commanding. Her voice was warm and vibrant (a good singing voice, too), her wit deadly, her arguments wide ranging and addressed, as a rule, more to the intelligence than to the feelings of her auditors.

She had been a precocious child, gifted with many talents. All her life, to the day of her murder in January 1919, she was tempted and tormented by longings to diminish her absorption in politics in order to develop to the full the many other capacities of her spirit. Unlike so many political figures, her inner life, as expressed in her letters, her activities, her enthusiasms, reveals a rounded human being. She drew and painted, read great literature in Russian, Polish, German, and French, wrote poetry in the first three of these, continued to be seduced by an interest in anthropology, history, botany, geology, and others of the arts and sciences into which the modern specialized intellect is fragmented. "Interest" is but a cold word for the ardor with which she pursued her studies. A passage from one of her letters written from prison to a young friend, Dr. Hans Diefenbacher, in the spring of 1917 will suffice to give an inkling of this passion:

How glad I am that three years ago I suddenly threw myself into botanizing, as I do into all things, with all my ardor, with the whole of me, so that for me the world, the party, and the work vanished, and one single passion filled me day and night: to tramp about out there in the fields of spring, to fill my arms full of plants, then, back at home, to systematize them, put them in order, identify them, enter them in notebooks. How I lived in a fever all that spring, how I suffered when I sat before some little plant and could not ascertain what it was and where it belonged! . . . In return

for that now I am at home in the green world, I have conquered it for myself—in storm and passion—and whatever one seizes upon thus with ardor has firm roots in one.

It would not be amiss to suggest that this longing “to conquer in storm and passion” was what made Rosa Luxemburg a “revolutionary” rather than a “reformist” socialist.

Having been brought up in Russian Poland at a time when its intellectuals were “discovering Marx,” her initiation into the revolutionary movement was precocious, too. At sixteen, when she graduated at the top of her class from the girl’s Gymnasium in Warsaw, she was denied the gold medal because of “an oppositional attitude towards the authorities.” Three years later, at the tender age of nineteen, she had to flee to Switzerland to avoid arrest, aided both by a Catholic priest, who was given to understand that she was escaping from her parents to undergo conversion, and by an underground Polish movement.¹

At Zurich she made simultaneous entrance into the world of refugee politics and the university. At the latter she won two doctorates, one in law the other in philosophy, acquiring at the same time her life-long interest in a half dozen other disciplines. She got to know Plekhanov, Axelrod, Lenin, and other Russian exiles, and three Polish exiles who worked with her thenceforward, Marchlewski, Warszawski, and Jogiches.

Leo Jogiches, three years older than Rosa, was already a fully formed conspirator and revolution-

1 It was the only time she fled arrest. Thereafter, she was to take prison terms as part of her work.

ary when he fled to Zurich in 1890. Almost immediately they became linked by a lifelong personal intimacy (without benefit of religious or civil ceremony) and by a lifelong association in the Polish and Russian, and later in the German, movements. The two were as different as two people engaged in a shared life and common enterprise could be. Jogiches was taciturn, stern, gloomy, secretive about his past and his private life, with none of her eloquence or outgoing capacity for friendship. Moreover, he was, as she was not, a consummate conspirator, an able organizer, a natural-born faction fighter. Under the conditions of underground life in Poland and Russia it is doubtful if she could have built a movement without him. She was the ideologist, he the organizer and conspirator. In Germany, however, where life was lived more publicly, he became a leader only by following in her wake.

Switzerland was too small and peaceful, the political life of a Russian-Polish exile too confined, to give scope to her large talents and aspirations. She went for a while to France, where it is a measure of the breadth of her personal criteria that she was able to form friendships both with the outstanding Marxist leader, Vaillant, and with the great leader of the socialist "right," Jean Jaurès. "A splendid human being," she said of the latter, "open, natural, overflowing with inner warmth and intelligence." Her glowing temperament was closer to that of the humane, warmhearted Jaurès than to the more dogmatic Vaillant, the pedantic Kautsky, or the narrow, dictatorial Lenin.

The French movement was also too small to hold her, and she headed for Germany, the land where

the "party of Marx and Engels" was the largest political party in the country and the largest and most influential in the international socialist movement. As a foreigner, she would find it impossible to become publicly active in Germany, so she proposed "marriage" to Gustav Luebeck, son of an old German socialist family she knew. After the wedding ceremony, the "couple" separated at the door of the marriage bureau, and "Frau Rosa Luebeck," a name she never used except to legitimize her political activity, was free to plunge into the doctrinal and tactical disputes, the mass activities, the addressing of meetings and congresses, the writing for theoretical and popular journals. But not for that did she abandon her Polish and Russian activities, for this frail woman had enough overflowing spirits for three parties.

Almost at the outset she rose to the top of the great German party. She became a contributor to the theoretical organ, *Neue Zeit*, then assistant to its founder and editor, Karl Kautsky. She added her touch of fire to his doctrinaire fight against the "revision" of "orthodox" Marxism. She contributed to and became an editor of provincial dailies, then of the daily central organ, *Vorwaerts*. She got into the Vorstand (Executive), where even the veteran Bebel treated with respect her ardor, learning, wit, and sharp tongue. She became the teacher of Marxian economics at the Central Party Training School. Unlike other German pundits, who did little more than repeat Marx's formulae in "new" works, she developed first an original, mildly heretical interpretation of the labor theory of value,² then ven-

² In her lectures, published posthumously in 1924 as *Einfuehrung in die Nationaloekonomie*.

tured to cross swords with Marx himself in a critical appraisal and revision of the master's arid and weak second volume of *Das Kapital*.³ Finally, from 1905 on, this redoubtable woman ("one of the last two remaining *men* in the German Social Democratic Party," she once said of herself to Bebel)⁴ became a leader of an extreme Left Wing which considered even the veterans of Marxist "orthodoxy," Kautsky and Bebel, to be a mere "Center" to her "Left."

LENIN AND LUXEMBURG AS "REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISTS"

When Rosa Luxemburg was murdered by Prussian officers in January 1919 while being taken to prison, the Leninists laid claim to her martyrdom, her tradition, and her name. On the surface this seemed a plausible claim. For both Lenin and Luxemburg regarded themselves as "revolutionary socialists." What they meant by this was that they rejected root and branch the society in which they lived, denied that it could be reformed or made better in any meaningful fashion, insisted that it must be overthrown in a great upheaval and replaced by a totally new society. One of Rosa Luxem-

3 This was the subject of her *Die Akkumulation des Kapitals: Ein Beitrag zur oekonomischen Erklarung des Imperialismus* (Berlin, 1913). In this writer's judgment, her schemata are as far from economic reality as those of Marx which she was criticizing, but, be that as it may, hers is a work of undeniable originality and intellectual force, which has had a great influence on subsequent Marxist writing from Lenin's *Imperialism* to the various works of Fritz Sternberg.

4 The "other man" was her friend and disciple, Klara Zetkin!

burg's notable pamphlets, *Reform or Revolution* (first published as two articles in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* in 1898 and 1899) was an attempt to prove that modern industrial society, the most rapidly changing in history, could not be fundamentally altered or improved except by a social revolution and that such reforms as had been instituted were a by-product of the revolutionary movement rather than voluntary acts of society to remove abuses and redress grievances. Legislation, constitutions, codified rights were but the "vegetative stage of society"; its "creative stage" was only and exclusively social revolution.

Both Lenin and Luxemburg were doctrinaire "lefts," too, in their rejection of the activities of the organized workingmen aiming at improving their conditions of life *within* the framework of industrial (or as they preferred to say, "capitalist") society. Both denied the possibility of any long-term improvement. Both had a low opinion of trade unions and of parliamentary activity. Neither could ever understand why workingmen in general were not more attracted to the historic "mission" which Marxism had assigned them; why workers had no stomach for being reduced to "nought" the better to prepare themselves for becoming "all."⁵ They never noticed nor understood that it was *against being reduced to nought* that the real workers' struggle was directed.

5 Cf. the lines of the socialist song, "The International": "Arise ye slaves, no more in thrall,/ The earth shall rise on new foundations,/We have been nought, we shall be all!" Marx first used this formula, borrowed from the Abbé Sieyès who had applied it to the "Third Estate," in *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie* (1844).

It was their common underestimation and misprision of the changes going on in industrial society, their common low opinion of reforms and of trade union and parliamentary activities, that linked Lenin and Luxemburg together as "left" or "revolutionary" socialists. But here the resemblance between these two dissimilar temperaments ceases.

ATTITUDE TOWARD WAR

Their two names have also been linked by their opposition to World War I. But Lenin thought that a European war would be "a useful trick for the revolution" and "doubted that Nikolasha and Franz Josef will give us that pleasure."⁶ He welcomed war when it came, as "putting the bayonet on the order of the day," marking the longed-for transition from the era of walking with "thin and weak soles on the civilized sidewalks of provincial cities" to the era that required "thick, hob-nailed boots" to climb the mountains. One of the "huge advantages" of any war, he said, was that it "mercilessly revealed, exposed, and destroyed much that is rotten, out-lived, moribund in human institutions."⁷

In contrast with his fierce exultation that bayonets were now the order of the day, war came to Rosa Luxemburg as a burden of grief and anguish. The failure of the International to prevent it, or even decently to oppose it, above all the war-drunkness of the ordinary socialist workers, plunged her

6 Letter to Gorky during the Balkan Wars, out of which grew World War I, *V.I. Lenin i A.M. Gorkii* (Moscow, 1958), p. 91.

7 Lenin, *Collected Works* (4th Russian ed.; Moscow), vol. XXI, pp. 184 and 222.

into despair; for a time she seriously contemplated suicide. She sought to have the shattered International purify itself by merciless criticism of its errors, re-establish the broken ties of solidarity across the frontiers, sober the war-drunk masses, and unite them for a common struggle to bring about an early and a just peace.

"The slogan of peace," Lenin declared, "is stupid and wrong . . . It signifies philistine moaning . . ."

And again: "The slogan of peace is wrong—the slogan must be, turn the imperialist war into civil war."⁸ Luxemburg above all wanted the war to stop. Lenin wanted the war prolonged until the old order was in ruins, then prolonged further by its conversion into a universal civil war. Rosa Luxemburg was most concerned with the sufferings of the masses in war; Lenin with mobilizing their hatred. She wrote sadly of their chauvinistic madness; Lenin closed his eyes to, even denied, their chauvinism, picturing them as "betrayed by their leaders." She wished the International to be won back to its old prewar position, restored and purified. He proposed that the International be split, and a Third or Communist International built on its ruins. When he used his control of Russia in 1918 to call a conference to found a new international, her movement sent a delegation instructed to oppose its formation. But at that moment, her murderers silenced her voice. She was an ardent fighter for her views but not by choice a splitter. Lenin's method had always been to fight for his views by splitting whatever he did not control.

8 Lenin, vol. XXXV, pp. 121 and 125.

“LENINISM OR MARXISM?”

The work here published under the above title is made up of two articles Rosa Luxemburg wrote, in 1904, against Lenin's organization views and organization plan. The title is not hers. She called her articles, more modestly and matter-of-factly, “Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy.” They were published simultaneously in Russian in *Iskra*, and in German in *Neue Zeit*. They have since been republished in many languages as a pamphlet, under varying titles. In English, the United Workers Party published such a pamphlet some time in the twenties; then a fresh translation was made from *Neue Zeit* in 1934 by Integer, who entitled the pamphlet, *Revolutionary Socialist Organization*. Yet another version was published in 1935 in Glasgow, Scotland, by the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation, which gave it the title, *Leninism or Marxism?* The present volume uses the Integer text as the best translation, but has adopted the Glasgow title as the most attractive and best known in English.

In two pamphlets, and a number of articles published between 1902 and 1904, Lenin had been hammering away at his new organization plan for a “party of a new type,” that is, one differing fundamentally from all previous Marxian parties, whether those founded while Marx and Engels were alive, or since. Besides Rosa Luxemburg many other Marxists active in the Russian movement published their criticisms of his view, among them being Plekhanov, Axelrod, Martov, and Trotsky.

Reduced to its bare outlines, Lenin advanced the following propositions:

1. Left to its own devices and insights, the working class is incapable of developing any conception of the "historic mission" which Marx assigned to it. "The *spontaneous* development of the workers' movement leads precisely to its subordination to bourgeois ideology . . . the ideological enslavement of the workers to the bourgeoisie" (Lenin, vol. V, pp. 355-56. Italics here and throughout as in the original). What the workers' movement spontaneously concerns itself with is a "petty-bourgeois" matter, the price at which it sells the goods it possesses, namely its labor power. It wants but to get the best price and the best terms under the present "bourgeois" system. To do this it may fight the employers and even the state, but it will never develop the "socialist consciousness" necessary to its "historic mission."

2. Such "socialist consciousness"

can only be brought to the workers from the outside . . . Alone, by their own forces, the working class is capable of developing a pure-and-simple trade union consciousness . . . But the teachings of socialism have grown out of the philosophical, historical, economic theories which were worked out by the educated representatives of the possessing classes . . . (vol. V, pp. 347-48).

3. For this the working class needs a party which is not made up of the working class but a party of guardians, a self-constituted vanguard *for* the working class; an élite party drawn from all classes, made up primarily of declassed revolutionary intellectuals, who have made revolution their profession. This party should lead and guide the working class, inject its doctrine into the workers, infiltrate the workmen's organizations and struggles, and seek to

use them for its purposes. Only "bourgeois politicians," Lenin wrote, can believe that the task of a socialist is to serve the workers in *their* struggles. The task of the socialist politician is "not to assist the economic struggle of the proletariat, but to make the economic struggle assist the socialist movement and the victory of the revolutionary party" (vol. IV, p. 273).

4. This classless élite, since it does the thinking for the workmen and seeks to inject its consciousness into them, can appear even in countries where the working class is backward and weak. It is an élite which is drawn from all classes and must penetrate all classes (not only the working class), "dictating" to all classes; "dictating a positive program of action, alike to rebellious students, to dissatisfied Zemstvo figures [i.e., leaders of the rural liberal nobility], to discontented religious sectaries, to indignant school teachers, etc." (vol. V, p. 398). In short, it is to speak in the name of the working class; it is to use that numerous and closely packed class as its main battering ram in its struggle for power, but is itself to supply the doctrine, the watchwords, the purposes, the commands. It calls itself the "vanguard of the working class" because it brings to, nay injects into, the working class its own consciousness of that class's "historic mission." But it is to be, no less, the overseer for the whole of society, the "dictator of the program" of all classes of society. (In this bold, crude, repetitious hammering home of his ruthless doctrine, thus early can we discern the outlines of Lenin's future "dictatorship of the proletariat" over the proletariat and over society as a whole.)

5. Such a "party of a new type" needs an organization of a new type. It should be organized like an

army, have the unquestioning military discipline of an army, be centralized like an army, with all power and authority residing in its "general staff" or Central Committee. The Central Committee should plan, the local branches execute. The Central Committee should decide all general questions, the branches merely discuss how to grasp those decisions and carry them out. The Central Committee should have the right to form branches, dissolve them, purge them, appoint their leaders, eliminate, even exterminate, the unworthy (vol. V, p. 448; vol. VI, pp. 211-15 and 221-23; vol. VIII, pp. 365-66).

The workers, schooled by life in factory and barracks, would take naturally to this. They have no time for "the toy forms of democracy." Bureaucracy and centralism in organization are truly revolutionary; democracy in party matters, however, is "opportunism in the organization question."

This last epithet shows that for his new dogmas Lenin was creating new transgressions, which required new names. Among them was *khvostism* ("tailism," from Russian *khvost*, "a tail"), which meant that instead of directing, leading, pushing, and injecting your own purposes into the workers you seek merely to serve them and their purposes, hence "dragging at their tail." A kindred offense was "slavish kowtowing before spontaneity" (vol. V, pp. 350-58).

Rosa Luxemburg was offended in her whole being by Lenin's worship of centralism, his implicit contempt for the working class, its own creative impulses and purposes, and his distrust of all spontaneous developments and of spontaneity itself. It is here that her pamphlet joins issue with him.

Her polemical tone is, for her, remarkably gentle. She breaks a lance against his "pitiless" ultra-centralism. She rightly pictures his future party as one in which the Central Committee can and will perpetuate itself, dictate to the party, and have the party dictate to the masses. The Central Committee would "be the only thinking element," the entire party and the masses being reduced to mere "executing limbs." She reminds him how many times in recent history the masses had shown "spontaneous creativeness," surprising the party, making a mockery of its pedantic formulae and recipes. With a marvelous sensitivity to what is in the air (this is 1904 and the storms of 1905 are approaching), she predicts that the masses will soon take the party leaders by surprise once more, again showing their own multiform creativeness and again overflowing the narrow channels of party prescription.

She closes with a plea for the autonomy of the masses, respect for their spontaneity and creativeness, respect also for their right to make their own mistakes and be helped by them. Her polemic ends with the words, so often quoted: "Let us speak plainly. Historically, the errors committed by a truly revolutionary movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee."

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Nearly a quarter of a century passed. Lenin's party developed in the direction which Rosa Luxemburg had foreseen. In 1917, unexpectedly to all the socialist movements, the weak Tsar Nicholas II, having exhausted all social supports from grand

dukes down, fell from power. For many months the real power was in the moods, whims, and will of millions of armed peasants in uniform, possessed by the idea of seizing the land, deserting the front, ending the war.

A Provisional Government arose, without any real apparatus of administration or enforcement, recognizing all the freedoms which Rosa believed in, but holding that Russia was not "ripe" for socialism and that the cruel war must somehow be continued until Russia was safe from the invader and a general peace arrived at.

The real power remained "in the streets." By extreme appeals to demagoguery, and by use of his tightly disciplined armed conspiracy calling itself a party, Lenin in November 1917 was able to seize power "as easily as lifting up a feather" (Lenin, vol. XXVII, p. 76).

From her prison cell, on the basis of oral accounts from visitors and scraps of news in German and Russian newspapers smuggled into her cell, Rosa began a short, friendly, yet necessarily critical, appraisal of what was happening in Russia. She intended it for publication as one of her underground *Spartacus Letters*. The "Letter," like its author, was to have a tragic history.

The little pamphlet was never altogether finished. On November 9, 1918, a democratic revolution in Germany opened the doors of Rosa Luxemburg's prison. She stepped out into a world she had not made and found herself "at the head" of a movement which looked to her for leadership but, being drunk with the heady wine of Lenin's success, could no longer comprehend her voice nor follow her lead. They had been so "Russified" that her differences

with them were now of the same order, if not the same magnitude, as her differences with Lenin. Yet because they considered her their responsible leader, she felt constrained to follow where they rushed.

In Germany elections were being held for a Constituent Assembly to write a new constitution for the new Germany. As a believer in democracy, she naturally assumed that her party (then calling itself *Spartakus* or the Spartacans) would contest these universal, democratic elections. But Lenin in Russia had dispersed by force of arms a democratically elected Constituent Assembly, proclaiming instead a "Government of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils"—in actual fact, a government of his party. Rosa's "followers" outvoted her, deciding to boycott the elections to the German Constituent Assembly and proclaim a "Government of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils" of Germany. Her party dragged its reluctant leader in its wake.

A week after her release from prison, in the first issue of its new paper, *Rote Fahne* (dated Nov. 18, 1918), she made a solemn pledge to the masses: "The Spartacus League will never take over governmental power in any other way than through the clear, unambiguous will of the great majority of the proletarian masses in all Germany, never except by virtue of their conscious assent to the views, aims, and fighting methods of the Spartacus League."

But in the third week of December, "the masses," as represented in the First National Congress of the Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, rejected by an overwhelming majority the Spartacan motion that the Councils should disrupt the Constituent Assembly and the Provisional Democratic Government and seize power themselves.

In the light of Rosa's public pledge, the duty of her movement seemed clear: to accept the decision, or to seek to have it reversed not by force but by persuasion. However, on the last two days of 1918 and the first day of 1919, the Spartacans held a convention of their own where they outvoted their "leader" once more. In vain she tried to convince them that to oppose both the Councils and the Constituent Assembly with their tiny forces was madness and a breaking of their democratic faith. They voted to try to take power in the streets, that is, by armed uprising. Almost alone in her party, Rosa Luxemburg decided with a heavy heart to lend her energy and her name to their effort.

The *Putsch*,⁹ with inadequate forces and overwhelming mass disapproval except in Berlin, was, as she had predicted, a fizzle. But neither she nor her close associates fled for safety as Lenin had done in July 1917. They stayed in the capital, hiding carelessly in easily suspected hideouts, trying to direct an orderly retreat. On January 16, a little over two months after she had been released from prison, Rosa Luxemburg was seized, along with Karl Liebknecht and Wilhelm Pieck. Reactionary officers murdered Liebknecht and Luxemburg while "taking them to prison." Pieck was spared, to become, as the reader knows, one of the puppet rulers of Moscow-controlled East Germany today.

Leo Jogiches spent the next few days exposing the murder, until his arrest. He was taken to the Moabit Prison, where Radek, Lenin's emissary to the Spartacans and to any German forces which the

⁹ *Putsch* is a German term for a *coup d'état* attempted by a minority behind the backs or without the support of the majority of the people.

Russian ruler "might do business with," was also taken. On March 10 Jogiches was dragged out and murdered, but Radek, armored by investiture with a fragment of Lenin's governmental power, was permitted to sit in his cell, holding court for German officers and German heavy industrialists, as well as German Communists, and beginning the negotiations which led to the Reichswehr-Red Army secret military agreement, foreshadow of the future Stalin-Hitler Pact. In its way, the fate of the Russian emissary Radek and the "Russified" Pieck on the one hand, and that of Rosa Luxemburg on the other, are fitting symbols of the differences between Luxemburg's and Lenin's conceptions of the relationships between socialist principles and power.¹⁰

Rosa Luxemburg's little treatise on the Russian Revolution continued to have a pathetic career. The growing subordination of the Spartacan Movement, germ of the future Communist Party, to Lenin and Russian Communism caused her friends to suppress her work. They said that she had "lacked adequate information," that it was "untimely to publish it" (it is still "untimely" for them today!), nor did they scruple to say that she had "changed her mind" on her views of a lifetime as expressed in it.

10 For an account of the secret agreement initiated by Radek and von Seeckt, see G. Hilger and A. Meyer, *The Incompatible Allies* (New York, 1953); L. Kochan, *Russia and the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge, 1954); Gerald Freund, *Unholy Alliance* (New York, 1957); Hans W. Gatzke, "Russo-German Military Collaboration During the Weimar Republic," *The American Historical Review*, April, 1958, pp. 565-97.

When the censorship by her own comrades was at last broken, it was by one of her closest associates, Paul Levi. But he published the pamphlet only when he was breaking with Lenin and Leninism, out of disgust with another attempted *Putsch*, and disgust with Lenin, who secretly agreed with him but for reasons of political expediency publicly excoriated him for his open criticism of his party's errors. Zealous young Communists were told that he was violating Rosa Luxemburg's cherished wish to have it suppressed and that they would read it only at their soul's peril. The Social Democrats took it up, both in Germany and in France, where it was published in *Le Populaire* in 1922, but the Communists read only distorting commentaries and refutations. The unfortunate little classic was made a faction football and kicked around until it disappeared from view.

The disease which Rosa had foreseen as inseparable from a Russian and Lenin-dominated International did indeed infect the Comintern. As its "Stalinization" in the middle and late twenties extruded one group after another of the original founders, the Communist "splinter groups" thus arising felt the need of understanding the process of the decay of the Communist International from a supposed international association of brother parties into an agency of the Russian state, party, and dictator. Both Rosa's 1904 articles on the Leninist organization plan and her critical appraisal of the Russian Revolution were revived once more.

In the course of the thirties, *The Russian Revolution* was republished in German in Paris by an exile group called *Neuer Weg*; in French in a translation by Maurice Olivier; and sections of it in Eng-

lish, translated by Integer, were published in his *International Review* in New York. In 1928 the first textually scientific edition was published in German by Felix Weill of the Institut fuer Sozialforschung in Gruenberg's *Archiv fuer die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*. It is this version, supplemented by a variorum study of all other versions in German, French, and English, which the author of the present introduction used in 1940 for a new English language translation, published then by the Workers Age Publishers (New York). That translation is used in the present edition.

HER APPRAISAL OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

All around her the Russian Revolution was regarded with blind hatred or blind idolatry. But in the darkness of her prison cell, in a land made doubly dark by war and by her movement's betrayal of its pledges, she did not let the light she thought she descried in the eastern sky blind her to the dangers inherent in Lenin's method of seizing and using power.

The great service of the Bolsheviks, she thought, was to have "put socialism on the order of the day," to have begun to feel for a way out of the shambles of war, to have redeemed the tarnished honor of international socialism. But this was no model revolution carried on under model laboratory conditions. It had occurred in the midst of war and alien invasion, in a backward land, cursed with poverty, lacking in a democratic tradition, ill-equipped economically and culturally for the building of a "higher" social order. "It would be a crazy idea to think that every last thing done and left undone

under such abnormal conditions should represent the very pinnacle of perfection. . .”

SOCIALISM INSEPARABLE FROM DEMOCRACY

The heart of her pamphlet, as of her activities and teachings, lay in her unshakable belief in the initiative and capacity of the mass of mankind. That had been the real principle of her disagreement with Lenin in 1904 as it was two months before her death. To her the health-giving force of socialism was an attempt to extend democracy still further, to strengthen the pulse-beat of public life, to awaken hitherto inert masses to activity, to awareness of their own capacities for achievement and correction of their own errors, to initiative for the direct, popular solution of all problems, to the assumption of control over “their own” party, “their own” state machine, over industry, and over their own destinies.

There were more contradictory elements in her broad view than in Lenin’s narrow authoritarian conception, for she knew too much of revolutions and was too much a revolutionary to reject the employment of a temporary dictatorship to defend the “new order” from overthrow by its yet existent enemies. But she regarded such dictatorship as an evil, even if under some circumstances a necessary one, an evil to be mitigated as much as possible by making it as temporary as possible and limiting its scope as far as possible, while offsetting its dictatorial potential by greatly extending its exact opposite and antidote, freedom. The one hope of preventing a degeneration of a revolution even in its victory lay, to her mind, in the simultaneous enormous extension of democracy and freedom to the widest possible number of human beings:

Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party—however numerous they may be—is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently. Not because of any fanatical concept of ‘justice’ but because all that is instructive, wholesome, and purifying in political freedom depends on this essential characteristic, and its effectiveness vanishes when ‘freedom’ becomes a special privilege.

Is there any regime which loves liberty which could not be proud to engrave these three sentences over the portals of its public buildings?

As a socialist, she wanted socialism introduced, but she knew that her ideal of socialism could not be introduced without the widest possible democracy and freedom. No party, she felt, had a monopoly of wisdom, or a filing cabinet full of ready-made solutions to the thousands of new problems that would present themselves in the course of carrying on an “old order” and still more in the course of trying to institute a “new.” The actual solutions were to her neither a matter of authority nor prescription but of endless experiment, of fruitful trial and error, and fruitful correction of error. “Socialism by its very nature cannot be introduced by *ukaz* . . . Only unobstructed, effervescing life falls into a thousand new forms and improvisations, brings to light creative force, itself corrects all mistaken attempts.”

Her “worship of spontaneity,” her rejection of authoritarianism, were farther apart from Lenin’s views than ever. The differences of 1904 had grown as the occasion for their expression had grown. How prophetic do her words sound now, forty-three years after they were written:

With the repression of political life in the land as a whole, life in the Soviets must also become more and more crippled. Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinions, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains the active element. Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule. Among them, in reality, only a dozen outstanding heads do the leading and an elite of the working class is invited from time to time to meetings where they are to applaud the speeches of the leaders, and to approve proposed resolutions unanimously—at bottom then, a clique affair—a dictatorship to be sure, not however of the proletariat but only of a handful of politicians . . . Such conditions must inevitably cause a brutalization of public life: attempted assassinations, shooting of hostages, etc.

Much of what Rosa Luxemburg wrote in this little pamphlet is now hopelessly dated, for much of it stems from dogmas which would not bear examination and have not resisted the passage of time. Yet how much of the forty-three years of subsequent Soviet development did she foresee in the darkness of her prison cell! How alive is her love of liberty, and her astonishing ability to put into memorable words that love of freedom! It is these qualities, along with her astonishing powers of foresight of where ruthless dictatorship would lead, that make her four-decade-old, unfinished pamphlet of more than merely biographical and historical interest. It is, as it has come to be widely recognized, a classic of that now vanished Marxism socialist movement in which she was so ardent a crusader.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

CHAPTER I

FUNDAMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

THE Russian Revolution is the mightiest event of the World War. Its outbreak, its unexampled radicalism, its enduring consequences, constitute the clearest condemnation of the lying phrases which official Social-Democracy so zealously supplied at the beginning of the war as an ideological cover for German imperialism's campaign of conquest. I refer to the phrases concerning the mission of German bayonets, which were to overthrow Russian Czarism and free its oppressed peoples.

The mighty sweep of the revolution in Russia, the profound results which have transformed all class relationships, raised all social and economic problems, and, with the fatality of their own inner logic developed consistently from the first phase of the bourgeois republic to ever more advanced stages, finally reducing the fall of Czarism to the status of a mere minor episode—all these things show as plain as day that the freeing of Russia was not an achievement of the war and the military defeat of Czarism, not some service of "German bayonets in German fists," as the *Neue Zeit* under Kautsky's editorship once promised in an editorial. They show, on the contrary, that the freeing of Russia had its roots deep in the soil of its own land and was fully matured internally. The military adventure of German imperial-

ism under the ideological blessing of German Social-Democracy did not bring about the revolution in Russia but only served to interrupt it at first, to postpone it for a while after its first stormy rising tide in the years 1911-13, and then, after its outbreak, created for it the most difficult and abnormal conditions.

Moreover, for every thinking observer, these developments are a decisive refutation of the doctrinaire theory which Kautsky shared with the Government Social-Democrats,¹ according to which Russia, as an economically backward and predominantly agrarian land, was supposed not to be ripe for social revolution and proletarian dictatorship. This theory, which regards only a *bourgeois* revolution as feasible in Russia, is also the theory of the opportunist wing of the Russian labor movement, of the so-called Mensheviks, under the experienced leadership of Axelrod and Dan. And from this conception follow the tactics of the coalition of the socialists in Russia with bourgeois liberalism. On this basic conception of the Russian Revolution, from which follow automatically their detailed positions on questions of tactics, both the Russian and the German opportunists find themselves in agreement with the German Government Socialists. According to the opinion of all three, the Russian Revolution should have called a halt at the stage which German imperialism in its conduct of the war

1 During the war the German Social-Democracy divided into three factions: the majority leadership, which openly supported and entered into the Imperial government; the Kautsky section, which declined responsibility for the conduct of the war but supplied many of the theoretical arguments for those who accepted such responsibility; and the section led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, which openly opposed the war and counterposed international solidarity and proletarian revolution to it.

had set as its noble task, according to the mythology of the German Social-Democracy, i.e., it should have stopped with the overthrow of Czarism. According to this view, if the revolution has gone beyond that point and has set as its task the dictatorship of the proletariat, this is simply a mistake of the radical wing of the Russian labor movement, the Bolsheviks. And all difficulties which the revolution has met with in its further course, and all disorders it has suffered, are pictured as purely a result of this fateful error.

Theoretically, this doctrine (recommended as the fruit of "Marxist thinking" by the *Vorwärts* of Stamper and by Kautsky alike) follows from the original "Marxist" discovery that the socialist revolution is a national and, so to speak, a domestic affair in each modern country taken by itself. Of course, in the blue mists of abstract formulae, a Kautsky knows very well how to trace the world-wide economic connections of capital which make of all modern countries a single integrated organism. The problems of the Russian Revolution, moreover—since it is a product of international developments plus the agrarian question—cannot possibly be solved within the limits of bourgeois society.

Practically, this same doctrine represents an attempt to get rid of any responsibility for the course of the Russian Revolution, so far as that responsibility concerns the international, and especially the German, proletariat, and to deny the international connections of this revolution. It is not Russia's unripeness which has been proved by the events of the war and the Russian Revolution, but the unripeness of the German proletariat for the fulfillment of its historic tasks. And to make this fully clear is the first

task of a critical examination of the Russian Revolution.

The fate of the revolution in Russia depended fully upon international events. That the Bolsheviks have based their policy entirely upon the world proletarian revolution is the clearest proof of their political far-sightedness and firmness of principle and of the bold scope of their policies. In it is visible the mighty advance which capitalist development has made in the last decade. The revolution of 1905-07 roused only a faint echo in Europe. Therefore, it had to remain a mere opening chapter. Continuation and conclusion were tied up with the further development of Europe.

Clearly, not uncritical apologetics but penetrating and thoughtful criticism is alone capable of bringing out the treasures of experiences and teachings. Dealing as we are with the very first experiment in proletarian dictatorship in world history (and one taking place at that under the hardest conceivable conditions, in the midst of the world-wide conflagration and chaos of the imperialist mass slaughter, caught in the coils of the most reactionary military power in Europe, and accompanied by the completest failure on the part of the international working class), it would be a crazy idea to think that every last thing done or left undone in an experiment with the dictatorship of the proletariat under such abnormal conditions represented the very pinnacle of perfection. On the contrary, elementary conceptions of socialist politics and an insight into their historically necessary prerequisites force us to understand that under such fatal conditions even the most gigantic idealism and the most storm-tested revolutionary energy are incapable of realizing democracy and socialism but only distorted attempts at either.

To make this stand out clearly in all its fundamental aspects and consequences is the elementary duty of the socialists of all countries; for only on the background of this bitter knowledge can we measure the enormous magnitude of the responsibility of the international proletariat itself for the fate of the Russian Revolution. Furthermore, it is only on this basis that the decisive importance of the resolute international action of the proletarian revolution can become effective, without which action as its necessary support, even the greatest energy and the greatest sacrifices of the proletariat in a single country must inevitably become tangled in a maze of contradiction and blunders.

There is no doubt either that the wise heads at the helm of the Russian Revolution, that Lenin and Trotsky on their thorny path beset by traps of all kinds, have taken many a decisive step only with the greatest inner hesitation and with most violent inner opposition. And surely nothing can be farther from their thoughts than to believe that all the things they have done or left undone under the conditions of bitter compulsion and necessity in the midst of the roaring whirlpool of events, should be regarded by the International as a shining example of socialist policy toward which only uncritical admiration and zealous imitation are in order.

It would be no less wrong to fear that a critical examination of the road so far taken by the Russian Revolution would serve to weaken the respect for and the attractive power of the example of the Russian Revolution, which alone can overcome the fatal inertia of the German masses. Nothing is farther from the truth. An awakening of the revolutionary energy of the working class in Germany can never again be

called forth in the spirit of the guardianship methods of the German Social-Democracy of late-lamented memory. It can never again be conjured forth by any spotless authority, be it that of our own "higher committees" or that of "the Russian example." Not by the creation of a revolutionary hurrah-spirit, but quite the contrary: only by an insight into all the fearful seriousness, all the complexity of the tasks involved, only as a result of political maturity and independence of spirit, only as a result of a capacity for critical judgment on the part of the masses, which capacity was systematically killed by the Social-Democracy for decades under various pretexts, only thus can the genuine capacity for historical action be born in the German proletariat. To concern one's self with a critical analysis of the Russian Revolution in all its historical connections is the best training for the German and the international working class for the tasks which confront them as an outgrowth of the present situation.

The first period of the Russian Revolution, from its beginning in March to the October Revolution, corresponds exactly in its general outlines to the course of development of both the Great English Revolution and the Great French Revolution. It is the typical course of every first general reckoning of the revolutionary forces begotten within the womb of bourgeois society.

Its development moves naturally in an ascending line: from moderate beginnings to ever-greater radicalization of aims and, parallel with that, from a coalition of classes and parties to the sole rule of the radical party.

At the outset in March 1917, the "Cadets," that is the liberal bourgeoisie, stood at the head of the revo-

lution.² The first general rising of the revolutionary tide swept every one and everything along with it. The Fourth Duma, ultra-reactionary product of the ultra-reactionary four-class right of suffrage and arising out of the *coup d'état*, was suddenly converted into an organ of the revolution. All bourgeois parties, even those of the nationalistic right, suddenly formed a phalanx against absolutism. The latter fell at the first attack almost without a struggle, like an organ that had died and needed only to be touched to drop off. The brief effort, too, of the liberal bourgeoisie to save at least the throne and the dynasty collapsed within a few hours. The sweeping march of events leaped in days and hours over distances that formerly, in France, took decades to traverse. In this, it became clear that Russia was realizing the result of a century of European development, and above all, that the revolution of 1917 was a direct continuation of that of 1905-07, and not a gift of the German "liberator." The movement of March 1917 linked itself directly onto the point where, ten years earlier, its work had broken off. The democratic republic was the complete, internally ripened product of the very first onset of the revolution.

Now, however, began the second and more difficult task. From the very first moment, the driving force of the revolution was the mass of the urban proletariat. However, its demands did not limit themselves to the realization of political democracy but were concerned with the burning question of international policy—immediate peace. At the same time, the revolution embraced the mass of the army, which raised the same demand for immediate peace, and

2 *Cadets*, an abbreviation derived from the Russian initials of the party calling itself the Constitutional Democrats.

the mass of the peasants, who pushed the agrarian question into the foreground, that agrarian question which since 1905 had been the very axis of the revolution. Immediate peace and land—from these two aims the internal split in the revolutionary phalanx followed inevitably. The demand for immediate peace was in most irreconcilable opposition to the imperialist tendencies of the liberal bourgeoisie for whom Milyukov was the spokesman. On the other hand, the land question was a terrifying spectre for the other wing of the bourgeoisie, the rural landowners. And, in addition, it represented an attack on the sacred principle of private property in general, a touchy point for the entire propertied class.

Thus, on the very day after the first victories of the revolution, there began an inner struggle within it over the two burning questions—peace and land. The liberal bourgeoisie entered upon the tactics of dragging out things and evading them. The laboring masses, the army, the peasantry, pressed forward ever more impetuously. There can be no doubt that with the questions of peace and land, the fate of the political democracy of the republic was linked up. The bourgeois classes, carried away by the first stormy wave of the revolution, had permitted themselves to be dragged along to the point of republican government. Now they began to seek a base of support in the rear and silently to organize a counter-revolution. The Kaledin Cossack campaign against Petersburg was a clear expression of this tendency. Had the attack been successful, then not only the fate of the peace and land questions would have been sealed, but the fate of the republic as well. Military dictatorship, a reign of terror against the proletariat, and

then return to monarchy, would have been the inevitable results.

From this we can judge the utopian and fundamentally reactionary character of the tactics by which the Russian "Kautskyans" or Mensheviks permitted themselves to be guided. Hardened in their addiction to the myth of the bourgeois character of the Russian Revolution—for the time being, you see, Russia is not supposed to be ripe for the social revolution!—they clung desperately to a coalition with the bourgeois liberals. But this means a union of elements which had been split by the natural internal development of the revolution and had come into the sharpest conflict with each other. The Axelrods and Dans wanted to collaborate at all costs with those classes and parties from which came the greatest threat of danger to the revolution and to its first conquest, democracy.

It is especially astonishing to observe how this industrious man (Kautsky), by his tireless labor of peaceful and methodical writing during the four years of the World War, has torn one hole after another in the fabric of socialism. It is a labor from which socialism emerges riddled like a sieve, without a whole spot left in it. The uncritical indifference with which his followers regard this industrious labor of their official theoretician and swallow each of his new discoveries without so much as batting an eyelash, finds its only counterpart in the indifference with which the followers of Scheidemann and Co. look on while the latter punch socialism full of holes in practice. Indeed, the two labors completely supplement each other. Since the outbreak of the war, Kautsky, the official guardian of the temple of Marxism, has really only been doing in theory the same things

which the Scheidemanns have been doing in practise, namely: (1) the International an instrument of peace; (2) disarmament, the League of Nations and nationalism; and finally (3) democracy *not* socialism.³

In this situation, the Bolshevik tendency performs the historic service of having proclaimed from the very beginning, and having followed with iron con-

3 Here, as at various points in the manuscript, the passage is still in the form of rough notations which Rosa Luxemburg intended to expand and complete later. Her murder by military agents of the Social-Democratic coalition government prevented her from completing and revising the work. The expression, "the International an instrument of peace" refers to the excuses Kautsky gave for its bankruptcy during the war ("an instrument of peace is not suited to times of war"). It probably refers also to the theory that the International, being peaceful, is not an instrument for revolutionary struggle. Kautsky substituted utopian talk of disarmament (without the removal of the causes and roots of war!) for a revolutionary struggle against war. He provided apologetics for the League of Nations which was supposed to have banished war from the world. And he justified the socialists of each country when they abandoned internationalism, supported their own governments and ruling classes, and became in theory and practice nationalists instead of internationalists. When the struggle for socialism began in earnest, the Scheidemanns defended capitalism *against* socialism in practise, while Kautsky did so in theory by pretending that capitalist "democracy" was democracy in the abstract, and that they were defending "democracy." Hence the third point means: the advocacy of democracy *as against socialism*.

The passage in slightly expanded form might read something as follows:

"(1) the International as an instrument for peace-time only and for the maintenance of peace; (2) advocacy of the doctrines of disarmament, apologetics for the League of Nations and nationalism as against internationalism; (3) and the advocacy of "democracy" *as against* socialism.

sistency, those tactics which alone could save democracy and drive the revolution ahead. All power exclusively in the hands of the worker and peasant masses, in the hands of the soviets—this was indeed the only way out of the difficulty into which the revolution had gotten; this was the sword stroke with which they cut the Gordian knot, freed the revolution from a narrow blind-alley and opened up for it an untrammelled path into the free and open fields.

The party of Lenin was thus the only one in Russia which grasped the true interest of the revolution in that first period. It was the element that drove the revolution forward, and, thus it was the only party which really carried on a socialist policy.

It is this which makes clear, too, why it was that the Bolsheviks, though they were at the beginning of the revolution a persecuted, slandered and hunted minority attacked on all sides, arrived within the shortest time to the head of the revolution and were able to bring under their banner all the genuine masses of the people: the urban proletariat, the army, the peasants, as well as the revolutionary elements of democracy, the left wing of the Socialist-Revolutionaries.⁴

The real situation in which the Russian Revolution

4 The Socialist-Revolutionaries were a party made up largely of petty bourgeois and declassed intellectuals and peasants. It was not a Marxist party. Its program included the advocacy of a democratic revolution in Russia. When Rosa Luxemburg speaks here of the "revolutionary elements of democracy," she is referring to the left wing of the Socialist-Revolutionary party which joined with the Bolsheviks in the struggle for peace, the seizure of the land, and the transfer of power to the soviets. They later broke with the Bolsheviks, principally on the issue of the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty.

found itself, narrowed down in a few months to the alternative: victory of the counter-revolution or dictatorship of the proletariat—Kaledin or Lenin. Such was the objective situation, just as it quickly presents itself in every revolution after the first intoxication is over, and as it presented itself in Russia as a result of the concrete, burning questions of peace and land, for which there was no solution within the framework of bourgeois revolution.

In this, the Russian Revolution has but confirmed the basic lesson of every great revolution, the law of its being, which decrees: either the revolution must advance at a rapid, stormy and resolute tempo, break down all barriers with an iron hand and place its goals ever farther ahead, or it is quite soon thrown backward behind its feeble point of departure and suppressed by counter-revolution. To stand still, to mark time on one spot, to be contented with the first goal it happens to reach, is never possible in revolution. And he who tries to apply the home-made wisdom derived from parliamentary battles between frogs and mice to the field of revolutionary tactics only shows thereby that the very psychology and laws of existence of revolution are alien to him and that all historical experience is to him a book sealed with seven seals.

Take the course of the English Revolution from its onset in 1642. There the logic of things made it necessary that the first feeble vacillations of the Presbyterians, whose leaders deliberately evaded a decisive battle with Charles I and victory over him, should inevitably be replaced by the Independents, who drove them out of Parliament and seized the power for themselves. And in the same way, within the army of the Independents, the lower petty-bourgeois mass of

the soldiers, the Lilburnian "Levellers" constituted the driving force of the entire Independent movement; just as, finally, the proletarian elements within the mass of the soldiers, the elements that went farthest in their aspirations for social revolution and who found their expression in the Digger movement, constituted in their turn the leaven of the democratic party of the "Levellers."

Without the moral influence of the revolutionary proletarian elements on the general mass of the soldiers, without the pressure of the democratic mass of the soldiers upon the bourgeois upper layers of the party of the Independents, there would have been no "purge" of the Long Parliament of its Presbyterians, nor any victorious ending to the war with the army of the Cavaliers and Scots, nor any trial and execution of Charles I, nor any abolition of the House of Lords and proclamation of a republic.

And what happened in the Great French Revolution? Here, after four years of struggle, the seizure of power by the Jacobins proved to be the only means of saving the conquests of the revolution, of achieving a republic, of smashing feudalism, of organizing a revolutionary defense against inner as well as outer foes, of suppressing the conspiracies of counter-revolution and spreading the revolutionary wave from France to all Europe.

Kautsky and his Russian coreligionists who wanted to see the Russian Revolution keep the "bourgeois character" of its first phase, are an exact counterpart of those German and English liberals of the preceding century who distinguished between the two well-known periods of the Great French Revolution: the "good" revolution of the first Girondin phase and the "bad" one after the Jacobin uprising. The Liberal

shallowness of this conception of history, to be sure, doesn't care to understand that, without the uprising of the "immoderate" Jacobins, even the first, timid and half-hearted achievements of the Girondin phase would soon have been buried under the ruins of the revolution, and that the real alternative to Jacobin dictatorship—as the iron course of historical development posed the question in 1793—was not "moderate" democracy, but . . . restoration of the Bourbons! The "golden mean" cannot be maintained in any revolution. The law of its nature demands a quick decision: either the locomotive drives forward full steam ahead to the most extreme point of the historical ascent, or it rolls back of its own weight again to the starting point at the bottom; and those who would keep it with their weak powers half way up the hill, it but drags down with it irredeemably into the abyss.

Thus it is clear that in every revolution only that party is capable of seizing the leadership and power which has the courage to issue the appropriate watchwords for driving the revolution ahead, and the courage to draw all the necessary conclusions from the situation. This makes clear, too, the miserable role of the Russian Mensheviks, the Dans, Zeretellis, etc., who had enormous influence on the masses at the beginning, but, after their prolonged wavering and after they had fought with both hands and feet against taking over power and responsibility, were driven ignobly off the stage.

The party of Lenin was the only one which grasped the mandate and duty of a truly revolutionary party and which, by the slogan—"All power in the hands of the proletariat and peasantry"—insured the continued development of the revolution.

Thereby the Bolsheviks solved the famous problem of "winning a majority of the people," which problem has ever weighed on the German Social-Democracy like a nightmare. As bred-in-the-bone disciples of parliamentary cretinism,⁵ these German Social-Democrats have sought to apply to revolutions the home-made wisdom of the parliamentary nursery: in order to carry anything, you must first have a majority. The same, they say, applies to revolution: first let's become a "majority." The true dialectic of revolutions, however, stands this wisdom of parliamentary moles on its head: not through a majority to revolutionary tactics, but through revolutionary tactics to a majority—that is the way the road runs.

Only a party which knows how to lead, that is, to advance things, wins support in stormy times. The determination with which, at the decisive moment, Lenin and his comrades offered the only solution which could advance things ("all power in the hands of the proletariat and peasantry"), transformed them almost overnight from a persecuted, slandered, outlawed minority whose leader had to hide like Marat in cellars, into the absolute master of the situation.

Moreover, the Bolsheviks immediately set as the aim of this seizure of power a complete, far-reaching revolutionary program: not the safeguarding of bourgeois democracy, but a dictatorship of the proletariat for the purpose of realizing socialism. Thereby they won for themselves the imperishable historic distinction of having for the first time proclaimed the

5 A term first applied by Marx to those parliamentarians who think that all history is decided by motions, votes and points of order in parliamentary debate.

final aim of socialism as the direct program of practical politics.

Whatever a party could offer of courage, revolutionary far-sightedness and consistency in an historic hour, Lenin, Trotsky and the other comrades have given in good measure. All the revolutionary honor and capacity which western Social-Democracy lacked was represented by the Bolsheviks. Their October uprising was not only the actual salvation of the Russian Revolution; it was also the salvation of the honor of international socialism.