

LETTERS FROM AFAR¹

FIRST LETTER

THE FIRST STAGE OF THE FIRST REVOLUTION²

The first revolution engendered by the imperialist world war has broken out. The first revolution but certainly not the last.

Judging by the scanty information available in Switzerland, the first stage of this first revolution, namely, of the Russian revolution of March 1, 1917, has ended. This first stage of our revolution will certainly not be the last.

How could such a "miracle" have happened, that in only eight days—the period indicated by Mr. Milyukov in his boastful telegram to all Russia's representatives abroad—a monarchy collapsed that had maintained itself for centuries, and that in spite of everything had managed to maintain itself throughout the three years of the tremendous, nation-wide class battles of 1905-07?

There are no miracles in nature or history, but every abrupt turn in history, and this applies to every revolution, presents such a wealth of content, unfolds such unexpected and specific combinations of forms of struggle and alignment of forces of the contestants, that to the lay mind there is much that must appear miraculous.

The combination of a number of factors of world-historic importance was required for the tsarist monarchy to have collapsed in a few days. We shall mention the chief of them.

Without the tremendous class battles and the revolutionary energy displayed by the Russian proletariat during the three years 1905-07, the second revolution could not possibly have been so rapid in the sense that its *initial stage* was completed in a few days. The first revolution (1905) deeply ploughed the soil, uprooted age-old prejudices, awakened millions of workers and tens of millions of peasants to political life and political struggle and revealed to each other—and to the world—*all* classes (and all the principal parties) of Russian society in their true character and in the true alignment of their interests, their forces, their modes of action, and their immediate and ultimate aims. This first

revolution, and the succeeding period of counter-revolution (1907-14), laid bare the very essence of the tsarist monarchy, brought it to the “utmost limit”, exposed all the rottenness and infamy, the cynicism and corruption of the tsar’s clique, dominated by that monster, Rasputin. It exposed all the bestiality of the Romanov family—those pogrom-mongers who drenched Russia in the blood of Jews, workers and revolutionaries, those *landlords*, “first among peers”, *who own millions* of dessiatines of land and are prepared to stoop to any brutality, to any crime, to ruin and strangle any number of citizens in order to preserve the “sacred right of property” for themselves *and their class*.

Without the Revolution of 1905-07 and the counter-revolution of 1907-14, there could not have been that clear “self-determination” of all classes of the Russian people and of the nations inhabiting Russia, that determination of the relation of these classes to each other and to the tsarist monarchy, which manifested itself during the eight days of the February-March Revolution of 1917. This eight-day revolution was “performed”, if we may use a metaphorical expression, as though after a dozen major and minor rehearsals; the “actors” knew each other, their parts, their places and their setting in every detail, through and through, down to every more or less important shade of political trend and mode of action.

For the first great Revolution of 1905, which the Guchkovs and Milyukovs and their hangers-on denounced as a “great rebellion”, led, after the lapse of twelve years, to the “brilliant”, the “glorious” Revolution of 1917—the Guchkovs and Milyukovs have proclaimed it “glorious” because it has put them in power (*for the time being*). But this required a great, mighty and all-powerful “stage manager”, capable, on the one hand, of vastly accelerating the course of world history, and, on the other, of engendering worldwide crises of unparalleled intensity—economic, political, national and international. Apart from an extraordinary acceleration of world history, it was also necessary that history make particularly abrupt turns, in order that at one such turn the filthy and blood-stained cart of the Romanov monarchy should be overturned at *one stroke*.

This all-powerful “stage manager”, this mighty accelerator was the imperialist world war.

That it is a world war is now indisputable, for the United States and China are already half-involved today, and will be fully involved tomorrow.

That it is an imperialist war on *both* sides is now likewise indisputable. Only the capitalists and their hangers-on, the social-patriots and social-chauvinists, or—if instead of general critical definitions we use political names familiar in Russia—only the Guchkovs and Lvovs, Milyukovs and Shingaryovs on the one hand, and only the Gvozdyovs, Potresovs, Chkhenkelis, Kerenskys and Chkheidzes on the other, can deny or gloss over this fact. *Both* the German and the Anglo-French bourgeoisie are waging the war for the plunder of foreign countries and the strangling of small nations, for financial world supremacy and the division and redivision of colonies, and in order to save the tottering capitalist regime by misleading and dividing the workers of the various countries.

The imperialist war was bound, with objective inevitability, immensely to accelerate and intensify to an unprecedented degree the class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie; it was bound to turn into a civil war between the hostile classes.

This *transformation has been started* by the February-March Revolution of 1917, the first stage of which has been marked, firstly, by a joint blow at tsarism struck by two forces: one, the whole of bourgeois and landlord Russia, with all her unconscious hangers-on and all her conscious leaders, the British and French ambassadors and capitalists, and the other, *the Soviet of Workers' Deputies*, which has begun to win over the soldiers' and peasants' deputies.³

These three political camps, these three fundamental political forces—(1) the tsarist monarchy, the head of the feudal landlords, of the old bureaucracy and the military caste; (2) bourgeois and landlord-Octoberist-Cadet Russia, behind which trailed the petty bourgeoisie (of which Kerensky and Chkheidze are the principal representatives); (3) the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, which is seeking to make the entire proletariat and the entire mass of the poorest part

of the population its allies—these three *fundamental* political forces fully and clearly revealed themselves even in the eight days of the “first stage” and even to an observer so remote from the scene of events as the present writer, who is obliged to content himself with the meagre foreign press dispatches.

But before dealing with this in greater detail, I must return to the part of my letter devoted to a factor of prime importance, namely, the imperialist world war.

The war shackled the belligerent powers, the belligerent groups of capitalists, the “bosses” of the capitalist system, the slave-owners of the capitalist slave system, to each other with *chains of iron*. *One bloody clot*—such is the social and political life of the present moment in history.

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

But “he who laughs last laughs best”. The bourgeoisie has been unable to delay for long the revolutionary crisis engendered by the war. That crisis is growing with irresistible force in all countries, beginning with Germany, which, according to an observer who recently visited that country, is suffering “brilliantly organised famine”, and ending with England and France, where *famine is also* looming, but where organisation is far less “brilliant”.

It was natural that the revolutionary crisis should have broken out *first of all* in tsarist Russia, where the disorganisation was most appalling and the proletariat most revolutionary (not by virtue of any special qualities, but because of the living traditions of 1905). This crisis was precipitated by the series of extremely severe defeats sustained by Russia and her allies. They shook up the old machinery of

government and the old order and roused the anger of *all* classes of the population against them; they embittered the army, wiped out a very large part of the old commanding personnel, composed of die-hard aristocrats and exceptionally corrupt bureaucratic elements, and replaced it by a young, fresh, mainly bourgeois, commoner, petty-bourgeois personnel. Those who, grovelling to the bourgeoisie or simply lacking backbone, howled and wailed about “defeatism”, are now faced by the fact of the historical connection between the defeat of the most backward and barbarous tsarist monarchy and the *beginning* of the revolutionary conflagration.

But while the defeats early in the war were a negative factor that precipitated the upheaval, the *connection* between Anglo-French finance capital, Anglo-French imperialism, and Russian Octobrist-Cadet capital was a factor that hastened this crisis by the direct *organisation of a plot* against Nicholas Romanov.

This highly important aspect of the situation is, for obvious reasons, hushed up by the Anglo-French press and maliciously emphasised by the German. We Marxists must soberly face the truth and not allow ourselves to be confused either by the lies, the official sugary diplomatic and ministerial lies, of the first group of imperialist belligerents, or by the sniggering and smirking of their financial and military rivals of the other belligerent group. The whole course of events in the February-March Revolution clearly shows that the British and French embassies, with their agents and “connections”, who had long been making the most desperate efforts to prevent “separate” agreements and a separate peace between Nicholas II (and last, we hope, and we will endeavour to make him that) and Wilhelm II, directly organised a plot in conjunction with the Octobrists and Cadets, in conjunction with a section of the generals and army and St. Petersburg garrison officers, with the express object of *deposing* Nicholas Romanov.

Let us not harbour any illusions. Let us not make the mistake of those who—like certain O.C. supporters or Mensheviks who are oscillating between Gvozdyov-Potresov policy and internationalism and only too often slip into petty-

bourgeois pacifism—are now ready to extol “agreement” between the workers’ party and the Cadets, “support” of the latter by the former, etc. In conformity with the old (and by no means Marxist) doctrine that they have learned by rote, they are trying to veil the plot of the Anglo-French imperialists and the Guchkovs and Milyukovs aimed at deposing the “chief warrior”, Nicholas Romanov, and putting more energetic, fresh and more capable *warriors* in his place.

That the revolution succeeded so quickly and—seemingly, at the first superficial glance—so radically, is only due to the fact that, as a result of an extremely unique historical situation, *absolutely dissimilar currents, absolutely heterogeneous* class interests, *absolutely contrary* political and social strivings have *merged*, and in a strikingly “harmonious” manner. Namely, the conspiracy of the Anglo-French imperialists, who impelled Milyukov, Guchkov and Co. to seize power *for the purpose of continuing the imperialist war*, for the purpose of conducting the war still more ferociously and obstinately, for the purpose of *slaughtering fresh millions* of Russian workers and peasants in order that the Guchkovs might obtain Constantinople, the French capitalists Syria, the British capitalists Mesopotamia, and so on. This on the one hand. On the other, there was a profound proletarian and mass popular movement of a revolutionary character (a movement of the entire poorest section of the population of town and country) for *bread*, for *peace*, for *real freedom*.

It would simply be foolish to speak of the revolutionary proletariat of Russia “supporting” the Cadet-Oktoberist imperialism, which has been “patched up” with English money and is as abominable as tsarist imperialism. The revolutionary workers were destroying, have already destroyed to a considerable degree and will destroy to its foundations the infamous tsarist *monarchy*. They are neither elated nor dismayed by the fact that at certain brief and exceptional historical conjunctures *they were aided* by the struggle of Buchanan, Guchkov, Milyukov and Co. to *replace* one monarch by *another monarch*, also preferably a Romanov!

Such, and only such, is the way the situation developed. Such, and only such, in the view that can be taken by a politician who does not fear the truth, who soberly weighs the

balance of social forces in the revolution, who appraises every "current situation" not only from the standpoint of all its present, current peculiarities, but also from the standpoint of the more fundamental motivations, the deeper interest-relationship of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, both in Russia and throughout the world.

The workers of Petrograd, like the workers of the whole of Russia, self-sacrificingly fought the tsarist monarchy—fought for freedom, land for the peasants, and *for peace*, against the imperialist slaughter. To continue and intensify that slaughter, Anglo-French imperialist capital hatched Court intrigues, conspired with the officers of the Guards, incited and encouraged the Guchkovs and Milyukov, and fixed up a *complete new government*, which in fact *did seize power* immediately the proletarian struggle had struck the first blows at tsarism.

This new government, in which Lvov and Guchkov of the Octobrists and Peaceful Renovation Party,⁴ yesterday's abettors of Stolypin the Hangman, control *really important* posts, vital posts, decisive posts, the army and the bureaucracy—this government, in which Milyukov and the other Cadets⁵ are more than anything decorations, a signboard—they are there to deliver sentimental professorial speeches—and in which the Trudovik⁶ Kerensky is a bala-laika on which they play to deceive the workers and peasants—this government is not a fortuitous assemblage of persons.

They are representatives of the new class that has risen to political power in Russia, the class of capitalist landlords and bourgeoisie which has long been *ruling* our country economically, and which during the Revolution of 1905-07, the counter-revolutionary period of 1907-14, and finally—and with especial rapidity—the war period of 1914-17, was quick to organise itself politically, taking over control of the local government bodies, public education, congresses of various types, the Duma, the war industries committees, etc. This new class was already "almost completely" *in power* by 1917, and therefore it needed only the first blows to bring tsarism to the ground and clear the way for the bourgeoisie. The imperialist war, which required an incredible exertion

of effort, so accelerated the course of backward Russia's development that we have "at one blow" (*seemingly* at one blow) *caught up* with Italy, England, and almost with France. We have obtained a "coalition", a "national" (i.e., adapted for carrying on the imperialist slaughter and for fooling the people) "parliamentary" government.

Side by side with this government—which as regards the *present* war is but the agent of the billion-dollar "firm" "England and France"—there has arisen the chief, unofficial, as yet undeveloped and comparatively weak *workers' government*, which expresses the interests of the proletariat and of the entire poor section of the urban and rural population. This is the *Soviet of Workers' Deputies* in Petrograd, which is seeking connections with the soldiers and peasants, and also with the agricultural workers, with the latter particularly and primarily, of course, more than with the peasants.

Such is the *actual* political situation, which we must first endeavour to define with the greatest possible objective precision, in order that Marxist tactics may be based upon the only possible solid foundation—the foundation of *facts*.

The tsarist monarchy has been smashed, but not finally destroyed.

The Octobrist-Cadet bourgeois government, which wants to fight the imperialist war "to a finish", and which in reality is the agent of the financial firm "England and France", is *obliged to promise* the people the maximum of liberties and sops compatible with the maintenance of its power over the people and the possibility of continuing the imperialist slaughter.

The Soviet of Workers' Deputies is an organisation of the workers, the embryo of a workers' government, the representative of the interests of the entire mass of the *poor* section of the population, i.e., of nine-tenths of the population, which is striving for *peace, bread and freedom*.

The conflict of these three forces determines the situation that has now arisen, a situation that is *transitional* from the first stage of the revolution to the second.

The antagonism between the first and second force is *not* profound, it is temporary, the result *solely* of the present

conjuncture of circumstances, of the abrupt turn of events in the imperialist war. The *whole* of the new government is monarchist, for Kerensky's *verbal* republicanism simply cannot be taken seriously, is not worthy of a statesman and, *objectively*, is political chicanery. The new government, which has not dealt the tsarist monarchy the final blow, has already *begun to strike a bargain* with the landlord Romanov dynasty. The bourgeoisie of the Octobrist-Cadet type *needs* a monarchy to serve as the head of the bureaucracy and the army in order to protect the privileges of capital against the working people.

He who says that the workers must *support* the new government in the interests of the struggle against tsarist reaction (and apparently this is being said by the Potresovs, Gvozdyovs, Chkhenkelis and also, all *evasiveness* notwithstanding, by *Chkheidze*) is a traitor to the workers, a traitor to the cause of the proletariat, to the cause of peace and freedom. For actually, *precisely* this new government is *already* bound hand and foot by imperialist capital, by the imperialist policy of *war* and plunder, has *already* begun to strike a bargain (without consulting the people!) with the dynasty, *is already working to restore the tsarist monarchy*, is already soliciting the candidature of Mikhail Romanov as the new kinglet, is already taking measures to prop up the throne, to substitute for the legitimate (lawful, ruling by virtue of the old law) monarchy a Bonapartist, plebiscite monarchy (ruling by virtue of a fraudulent plebiscite).

No, if there is to be a real struggle against the tsarist monarchy, if freedom is to be guaranteed in fact and not merely in words, in the glib promises of Milyukov and Kerensky, the workers must *not* support the new government; the government must "support" the workers! For the only *guarantee* of freedom and of the complete destruction of tsarism lies in *arming the proletariat*, in strengthening, extending and developing the role, significance and power of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies.

All the rest is mere phrase-mongering and lies, self-deception on the part of the politicians of the liberal and radical camp, fraudulent trickery.

Help, or at least do not hinder, the arming of the

workers, and freedom in Russia will be invincible, the monarchy irrestorable, the republic secure.

Otherwise the Guchkovs and Milyukovs will restore the monarchy and grant *none*, absolutely none of the “liberties” they promised. All bourgeois politicians in *all* bourgeois revolutions “fed” the people and fooled the workers with promises.

Ours is a bourgeois revolution, *therefore*, the workers must support the bourgeoisie, say the Potresovs, Gvozdyovs and Chkheidzes, as Plekhanov said yesterday.

Ours is a bourgeois revolution, we Marxists say, *therefore* the workers must open the eyes of the people to the deception practised by the bourgeois politicians, teach them to put no faith in words, to depend entirely on their *own* strength, their *own* organisation, their *own* unity, and their *own weapons*.

The government of the Octobrists and Cadets, of the Guchkovs and Milyukovs, *cannot*, even if it sincerely wanted to (only infants can think that Guchkov and Lvov are sincere), *cannot* give the people *either peace, bread, or freedom*.

It cannot give peace because it is a war government, a government for the continuation of the imperialist slaughter, a government of *plunder*, out to plunder Armenia, Galicia and Turkey, annex Constantinople, reconquer Poland, Courland, Lithuania, etc. It is a government bound hand and foot by Anglo-French imperialist capital. Russian capital is merely a branch of the world-wide “firm” which manipulates *hundreds of billions* of rubles and is called “England and France”.

It cannot give bread because it is a bourgeois government. *At best*, it can give the people “brilliantly organised famine”, as Germany has done. But the people will not accept famine. They will learn, and probably very soon, that there is bread and that it can be obtained, but only by methods that *do not respect the sanctity of capital and landownership*.

It cannot give freedom because it is a landlord and capitalist government which *fears* the people and has already begun to strike a bargain with the Romanov dynasty.

The tactical problems of our immediate attitude towards this government will be dealt with in another article. In it, we shall explain the peculiarity of the present situation, which is a *transition* from the first stage of the revolution to the second, and why the slogan, the “task of the day”, at *this* moment must be: *Workers, you have performed miracles of proletarian heroism, the heroism of the people, in the civil war against tsarism. You must perform miracles of organisation, organisation of the proletariat and of the whole people, to prepare the way for your victory in the second stage of the revolution.*

Confining ourselves for the *present* to an analysis of the class struggle and the alignment of class forces at this stage of the revolution, we have still to put the question: who are the proletariat’s *allies* in *this* revolution?

It has *two* allies: first, the broad mass of the semi-proletarian and partly also of the small-peasant population, who number scores of millions and constitute the overwhelming majority of the population of Russia. For this mass peace, bread, freedom and land are *essential*. It is inevitable that to a certain extent this mass will be under the influence of the bourgeoisie, particularly of the petty bourgeoisie, to which it is most akin in its conditions of life, vacillating between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The cruel lessons of war, and they will be *the more* cruel the more vigorously the war is prosecuted by Guchkov, Lvov, Milyukov and Co., will *inevitably* push this mass towards the proletariat, compel it to follow the proletariat. We must now take advantage of the relative freedom of the new order and of the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies to *enlighten* and *organise* this mass first of all and above all. Soviets of Peasants’ Deputies and Soviets of Agricultural Workers—that is one of our most urgent tasks. In this connection we shall strive not only for the agricultural workers to establish their own separate Soviets, but also for the propertyless and poorest peasants to organise *separately* from the well-to-do peasants. The special tasks and special forms of organisation urgently needed at the present time will be dealt with in the next letter.

Second, the ally of the Russian proletariat is the proletariat of all the belligerent countries and of all countries in

general. At present this ally is to a large degree repressed by the war, and all too often the European social-chauvinists speak in its name—men who, like Plekhanov, Gvozdyov and Potresov in Russia, have deserted to the bourgeoisie. But the liberation of the proletariat from their influence has progressed with every month of the imperialist war, and the Russian revolution will *inevitably* immensely hasten this process.

With these two allies, the proletariat, *utilising the peculiarities* of the present transition situation, can and will proceed, first, to the achievement of a democratic republic and complete victory of the peasantry over the landlords, instead of the Guchkov-Milyukov semi-monarchy, and then to *socialism*, which alone can give the war-weary people *peace, bread and freedom*.

N. Lenin

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LETTERS FROM AFAR

SECOND LETTER

THE NEW GOVERNMENT AND THE PROLETARIAT

The principal document I have at my disposal at today's dated (March 8/21) is a copy of that most conservative and bourgeois English newspaper *The Times* of March 16, containing a batch of reports about the revolution in Russia. Clearly, a source more favourably inclined—to put it mildly—towards the Guchkov and Milyukov government it would not be easy to find.

This newspaper's correspondent reports from St. Petersburg on Wednesday, March 1 (14), when the *first* Provisional government still existed, i.e., the thirteen-member Duma Executive Committee,⁷ headed by Rodzyanko and including two "socialists", as the newspaper puts it, Kerensky and Chkheidze:

"A group of 22 elected members of the Upper House [State Council] including M. Guchkov, M. Stakhovich, Prince Trubetskoi, and Professor Vassiliev, Grimm, and Vernadsky, yesterday addressed a telegram to the Tsar" imploring him in order to save the "dynasty", etc., etc., to convoke the Duma and to name as the head of the government someone who enjoys the "confidence of the nation". "What the Emperor may decide to do on his arrival today is unknown at the hour of telegraphing," writes the correspondent, "but one thing is quite certain. Unless His Majesty immediately complies with the wishes of the most moderate elements among his loyal subjects, the influence at present exercised by the Provisional Committee of the Imperial Duma will pass wholesale into the hands of the socialists, who want to see a republic established, but who are unable to institute any kind of orderly government and would inevitably precipitate the country into anarchy within and disaster without...."

What political sagacity and clarity this reveals. How well this Englishman, who thinks like (if he does not guide) the Guchkovs and Milyukovs, understands the alignment of

class forces and interests! “The most moderate elements among his loyal subjects”, i.e., the monarchist landlords and capitalists, want to take power into their hands, fully realising that otherwise “influence” will pass into the hands of the “socialists”. Why the “socialists” and not somebody else? Because the English Guchkovite is fully aware that there is *no* other social force in the political arena, *nor can there be*. The revolution was made by the proletariat. It displayed heroism; it shed its blood; it swept along with it the broadest masses of the toilers and the poor; it is demanding bread, peace and freedom; it is demanding a republic; it sympathises with socialism. But the handful of landlords and capitalists headed by the Guchkovs and Milyukovs want to betray the will, or strivings, of the vast majority and conclude *a deal with the tottering monarchy*, bolster it up, save it: appoint Lvov and Guchkov, Your Majesty, and we will be with the monarchy against the people. Such is the entire meaning, the sum and substance of the new government’s policy!

But how to justify the deception, the fooling of the people, the violation of the will of the overwhelming majority of the population?

By slandering the people—the old but eternally new method of the bourgeoisie. And the English Guchkovite slanders, scolds, spits and splutters: “anarchy within and disaster without”, no “orderly government”!!

That is not true, Mr. Guchkovite! The workers want a republic; and a republic represents far more “orderly” government than monarchy does. What guarantee have the people that the second Romanov will not get himself a second Rasputin? Disaster will be brought on precisely by continuation of the war, i.e., precisely by the new government. Only a proletarian republic, backed by the rural workers and the poorest section of the peasants and town dwellers, can secure peace, provide bread, order and freedom.

All the shouts about anarchy are merely a screen to conceal the selfish interests of the capitalists, who want to make profit out of the war, out of war loans, who want to restore the monarchy *against* the people.

“...Yesterday,” continues the correspondent, “the Social-Democratic Party issued a proclamation of a most seditious

character, which was spread broadcast throughout the city. They [i.e., the Social-Democratic Party] are mere doctrinaires, but their power for mischief is enormous at a time like the present. M. Kerensky and M. Chkheidze, who realise that without the support of the officers and the more moderate elements of the people they cannot hope to avoid anarchy, have to reckon with their less prudent associates, and are insensibly driven to take up an attitude which complicates the task of the Provisional Committee....”

O great English, Guchkovite diplomat! How “imprudently” you have blurted out the truth!

“The Social-Democratic Party” and their less prudent associates “with whom Kerensky and Chkheidze have to reckon”, evidently mean the Central or the St. Petersburg Committee of our Party, which was restored at the January 1912 Conference,⁸ those very same Bolsheviki at whom the bourgeoisie always hurl the abusive term “doctrinaires”, because of their faithfulness to the “doctrine”, i.e., the fundamentals, the principles, teachings, aims of *socialism*. Obviously, the English Guchkovite hurls the abusive terms seditious and doctrinaire at the manifesto⁹ and at the conduct of our Party in urging a fight for a republic, peace, complete destruction of the tsarist monarchy, bread for the people.

Bread for the people and peace—that’s sedition, but ministerial posts for Guchkov and Milyukov—that’s “order”. Old and familiar talk!

What, then, are the tactics of Kerensky and Chkheidze as characterised by the English Guchkovite?

Vacillation: on the one hand, the Guchkovite praises them: they “realise” (Good boys! Clever boys!) that without the “support” of the army officers and the more moderate elements, anarchy cannot be avoided (we, however, have always thought, in keeping with our doctrine, with our socialist teachings, that it is the capitalists who introduce anarchy and war into human society, that only the transfer of *all* political power to the proletariat and the poorest people can rid us of war, of anarchy and starvation!). On the other hand, they “have to reckon with their less prudent associates”, i.e., the Bolsheviki, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, restored and united by the Central Committee.

What is the force that compels Kerensky and Chkheidze to “reckon” with the Bolshevik Party to which they have *never* belonged, which they, or their literary representatives (Socialist-Revolutionaries, Popular Socialists,¹⁰ the Menshevik O.C. supporters, and so forth), have always abused, condemned, denounced as an insignificant underground circle, a sect of doctrinaires, and so forth? Where and when has it ever happened that in time of revolution, at a time of predominantly *mass* action, sane-minded politicians should “reckon” with “doctrinaires”??

He is all mixed up, our poor English Guchkovite; he has failed to produce a logical argument, has failed to tell either a whole lie or the whole truth, he has merely given himself away.

Kerensky and Chkheidze are compelled to reckon with the Social-Democratic Party of the Central Committee by the influence it exerts on the proletariat, on the masses. Our Party was found to be with the masses, with the revolutionary proletariat, *in spite of* the arrest and deportation of our Duma deputies to Siberia, as far back as 1914, in spite of the fierce persecution and arrests to which the St. Petersburg Committee was subjected for its underground activities during the war, *against* the war and against tsarism.

“Facts are stubborn things,” as the English proverb has it. Let me remind you of it, most esteemed English Guchkovite! That our Party guided, or at least rendered devoted assistance to, the St. Petersburg workers in the great days of revolution is a fact the English Guchkovite “*himself*” was *obliged* to admit. And he was equally obliged to admit the fact that Kerensky and Chkheidze are oscillating *between* the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The Gvozdyovites, the “defencists”, i.e., the social-chauvinists, i.e., the defenders of the imperialist, predatory war, are now completely following the bourgeoisie; Kerensky, by entering the ministry, i.e., the second Provisional Government, has also completely deserted to the bourgeoisie; Chkheidze has not; he continues to *oscillate* between the Provisional Government of the bourgeoisie, the Guchkovs and Milyukovs, and the “provisional government” of the proletariat and the poorest masses of the people, the Soviet of Workers’

Deputies and the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party united by the Central Committee.

Consequently, the revolution has confirmed what we especially insisted on when we urged the workers clearly to realise the class difference between the principal parties and principal trends in the working-class movement and among the petty bourgeoisie—what we wrote, for example, in the Geneva *Sotsial-Demokrat* No. 41, nearly eighteen months ago, on October 13, 1915.

“As hitherto, we consider it admissible for Social-Democrats to join a provisional revolutionary government together with the democratic petty bourgeoisie, but *not* with the revolutionary chauvinists. By revolutionary chauvinists we mean those who want a victory over tsarism so as to achieve victory over Germany—plunder other countries—consolidate Great-Russian rule over the other peoples of Russia, etc. Revolutionary chauvinism is based on the class position of the petty bourgeoisie. The latter always vacillates between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. At present it is vacillating between chauvinism (which prevents it from being consistently revolutionary, even in the meaning of a democratic revolution) and proletarian internationalism. At the moment the Trudoviks, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, *Nasha Zarya* (now *Dyelo*), Chkheidze’s Duma group, the Organising Committee, Mr. Plekhanov and the like are political spokesmen for this petty bourgeoisie in Russia. If the revolutionary chauvinists won in Russia, we would be opposed to a defence of *their* “fatherland” in the present war. Our slogan is: against the chauvinists, even if they are revolutionary and republican—*against* them and *for* an alliance of the international proletariat for the socialist revolution.”

But let us return to the English Guchkovite.

“...The Provisional Committee of the Imperial Duma,” he continues, “appreciating the dangers ahead, have purposely refrained from carrying out the original intention of arresting Ministers, although they could have done so yesterday without the slightest difficulty. The door is thus left open for negotiations, thanks to which we [“we”= British finance capital and imperialism] may obtain all the benefits

of the new regime without passing through the dread ordeal of the Commune and the anarchy of civil war....”

The Guchkovites were *for* a civil war from which *they* would benefit, but they are *against* a civil war from which the people, i.e., the actual majority of the working people, would benefit.

“...The relations between the Provisional Committee of the Duma, which represents the whole nation [imagine saying this about the committee of the landlord and capitalist Fourth Duma!], and the Council of Labour Deputies, representing purely class interests [this is the language of a diplomat who has heard learned words with one ear and wants to conceal the fact that the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies represents the proletariat and the poor, i.e., nine-tenths of the population], but in a crisis like the present wielding enormous power, have aroused no small misgivings among reasonable men regarding the possibility of a conflict between them—the results of which might be too terrible to describe.

“Happily this danger has been averted, at least for the present [note the “at least”!], thanks to the influence of M. Kerensky, a young lawyer of much oratorical ability, who clearly realises [unlike Chkheidze, who also “realised”, but evidently less clearly in the opinion of the Guchkovite?] the necessity of working with the Committee in the interests of his Labour constituents [i.e., to catch the workers’ votes, to flirt with them]. A satisfactory Agreement¹¹ was concluded today [Wednesday, March 1/14], whereby all unnecessary friction will be avoided.”

What this agreement was, whether it was concluded with the *whole* of the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies and on what terms, we do not know. On this *chief* point, the English Guchkovite says nothing at all this time. And no wonder! It is not to the advantage of the bourgeoisie to have these terms made clear, precise and known to all, for it would then be more difficult for it to violate them!

The preceding lines were already written when I read two very important communications. First, in that most conservative and bourgeois Paris newspaper *Le Temps*¹² of

March 20, the text of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies manifesto appealing for "support" of the new government¹³; second, excerpts from Skobelev's speech in the State Duma on March 1 (14), reproduced in a Zurich newspaper (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 1 Mit.-bl., March 21) from a Berlin newspaper (*National-Zeitung*¹⁴).

The manifesto of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, if the text has not been distorted by the French imperialists, is a most remarkable document. It shows that the St. Petersburg proletariat, at least at the time the manifesto was issued, was under the predominating influence of petty-bourgeois politicians. You will recall that in this category of politicians I include, as has been already mentioned above, people of the type of Kerensky and Chkheidze.

In the manifesto we find two political ideas, and two slogans corresponding to them:

Firstly. The manifesto says that the government (the new one) consists of "moderate elements". A strange description, by no means complete, of a purely liberal, not of a Marxist character. I too am prepared to agree that in a certain sense—in my next letter I will show in precisely what sense—now, with the first stage of the revolution completed, every government must be "moderate". But it is absolutely impermissible to conceal from ourselves and from the people that this government wants to continue the imperialist war, that it is an agent of British capital, that it wants to restore the monarchy and strengthen the rule of the landlords and capitalists.

The manifesto declares that all democrats must "support" the new government and that the Soviet of Workers' Deputies requests and authorises Kerensky to enter the Provisional Government. The conditions—implementation of the promised reforms already during the war, guarantees for the "free cultural" (only??) development of the nationalities (a purely Cadet, wretchedly liberal programme), and the establishment of a special committee consisting of members of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and of "military men"¹⁵ to supervise the activities of the Provisional Government.

This Supervising Committee, which comes within the

second category of ideas and slogans, we will discuss separately further on.

The appointment of the Russian Louis Blanc, Kerensky, and the appeal to support the new government is, one may say, a classical example of betrayal of the cause of the revolution and the cause of the proletariat, a betrayal which doomed a number of nineteenth-century revolutions, irrespective of how sincere and devoted to socialism the leaders and supporters of such a policy may have been.

The proletariat cannot and must not support a war government, a restoration government. To fight reaction, to rebuff all possible and probable attempts by the Romanovs and their friends to restore the monarchy and muster a counter-revolutionary army, it is necessary not to support Guchkov and Co., but to *organise*, expand and strengthen a *proletarian* militia, to arm the people under the leadership of the workers. Without this principal, fundamental, radical measure, there can be no question either of offering serious resistance to the restoration of the monarchy and attempts to rescind or curtail the promised freedoms, or of firmly taking the road that will give the people bread, *peace* and freedom.

If it is true that Chkheidze, who, with Kerensky, was a member of the first Provisional Government (the Duma committee of thirteen), refrained from entering the second Provisional Government out of principled considerations of the above-mentioned or similar character, then that does him credit. That must be said frankly. Unfortunately, such an interpretation is contradicted by the facts, and primarily by the speech delivered by Skobelev, who has always gone hand in hand with Chkheidze.

Skobelev said, if the above-mentioned source is to be trusted, that “the social [? evidently the Social-Democratic] group and the workers are only slightly in touch (have little contact) with the aims of the Provisional Government”, that the workers are demanding peace, and that if the war is continued there will be disaster in the spring anyhow, that “the workers have concluded with society [liberal society] a temporary agreement [eine *vorlaufige Waffenfreundschaft*], although their political aims are as far removed from the aims

of society as heaven is from earth”, that “the liberals must abandon the senseless [*unsinnige*] aims of the war”, etc.

This speech is a sample of what we called above, in the excerpt from *Sotsial-Demokrat*, “oscillation” between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The liberals, while remaining liberals, *cannot* “abandon” the “senseless” aims of the war, which, incidentally, are not determined by them alone, but by Anglo-French finance capital, a world-mighty force measured by hundreds of billions. The task is not to “coax” the liberals, but to *explain* to the workers why the liberals find themselves in a blind alley, why *they* are bound hand and foot, why they *conceal* both the treaties tsarism concluded with England and other countries and the deals between Russian and Anglo-French capital, and so forth.

If Skobelev says that the workers have concluded an agreement with liberal society, no matter of what character, and since he does not protest against it, does not explain from the Duma rostrum how harmful it is for the workers, he thereby *approves* of the agreement. And that is exactly what he should not do.

Skobelev’s direct or indirect, clearly expressed or tacit, approval of the agreement between the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies and the Provisional Government is Skobelev’s swing towards the bourgeoisie. Skobelev’s statement that the workers are demanding peace, that their aims are as far removed from the liberals’ aims as heaven is from earth, is Skobelev’s swing towards the proletariat.

Purely proletarian, truly revolutionary and profoundly correct in design is the second political idea in the manifesto of the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies that we are studying, namely, the idea of establishing a “Supervising Committee” (I do not know whether this is what it is called in Russian; I am translating freely from the French), of proletarian-soldier supervision over the Provisional Government.

Now, that’s something real! It is worthy of the workers who have shed their blood for freedom, peace, bread for the people! It is a *real step* towards *real guarantees* against tsarism, against a monarchy and against the monarchists Guchkov, Lvov and Co.! It is a sign that the Russian proletariat, in spite of everything, has made progress compared

with the French proletariat in 1848, when it “authorised” Louis Blanc! It is proof that the instinct and mind of the proletarian masses are not satisfied with declamations, exclamations, promises of reforms and freedoms, with the title of “minister authorised by the workers”, and similar tinsel, but are seeking support *only* where it is to be found, in the *armed* masses of the people organised and led by the proletariat, the class-conscious workers.

It is a step along the right road, but *only* the first step. If this “Supervising Committee” remains a purely political-type parliamentary institution, a committee that will “put questions” to the Provisional Government and receive answers from it, then it will remain a plaything, will amount to nothing.

If, on the other hand, it leads, immediately and despite all obstacles, to the formation of a *workers' militia*, or *workers' home guard*, extending to the whole people, to all men and women, which would not only replace the exterminated and dissolved police force, not only make the latter's restoration *impossible* by *any* government, constitutional-monarchist or democratic-republican, *either* in St. Petersburg or anywhere else in Russia—then the advanced workers of Russia will really take the road towards new and great victories, the road to victory over war, to the realisation of the slogan which, as the newspapers report, adorned the colours of the cavalry troops that demonstrated in St. Petersburg, in the square outside the State Duma:

“Long Live Socialist Republics in All Countries!”

I will set out my ideas about this workers' militia in my next letter.

In it I will try to show, on the one hand, that the formation of a militia embracing the entire people and led by the workers is the correct slogan of the day, one that corresponds to the tactical tasks of the peculiar transitional moment through which the Russian revolution (and the world revolution) is passing; and, on the other hand, that to be successful, this workers' militia must, firstly, embrace the entire people, must be a mass organisation to the degree of being *universal*, must really embrace the *entire* able-bodied population of both sexes; secondly, it must proceed to

combine not only purely police, but general state functions with military functions and with the control of social production and distribution.

N. Lenin

Zurich, March 22 (9), 1917

P.S. I forgot to date my previous letter March 20 (7).

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LETTERS FROM AFAR

THIRD LETTER

CONCERNING A PROLETARIAN MILITIA

The conclusion I drew yesterday about Chkheidze's vacillating tactics has been fully confirmed today. March 10 (23), by two documents. First—a telegraphic report from Stockholm in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*¹⁶ containing excerpts from the manifesto of the Central Committee of our Party, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, in St. Petersburg. In this document there is not a word about either supporting the Guchkov government or overthrowing it; the workers and soldiers are called upon to organise around the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, to elect representatives to it for the fight against tsarism and for a republic, for an eight-hour day, for the confiscation of the landed estates and grain stocks, and chiefly, for an end to the predatory war. Particularly important and particularly urgent in this connection is our Central Committee's absolutely correct idea that to obtain peace relations must be established with *the proletarians of all the belligerent countries*.

To expect peace from negotiations and relations between the bourgeois governments would be self-deception and deception of the people.

The second document is a Stockholm report, also by telegraph, to another German newspaper (*Vossische Zeitung*¹⁷) about a conference between the Chkheidze group in the Duma, the workers' group (? Arbeiterfraction) and representatives of fifteen workers' unions on March 2 (15) and a manifesto published next day. Of the eleven points of this manifesto, the telegram reports only three; the first, the demand for a republic; the seventh, the demand for peace and immediate peace negotiations; and the third, the demand for "adequate participation in the government of representatives of the Russian working class".

If this point is correctly reported, I can understand why the bourgeoisie is praising Chkheidze. I can understand why the praise of the English Guchkovites in *The Times* which I quoted elsewhere has been supplemented by the

praise of the French Guchkovites in *Le Temps*. This newspaper of the French millionaires and imperialists writes on March 22: "The leaders of the workers' parties, particularly M. Chkheidze, are exercising all their influence to moderate the wishes of the working classes."

Indeed, to demand workers' "participation" in the Guchkov-Milyukov government is a theoretical and political absurdity: to participate as a minority would mean serving as a pawn; to participate on an "equal footing" is impossible, because the demand to continue the war cannot be reconciled with the demand to conclude an armistice and start peace negotiations; to "participate" as a majority requires the strength to *overthrow* the Guchkov-Milyukov government. In practice, the demand for "participation" is the worst sort of Louis Blanc-ism, i.e., oblivion to the class struggle and the actual conditions under which it is being waged, infatuation with a most hollow-sounding phrase, spreading illusions among the workers, loss, in negotiations with Milyukov or Kerensky, of *precious* time which must be used to create a *real* class and revolutionary force, a proletarian militia that will *enjoy the confidence of all* the poor strata of the population, and they constitute the vast majority, and will *help them to organise*, help them to fight for bread, peace, freedom.

This mistake in the manifesto issued by Chkheidze and his group (I am not speaking of the O.C., Organising Committee *party*, because in the sources available to me there is not a word about the O.C.)—this mistake is all the more strange considering that at the March 2 (15) conference, Chkheidze's closest collaborator, Skobelev, said, according to the newspapers: "Russia is on the eve of a second, real [*wirklich*] revolution."

Now that is the truth, from which Skobelev and Chkheidze have forgotten to draw the practical conclusions. I cannot judge from here, from my accursed afar, how near this second revolution is. Being on the spot, Skobelev can see things better. Therefore, I am not raising for myself problems, for the solution of which I have not and cannot have the necessary concrete data. I am merely emphasising the confirmation by Skobelev, an "outside witness", i.e., one

who does not belong to our Party, of the *factual* conclusion I drew in my first letter, namely: that the February-March Revolution was merely the *first stage* of the revolution. Russia is passing through a peculiar historical moment of *transition* to the next stage of the revolution, or, to use Skobelev's expression, to a "second revolution".

If we want to be Marxists and learn from the experience of revolution in the whole world, we must strive to understand in what, precisely, lies the *peculiarity* of this *transitional* moment, and what tactics follow from its objective specific features.

The peculiarity of the situation lies in that the Guchkov-Milyukov government gained the first victory with extraordinary ease due to the following three major circumstances: (1) assistance from Anglo-French finance capital and its agents; (2) assistance from part of the top ranks of the army; (3) the already existing organisation of the entire Russian bourgeoisie in the shape of the rural and urban local government institutions, the State Duma, the war industries committees, and so forth.

The Guchkov government is held in a vice: bound by the interests of capital, it is compelled to strive to continue the predatory, robber war, to protect the monstrous profits of capital and the landlords, to restore the monarchy. Bound by its revolutionary origin and by the need for an abrupt change from tsarism to democracy, pressed by the bread-hungry and peace-hungry masses, the government is compelled to lie, to wriggle, to play for time, to "proclaim" and promise (promises are the only things that are very cheap even at a time of madly rocketing prices) as much as possible and do as little as possible, to make concessions with one hand and to withdraw them with the other.

Under certain circumstances, the new government can at best postpone its collapse somewhat by leaning on all the organising ability of the entire Russian bourgeoisie and bourgeois intelligentsia. But even in that case it is *unable* to avoid collapse, because it is *impossible* to escape from the claws of the terrible monster of imperialist war and famine nurtured by world capitalism unless one renounces bourgeois relationships, passes to revolutionary measures,

appeals to the supreme historic heroism of both the Russian and world proletariat.

Hence the conclusion: we cannot overthrow the new government at one stroke, or, if we can (in revolutionary times the limits of what is possible expand a thousandfold), we will not be able to maintain power *unless we counter* the magnificent organisation of the entire Russian bourgeoisie and the entire bourgeois intelligentsia with an equally magnificent *organisation of the proletariat*, which must lead the entire vast mass of urban and rural poor, the semi-proletariat and small proprietors.

Irrespective of whether the “second revolution” has already broken out in St. Petersburg (I have said that it would be absolutely absurd to think that it is possible from abroad to assess the actual tempo at which it is maturing), whether it has been postponed for some time, or whether it has already begun in individual areas (of which some signs are evident)—in *any* case, the slogan of the moment on the eve of the new revolution, during it, and on the morrow of it, must be *proletarian organisation*.

Comrade workers! You performed miracles of proletarian heroism yesterday in overthrowing the tsarist monarchy. In the more or less near future (perhaps even now, as these lines are being written) you will again have to perform the same miracles of heroism to overthrow the rule of the landlords and capitalists, who are waging the imperialist war. You will not achieve *durable victory* in this next “real” revolution if you do not perform *miracles of proletarian organisation!*

Organisation is the slogan of the moment. But to confine oneself to that is to say nothing, for, on the one hand, organisation is *always* needed; hence, mere reference to the necessity of “organising the masses” explains absolutely nothing. On the other hand, he who confines himself solely to this becomes an abettor of the liberals, for the *very thing* the liberals want in order to strengthen their rule is that the workers *should not go beyond their ordinary* “legal” (from the standpoint of “normal” bourgeois society) organisations, i.e., that they should *only* join their party, their trade union, their co-operative society, etc., etc.

Guided by their class instinct, the workers have realised that in revolutionary times they need *not only* ordinary, but an entirely different organisation. They have rightly taken the path indicated by the experience of our 1905 Revolution and of the 1871 Paris Commune; they have set up a *Soviet of Workers' Deputies*; they have begun to develop, expand and strengthen it by drawing in *soldiers'* deputies, and, undoubtedly, deputies from rural *wage-workers*, and then (in one form or another) from the entire peasant poor.

The prime and most important task, and one that brooks no delay, is to set up organisations of this kind in all parts of Russia without exception, for all trades and strata of the proletarian and semi-proletarian population without exception, i.e., for all the working and exploited people, to use a less economically exact but more popular term. Running ahead somewhat, I shall mention that for the entire mass of the peasantry our Party (its *special* role in the new type of proletarian organisations I hope to discuss in one of my next letters) should especially recommend Soviets of wage-workers and Soviets of small tillers who do not sell grain, to be formed *separately* from the well-to-do peasants. Without this, it will be impossible either to conduct a truly proletarian policy in general,* or correctly to approach the extremely important practical question which is a matter of life and death for millions of people: the proper distribution of *grain*, increasing its production, etc.

It might be asked: What should be the function of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies? They "must be regarded as organs of insurrection, of revolutionary rule", we wrote in No. 47 of the Geneva *Sotsial-Demokrat*, of October 13, 1915.

This theoretical proposition, deduced from the experience of the Commune of 1871 and of the Russian Revolution of 1905, must be explained and concretely developed on the

* In the rural districts a struggle will now develop for the small and, partly, middle peasants. The landlords, leaning on the well-to-do peasants, will try to lead them into subordination to the bourgeoisie. Leaning on the rural wage-workers and rural poor, we must lead them into the closest alliance with the urban proletariat.

basis of the practical experience of precisely the present stage of the present revolution in Russia.

We need revolutionary *government*, we need (for a certain transitional period) a *state*. This is what distinguishes us from the anarchists. The difference between the revolutionary Marxists and the anarchists is not only that the former stand for centralised, large-scale communist production, while the latter stand for disconnected small production. The difference between us precisely on the question of government, of the state, is that we are *for*, and the anarchists *against*, utilising revolutionary forms of the state in a revolutionary way for the struggle for socialism.

We need a state. But *not the kind* of state the bourgeoisie has created everywhere, from constitutional monarchies to the most democratic republics. And in this we differ from the opportunists and Kautskyites of the old, and decaying, socialist parties, who have distorted, or have forgotten, the lessons of the Paris Commune and the analysis of these lessons made by Marx and Engels.*

We need a state, but *not the kind* the bourgeoisie needs, with organs of government in the shape of a police force, an army and a bureaucracy (officialdom) separate from and opposed to the people. All bourgeois revolutions merely perfected *this* state machine, merely transferred *it* from the hands of one party to those of another.

The proletariat, on the other hand, if it wants to uphold the gains of the present revolution and proceed further, to win peace, bread and freedom, must “*smash*”, to use Marx’s expression, this “ready-made” state machine and substitute a new one for it by *merging* the police force, the army and the bureaucracy with *the entire armed people*. Following the

* In one of my next letters, or in a special article, I will deal in detail with this analysis, given in particular in Marx’s *The Civil War in France*, in Engels’s preface to the third edition of that work, in the letters: Marx’s of April 12, 1871, and Engels’s of March 18-28, 1875, and also with the utter distortion of Marxism by Kautsky in his controversy with Pannekoek in 1912 on the question of the so-called “destruction of the state”.¹⁸

path indicated by the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Russian Revolution of 1905, the proletariat must organise and arm *all* the poor, exploited sections of the population in order that they *themselves* should take the organs of state power directly into their own hands, in order that *they themselves should constitute* these organs of state power.

And the workers of Russia have already *taken* this path in the first stage of the first revolution, in February-March 1917. The whole task now is clearly to understand what this new path is, to proceed along it further, boldly, firmly and perseveringly.

The Anglo-French and Russian capitalists wanted “only” to remove, or only to “frighten”, Nicholas II and to leave intact the old state machine, the police force, the army and the bureaucracy.

The workers went further and smashed it. And now, not only the Anglo-French, but also the German capitalists are *howling* with rage and horror as they see, for example, Russian soldiers shooting their officers, as in the case of Admiral Nepenin, that supporter of Guchkov and Milyukov.

I said that the workers have smashed the old state machine. It will be more correct to say: *have begun* to smash it.

Let us take a concrete example.

In St. Petersburg and in many other places the police force has been partly wiped out and partly dissolved. The Guchkov-Milyukov government *cannot* either restore the monarchy or, in general, maintain power *without restoring* the police force as a special organisation of armed men under the command of the bourgeoisie, separate from and opposed to the people. That is as clear as daylight.

On the other hand, the new government must reckon with the revolutionary people, must feed them with half-concessions and promises, must play for time. That is why it resorts to half-measures: it establishes a “people’s militia” with elected officials (this sounds awfully respectable, awfully democratic, revolutionary and beautiful!)—*but ... but*, firstly, it places this militia under the control of the rural and urban local government bodies, i.e., under the command of landlords and capitalists who have been elected in

conformity with laws passed by Nicholas the Bloody and Stolypin the Hangman!! Secondly, although calling it a “people’s militia” in order to throw dust in the eyes of the “people”, it does *not* call upon the *entire* people to join this militia, *and does not compel* the employers and capitalists to *pay* workers and office employees their ordinary wages *for the hours and days* they spend in the *public service*, i.e., in the militia.

That’s their trick. That is how the landlord and capitalist government of the Guchkovs and Milyukovs manages to have a “people’s militia” on paper, while in reality, it is restoring, gradually and on the quiet, the *bourgeois*, anti-people’s militia. At first it is to consist of “eight thousand students and professors” (as foreign newspapers describe the present St. Petersburg militia)—an obvious plaything!—and will gradually be built up of the old and new *police force*.

Prevent restoration of the police force! Do not let the local government bodies slip out of your hands! Set up a militia that will really embrace the entire people, be really universal, and be led by the proletariat!—such is the task of the day, such is the slogan of the moment which equally conforms with the properly understood interests of furthering the class struggle, furthering the revolutionary movement, and the democratic instinct of every worker, of every peasant, of every exploited toiler who cannot help hating the policemen, the rural police patrols, the village constables, the command of landlords and capitalists over armed men with power over the people.

What kind of police force do *they* need, the Guchkovs and Milyukovs, the landlords and capitalists? The same kind as existed under the tsarist monarchy. After the briefest revolutionary periods *all* the bourgeois and bourgeois-democratic republics in the world set up or restored *precisely such* a police force, a special organisation of armed men subordinate to the bourgeoisie in one way or another, separate from and opposed to the people.

What kind of militia do we need, the proletariat, all the toiling people? A genuine *people’s* militia, i.e., one that, first, consists of the *entire* population, of all adult citizens of *both* sexes; and, second, one that combines the functions of a

people's army with police functions, with the functions of the chief and fundamental organ of public order and public administration.

To make these propositions more comprehensible I will take a purely schematic example. Needless to say, it would be absurd to think of drawing up any kind of a "plan" for a proletarian militia: when the workers and the entire people set about it practically, on a truly mass scale, they will work it out and organise it a hundred times better than any theoretician. I am not offering a "plan", I only want to illustrate my idea.

St. Petersburg has a population of about two million. Of these, more than half are between the ages of 15 and 65. Take half—one million. Let us even subtract an entire fourth as physically unfit, etc., taking no part in public service at the present moment for justifiable reasons. There remain 750,000 who, serving in the militia, say one day in fifteen (and receiving their pay for this time from their employers), would form an army of 50,000.

That's the type of "state" we need!

That's the kind of militia that would be a "people's militia" in deed and not only in words.

That is how we must proceed in order to *prevent* the restoration either of a special police force, or of a special army separate from the people.

Such a militia, 95 hundredths of which would consist of workers and peasants, would express the *real* mind and will, the strength and power of the vast majority of the people. Such a militia would really arm, and provide military training for, the entire people, would be a safeguard, but *not* of the Guchkov or Milyukov type, against all attempts to restore reaction, against all the designs of tsarist agents. Such a militia would be the executive organ of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, it would enjoy the *boundless* respect and confidence of the people, for it itself would be an organisation of the entire people. Such a militia would transform democracy from a beautiful signboard, which covers up the enslavement and torment of the people by the capitalists, into a means of actually *training the masses* for participation in *all* affairs of state. Such a militia would

draw the young people into political life and teach them not only by words, but also by action, by *work*. Such a militia would develop those functions which, speaking in scientific language, come within the purview of the "welfare police", sanitary inspection, and so forth, and would enlist for such work all adult women. If women are not drawn into public service, into the militia, into political life, if women are not torn out of their stupefying house and kitchen environment, it will be *impossible* to guarantee real freedom, it will be *impossible* to build even democracy let alone socialism.

Such a militia would be a proletarian militia, for the industrial and urban workers would exert a guiding influence on the masses of the poor as naturally and inevitably as they came to hold the leading place in the people's revolutionary struggle both in 1905-07 and in 1917.

Such a militia would ensure absolute order and devotedly observed comradely discipline. At the same time, in the severe crisis that all the belligerent countries are experiencing, it would make it possible to combat this crisis in a very democratic way, properly and rapidly to distribute grain and other supplies, introduce "universal labour service", which the French now call "civilian mobilisation" and the Germans "civilian service" and without which *it is impossible—it has proved to be impossible*—to heal the wounds that have been and are being inflicted by the predatory and horrible war.

Has the proletariat of Russia shed its blood only in order to receive fine promises of political democratic reforms and nothing more? Can it be that it will not demand, and secure, that *every* toiler should *forthwith* see and feel some improvement in his life? That every family should have bread? That every child should have a bottle of good milk and that not a single adult in a rich family should dare take extra milk until children are provided for? That the palaces and rich apartments abandoned by the tsar and the aristocracy should not remain vacant, but provide shelter for the homeless and the destitute? Who can carry out these measures except a people's militia, to which women must belong equally with men?

These measures do *not yet* constitute socialism. They

concern the distribution of consumption, not the reorganisation of production. They would not yet constitute the “dictatorship of the proletariat”, only the “revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry”. It is not a matter of finding a theoretical classification. We would be committing a great mistake if we attempted to force the complete, urgent, rapidly developing practical tasks of the revolution into the Procrustean bed of narrowly conceived “theory” instead of regarding theory primarily and predominantly as a *guide to action*.

Do the masses of the Russian workers possess sufficient class-consciousness, fortitude and heroism to perform “miracles of proletarian organisation” after they have performed miracles of daring, initiative and self-sacrifice in the direct revolutionary struggle? That we do not know, and it would be idle to indulge in guessing, for practice *alone* furnishes the answers to such questions.

What we do know definitely, and what we, as a party, I must explain to the masses is, on the one hand, the immense power of the locomotive of history that is engendering an unprecedented crisis, starvation and incalculable hardship. That locomotive is the war, waged for predatory aims by the capitalists of *both* belligerent camps. This “locomotive” has brought a number of the richest, freest and most enlightened nations to the brink of doom. It is *forcing* the peoples to strain to the utmost all their energies, placing them in unbearable conditions, putting on the order of the day not the application of certain “theories” (an illusion against which Marx always warned socialists), but implementation of the most extreme practical measures; for *without* extreme measures, death—immediate and certain death from starvation—awaits millions of people.

That the revolutionary enthusiasm of the advanced class can do a *great deal* when the objective situation *demand*s extreme measures from the entire people, needs no proof. *This* aspect is clearly seen and *felt* by everybody in Russia.

It is important to realise that in revolutionary times the objective situation changes with the same swiftness and abruptness as the current of life in general. And we must *be*

able to adapt our tactics and immediate tasks to the *specific features* of every given situation. Before February 1917, the immediate task was to conduct bold revolutionary-internationalist propaganda, summon the masses to fight, rouse them. The February-March days required the heroism of devoted struggle to crush the immediate enemy—tsarism. Now we are in *transition* from that first stage of the revolution to the second, from “coming to grips” with tsarism to “coming to grips” with Guchkov-Milyukov landlord and capitalist imperialism. The immediate task is *organisation*, not only in the stereotyped sense of working to form stereotyped organisations, but in the sense of drawing unprecedentedly broad masses of the oppressed classes into an organisation that would take over the military, political and economic functions of the state.

The proletariat has approached, and will approach, this singular task in different ways. In some parts of Russia the February-March Revolution puts nearly complete power in its hands. In others the proletariat may, perhaps, in a “usurpatory” manner, begin to form and develop a proletarian militia. In still others, it will probably strive for immediate elections of urban and rural local government bodies on the basis of universal, etc., suffrage, in order to turn them into revolutionary centres, etc., until the growth of proletarian organisation, the coming together of the soldiers with the workers, the movement among the peasantry and the disillusionment of very many in the war-imperialist government of Guchkov and Milyukov bring near the hour when this government will be replaced by the “government” of the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies.

Nor ought we to forget that close to St. Petersburg we have one of the most advanced, factually republican, countries, namely, Finland, which, from 1905 to 1917, shielded by the revolutionary battles of Russia, has in a relatively peaceful way developed democracy and has won the *majority* of the people for socialism. The Russian proletariat will guarantee the Finnish Republic complete freedom, including freedom to secede (it is doubtful now whether a single Social-Democrat will waver on this point when the Cadet Rodichev is so meanly haggling in Helsingfors for bits of

privileges for the Great Russians¹⁹)—and precisely in this way will win the *complete* confidence and comradely assistance of the Finnish workers for the all-Russian proletarian cause. In a difficult and big undertaking mistakes are inevitable, nor will we avoid them. The Finnish workers are better organisers, they will help us in this sphere, they will, *in their own way*, push forward the establishment of the socialist republic.

Revolutionary victories in Russia proper—peaceful organisational successes in Finland shielded by these victories—the Russian workers' transition to revolutionary organisational tasks on a new scale—capture of power by the proletariat and poorest strata of the population—encouragement and development of the socialist revolution in the West—this is the road that will lead us to *peace* and *socialism*.

N. Lenin

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LETTERS FROM AFAR

FOURTH LETTER

HOW TO ACHIEVE PEACE

I have just (March 12/25) read in the *Neue Zurcher Zeitung* (No. 517 of March 24) the following telegraphic dispatch from Berlin:

“It is reported from Sweden that Maxim Gorky has sent the government and the Executive Committee greetings couched in enthusiastic terms. He greets the people’s victory over the lords of reaction and calls upon all Russia’s sons to help erect the edifice of the new Russian state. At the same time he urges the government to crown the cause of emancipation by concluding peace. It must not, he says, be peace at any price; Russia now has less reason than ever to strive for peace at any price. It must be a peace that will enable Russia to live in honour among the other nations of the earth. Mankind has shed much blood; the new government would render not only Russia, but all mankind, the greatest service if it succeeded in concluding an early peace.”

That is how Maxim Gorky’s letter is reported.

It is with deep chagrin that one reads this letter, impregnated through and through with stock philistine prejudices. The author of these lines has had many occasions, in meetings with Gorky in Capri, to warn and reproach him for his political mistakes. Gorky parried these reproaches with his inimitable charming smile and with the ingenuous remark: “I know I am a bad Marxist. And besides, we artists are all somewhat irresponsible.” It is not easy to argue against that.

There can be no doubt that Gorky’s is an enormous artistic talent which has been, and will be, of great benefit to the world proletarian movement.

But why should Gorky meddle in politics?

In my opinion, Gorky’s letter expresses prejudices that are exceedingly widespread not only among the petty bourgeoisie, but also among a section of the workers under its influence. *All* the energies of our Party, all the efforts of the class-conscious workers, must be concentrated on a persistent, persevering, all-round struggle against these

prejudices.

The tsarist government began and waged the present war as an *imperialist*, predatory war to rob and strangle weak nations. The government of the Guchkovs and Milyukovs, which is a landlord and capitalist government, is forced to continue, and wants to continue, *this very same kind* of war. To urge that government to conclude a democratic peace is like preaching virtue to brothel keepers.

Let me explain what is meant.

What is imperialism?

In my *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, the manuscript of which was delivered to the Parus Publishers some time before the revolution, was accepted by them and announced in the magazine *Letopis*,²⁰ I answered this question as follows:

“Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun; in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed” (Chapter VII of the above-mentioned book, the publication of which was announced in *Letopis*, when the censorship still existed, under the title: “Modern Capitalism”, by V. Ilyin).

The whole thing hinges on the fact that capital has grown to huge dimensions. Associations of a small number of the biggest capitalists (cartels, syndicates, trusts) manipulate *billions* and divide the whole world among themselves. The world has been *completely* divided up. The war was brought on by the clash of the two most powerful groups of multimillionaires, Anglo-French and German, for the *redivision* of the world.

The Anglo-French group of capitalists wants first to rob Germany, deprive her of her colonies (nearly all of which have already been seized), and then to rob Turkey.

The German group of capitalists wants to seize Turkey for *itself* and to compensate itself for the loss of its colonies by seizing neighbouring small states (Belgium, Serbia, Rumania).

This is the real truth; it is being concealed by all sorts of bourgeois lies about a “liberating”, “national” war, a “war for right and justice”, and similar jingle with which the capitalists always fool the common people.

Russia is waging this war with foreign money. Russian capital is a *partner* of Anglo-French capital. Russia is waging the war in order to rob Armenia, Turkey, Galicia.

Guchkov, Lvov and Milyukov, our present ministers, are not chance comers. They are the representatives and leaders of the entire landlord and capitalist class. They are *bound* by the interests of capital. The capitalists can no more renounce their interests than a man can lift himself by his bootstraps.

Secondly, Guchkov-Milyukov and Co. are *bound* by Anglo-French capital. They have waged, and are still waging, the war with foreign money. They have borrowed billions, promising to pay *hundreds of millions* in interest *every year*, and to squeeze this *tribute* out of the Russian workers and Russian peasants.

Thirdly, Guchkov-Milyukov and Co. are *bound* to England, France, Italy, Japan and other groups of robber capitalists by direct *treaties* concerning the predatory aims of this war. These treaties were concluded by *Tsar Nicholas II*. Guchkov-Milyukov and Co. took advantage of the workers’ struggle against the tsarist monarchy to seize power, and *they have confirmed the treaties* concluded by the tsar.

This was done by the whole of the Guchkov-Milyukov government in a Manifesto which the St. Petersburg Telegraph Agency circulated on March 7(20): “The government [of Guchkov and Milyukov] will faithfully abide by all the treaties that bind us with other powers,” says the manifesto. Milyukov, the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, said the *same thing* in his telegram of March 5 (18), 1917 to all Russian representatives abroad.

These are all *secret* treaties, and Milyukov and Co. *refuse* to make them public for two reasons: (1) they fear the people, who are opposed to the predatory war; (2) they are bound by Anglo-French capital which insists that the treaties remain secret. But every newspaper reader who has followed events knows that these treaties envisage the robbery of China by

Japan; of Persia, Armenia, Turkey (especially Constantinople) and Galicia by Russia; of Albania by Italy; of Turkey and the German colonies by France and England, etc.

This is how things stand.

Hence, to urge the Guchkov-Milyukov government to conclude a speedy, honest, democratic and good-neighbourly peace is like the good village priest urging the landlords and the merchants to “walk in the way of God”, to love their neighbours and to turn the other cheek. The landlords and merchants listen to these sermons, continue to oppress and rob the people and praise the priest for his ability to console and pacify the “muzhiks”.

Exactly the same role is played—consciously or unconsciously—by all those who in the present imperialist war address pious peace appeals to the bourgeois governments. The bourgeois governments either refuse to listen to such appeals and even prohibit them, or they allow them to be made and assure all and sundry that they are only fighting to conclude the speediest and “justest” peace, and that all the blame lies with the enemy. Actually, talking peace to bourgeois governments turns out to be *deception of the people*.

The groups of capitalists who have drenched the world in blood for the sake of dividing territories, markets and concessions *cannot* conclude an “honourable” peace. They can conclude only a *shameful* peace, a peace based on *the division of the spoils, on the partition of Turkey and the colonies*.

Moreover, the Guchkov-Milyukov government is in general opposed to peace at the present moment, because the “only” “loot” it would get *now* would be Armenia and part of Galicia, whereas it *also* wants to get Constantinople *and* regain from the Germans Poland, which tsarism has always so inhumanly and shamelessly oppressed. Further, the Guchkov-Milyukov government is, in essence, only the agent of Anglo-French capital, which wants to retain the colonies it has wrested from Germany and, *on top of that*, compel Germany to hand back Belgium and part of France. Anglo-French capital helped the Guchkovs and Milyukovs remove Nicholas II in order that they might help it to “vanquish” Germany.

What, then, is to be done?

To achieve peace (and still more to achieve a really democratic, a really honourable peace), it is necessary that political power be in the hands of *the workers and poorest peasants*, not the landlords and capitalists. The latter represent an insignificant minority of the population, and the capitalists, as everybody knows, are making fantastic profits out of the war.

The workers and poorest peasants are the *vast* majority of the population. They are not making profit out of the war; on the contrary, they are being reduced to ruin and starvation. They are bound neither by capital nor by the treaties between the predatory groups of capitalists; they *can* and sincerely want to end the war.

If political power in Russia were in the hands of the *Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies*, these Soviets, and the *All-Russia Soviet* elected by them, could, and no doubt would, agree to carry out the peace programme which our Party (the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party) outlined as early as October 13, 1915, in No. 47 of its Central Organ, *Sotsial-Demokrat* (then published in Geneva because of the Draconic tsarist censorship).

This programme would probably be the following:

1) The All-Russia Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies (or the St. Petersburg Soviet temporarily acting for it) would forthwith declare that it is *not* bound by *any* treaties concluded *either* by the tsarist monarchy *or* by the bourgeois governments.

2) It would forthwith publish *all* these treaties in order to hold up to public shame the predatory aims of the tsarist monarchy and of *all* the bourgeois governments without exception.

3) It would forthwith publicly call upon *all* the belligerent powers to conclude an *immediate armistice*.

4) It would immediately bring to the knowledge of all the people our, the workers' and peasants' *peace terms*:

liberation of *all* colonies;

liberation of *all* dependent, oppressed and unequal nations.

5) It would declare that it expects nothing good from the bourgeois governments and calls upon the workers of all

countries to overthrow them and to transfer all political power to Soviets of Workers' Deputies.

6) It would declare that the *capitalist gentry themselves* can repay the billions of debts contracted by the bourgeois governments to wage this criminal, predatory war and that the workers and peasants *refuse to recognise* these debts. To pay the interest on these loans would mean paying the capitalists *tribute* for many years for having graciously allowed the workers to kill one another in order that the capitalists might divide the spoils.

Workers and peasants!—the Soviet of Workers' Deputies would say—are you willing to pay these gentry, the capitalists, *hundreds of millions* of rubles *every year* for a war waged for the division of the African colonies, Turkey, etc.?

For *these* peace terms the Soviet of Workers' Deputies would, in my opinion, agree to *wage war* against *any* bourgeois government and against *all* the bourgeois governments of the world, because this would really be a just war, because *all* the workers and toilers in *all* countries would *work for its success*.

The German worker now sees that the bellicose monarchy in Russia is being replaced by a *bellicose* republic, a republic of capitalists who want to continue the imperialist war, and who have confirmed the predatory treaties of the Tsarist monarchy.

Judge for yourselves, can the German worker trust *such* a republic?

Judge for yourselves, can the war continue, can the capitalist domination continue on earth, if the Russian people, always sustained by the living memories of the great Revolution of 1905, win complete freedom and transfer all political power to the Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies?

N. Lenin

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LETTERS FROM AFAR

FIFTH LETTER

THE TASKS INVOLVED IN THE BUILDING OF THE REVOLUTIONARY PROLETARIAN STATE

In the preceding letters, the immediate tasks of the revolutionary proletariat in Russia were formulated as follows: (1) to find the surest road to the next stage of the revolution, or to the second revolution, which (2) must transfer political power from the government of the landlords and capitalists (the Guchkovs, Lvovs, Milyukovs, Kerenskys) to a government of the workers and poorest peasants. (3) This latter government must be organised on the model of the Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, namely, (4) it must smash, completely eliminate, the old state machine, the army, the police force and bureaucracy (officialdom), that is common to *all* bourgeois states, and substitute for this machine (5) not only a mass organisation, but a universal organisation of the entire armed people. (6) *Only* such a government, of "such" a class composition ("revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry") and such organs of government ("proletarian militia") *will be capable* of successfully carrying out the extremely difficult and absolutely urgent *chief* task of the moment, namely: to achieve *peace*, not an imperialist peace, not a deal between the imperialist powers concerning the division of the booty by the capitalists and their governments, but a really lasting and democratic peace, which cannot be achieved without a proletarian revolution in a number of countries. (7) In Russia the victory of the proletariat can be achieved in the very near future *only* if, from the very first step, the workers are supported by the vast majority of the peasants fighting for the confiscation of the landed estates (and for the nationalisation of all the land, if we assume that the agrarian programme of the "104" is still essentially the agrarian programme

of the *peasantry*²¹). (8) In connection with such a peasant revolution, and on its basis, the proletariat can and must, in alliance with the *poorest* section of the peasantry, take further steps towards *control* of the production and distribution of the basic products, towards the introduction of “universal labour service”, etc. These steps are dictated, with absolute inevitability, by the conditions created by the war, which in many respects will become still more acute in the post-war period. In their entirety and in their development these steps will mark the *transition to socialism*, which cannot be achieved in Russia directly, at one stroke, without transitional measures, but is quite achievable and urgently necessary as a result of such transitional measures. (9) In this connection, the task of immediately organising special Soviets of Workers’ Deputies in the *rural districts*, i.e., Soviets of agricultural wage-workers *separate* from the Soviets of the other peasant deputies, comes to the forefront with extreme urgency.

Such, briefly, is the programme we have outlined, based on an appraisal of the class forces in the Russian and world revolution, and also on the experience of 1871 and 1905.

Let us now attempt a general survey of this programme as a whole and, in passing, deal with the way the subject was approached by K. Kautsky, the chief theoretician of the “Second” (1889-1914) International and most prominent representative of the “Centre”, “marsh” trend that is now to be observed in all countries, the trend that oscillates between the social-chauvinists and the revolutionary internationalists. Kautsky discussed this subject in his magazine *Die Neue Zeit* of April 6, 1917 (new style) in an article entitled, “The Prospects of the Russian Revolution”.

“First of all,” writes Kautsky, “we must ascertain what tasks confront the revolutionary proletarian regime” (state system).

“Two things,” continues the author, “are urgently needed by the proletariat: democracy and socialism.”

Unfortunately, Kautsky advances this absolutely

incontestable thesis in an exceedingly general form, so that in essence he says nothing and explains nothing. Milyukov and Kerensky, members of a bourgeois and imperialist government, would readily subscribe to this general thesis, one to the first part, and the other to the second....*

Written on March 26 (April 8), 1917	Published according
First published in the magazine	to the manuscript
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* The manuscript breaks off here.—*Ed.*

Notes

1) The first four *Letters from Afar* were written between March 7 and 12 (20 and 25), the fifth, unfinished letter was written on the eve of Lenin's departure from Switzerland, on March 26 (April 8), 1917.

As soon as the first news reached him of the revolutionary events in Russia and the composition of the bourgeois Provisional Government and the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, Lenin began work on an article for *Pravda*—he regarded the press as an important vehicle of propaganda and organisation. “The press is now the main thing”, he wrote to Alexandra Kollontai on March 3 (16). “I cannot deliver lectures or attend meetings, for I must write daily for *Pravda*,” he wrote to V. A. Karpinsky on March 8 (21), in reply to the latter's invitation to deliver a lecture on the tasks of the Party in the revolution to Russian emigres and Swiss socialists in Geneva.

The first and second “Letters from Afar” were sent to Alexandra Kollontai in Oslo on March 9 (22) for forwarding to Petrograd. On March 17 (30) Lenin asked J. S. Hanecki whether the first four letters had reached *Pravda* in Petrograd, adding that if they had not, he would send copies. The letters were brought to Petrograd by Alexandra Kollontai, who handed them over to *Pravda* on March 19 (April 1).

The first letter appeared in Nos. 14 and 15 of *Pravda*, March 21 and 22 (April 3 and 4), with considerable abridgements and certain changes by the editorial board, which, beginning with mid-March, included L. B. Kamenev and J. V. Stalin. The full text of the letter was first published in 1949, in the fourth Russian edition of Lenin's *Collected Works*.

The second, third and fourth letters were not published in 1917. The basic ideas of the unfinished fifth letter were developed by Lenin in his “Letters on Tactics” and “The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution”.

Before leaving for Russia, Lenin took measures to circulate the first and second letters among Bolsheviks living in France and Switzerland.

2) The *Pravda* editors deleted about one fifth of the first letter. The cuts concern chiefly Lenin's characterisation of the

Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary leaders as conciliators and flunkeys of the bourgeoisie, their attempts to hide from the people the fact that representatives of the British and French governments helped the Cadets and Octobrists secure the abdication of Nicholas II, and also Lenin's exposure of the monarchist and imperialist proclivities of the Provisional Government, which was determined to continue the predatory war.

3) Lenin here refers to the *Petrograd Soviet of Workers' Deputies*, which emerged in the very early days of the February Revolution. Elections to the Soviet began spontaneously at individual factories and within a few days spread to all the factories in the capital. On February 27 (March 12), before the Soviet had assembled for its first meeting, the Menshevik liquidators K. A. Gvozdyov and B. O. Bogdanov, and Duma members N. S. Chkheidze, M. I. Skobelev and others proclaimed themselves the Provisional Executive Committee of the Soviet in an attempt to bring it under their complete control. At its first meeting in the evening of the same day, the Soviet formed a Presidium composed of Chkheidze, Kerensky and Skobelev who, together with A. G. Shlyapnikov, N. N. Sukhanov and Y. M. Steklov, made up the Executive Committee. Provision was made for inclusion of representatives of the central and Petrograd committees of the socialist parties. The Socialist-Revolutionaries were at first opposed to the organisation of the Soviet, but subsequently delegated their representatives, V. A. Alexandrovich, V. M. Zenzinov and others.

The Soviet proclaimed itself the organ of the workers and soldiers, and up to the first Congress of Soviets (June 1917) was factually an all-Russian centre. On March 1 (14) the Executive Committee was extended to include soldiers' deputies, among them F. F. Linde, A. I. Paderin and A. D. Sadovsky.

The Bureau of the Executive Committee was composed among others, of N. S. Chkheidze, Y. M. Steklov, B. O. Bogdanov, P. I. Stučka, P. A. Krasikov, K. A. Gvozdyov. N. S. Chkheidze and A. F. Kerensky were delegated to represent the Soviet on the Duma Committee.

On February 28 (March 13), the Soviet issued its Manifesto to the Population of Petrograd and Russia. It called on the people to rally around the Soviet and take over the

administration of local affairs. On March 3 (14), the Soviet appointed several commissions—on food, military affairs, public order and the press. The latter commission provided the first editorial board of *Izvestia*, composed of N. D. Sokolov, Y. M. Steklov, N. N. Sukhanov and K. S. Grinevich; V. A. Bazarov and B. V. Avilov were added somewhat later.

Meetings of the Executive Committee were attended, in a consultative capacity, by the Social-Democratic members of all the four State Dumas, five representatives of the Soldiers' Commission, two representatives of the Central Trade Union Bureau, representatives of the district Soviets, the *Izvestia* editorial board, and other organisations.

The Soviet appointed special delegates to organise district Soviets and began the formation of a militia (100 volunteers for every 1,000 workers).

Though leadership of the Soviet was in the hands of compromising elements, the pressure of the militant workers and soldiers compelled it to take a number of revolutionary measures—the arrest of tsarist officials, release of political prisoners, etc.

On March 1 (14), the Soviet issued its "Order No. 1 to the Petrograd Garrison". It played a very big part in revolutionising the army. Henceforth all military units were to be guided in their political actions solely by the Soviet, all weapons were to be placed at the disposal and under the control of company and battalion soldiers' committees, orders issued by the Provisional Committee of the State Duma were to be obeyed only if they did not conflict with the orders of the Soviet, etc.

But at the crucial moment, on the night following March 1 (14), the compromising leaders of the Soviet Executive voluntarily turned over power to the bourgeoisie: they endorsed the Provisional Government composed of representatives of the bourgeoisie and landlords. This was not known abroad, since papers standing to the left of the Cadets were not allowed out of the country. Lenin learned of the surrender of power only when he returned to Russia.

4) *Octobrists*—members of the Union of October Seventeen, a counter-revolutionary party formed after promulgation of the tsar's Manifesto of October 17 (30) 1905. It represented and upheld the interests of the big bourgeoisie and of the landlords who ran their estates on capitalist lines.

Its leaders were A. I. Guchkov, a big Moscow manufacturer and real estate owner, and M. V. Rodzyanko, a rich landlord. The Octobrists gave their full support to the tsar's home and foreign policy and in the First World War joined the "Progressist bloc", a sham opposition group demanding responsible government, in other words, a government that would enjoy the confidence of the bourgeoisie and landlords. The Octobrists became the ruling party after the February Revolution and did everything they could to ward off socialist revolution. Their leader, Guchkov, was War Minister in the First Provisional Government. Following the Great October Socialist Revolution, the party became one of the main forces in the battle against Soviet power.

The party of *Peaceful Renovation* was a constitutional-monarchist organisation of the big bourgeoisie and landlords. It took final shape in 1906 following the dissolution of the First Duma. It united the "Left" Octobrists and "Right" Cadets and its chief leaders were P. A. Heiden, N. N. Lvov, P. P. Ryabushinsky, M. A. Stakhovich, Y. N. and G. N. Trubetskoi, D. N. Shipov. Like the Octobrists, it sought to safeguard and promote the interests of the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie and of the landlords who ran their estates along capitalist lines. In the Third Duma the party joined with the so-called Party of Democratic Reforms to form the Progressist group.

5) *Cadets*—the name derives from the Constitutional-Democratic Party, the chief party of the Russian liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie. Founded in October 1905, it was composed chiefly of capitalists, Zemstvo leaders, landlords and bourgeois intellectuals. Prominent in the leadership were P. N. Milyukov, S. A. Muromtsev, V. A. Maklakov, A. I. Shingaryov, P. B. Struve and F. I. Rodichev. The Cadets became the party of the imperialist bourgeoisie and in the First World War actively supported the tsarist government's predatory policies and in the February Revolution tried to save the monarchy. The dominant force in the Provisional Government, they followed a counter-revolutionary policy inimical to the people but advantageous to U.S., British and French imperialism. Implacable enemies of Soviet power, the Cadets had an active part in all the armed counter-revolutionary actions and foreign intervention campaigns. Most of their leaders emigrated after the defeat of the

counter-revolutionary forces and continued their anti-Soviet and counter-revolutionary work abroad.

6) *Trudovik*—member of the Trudovik group in the State Dumas, formed in April 1906 by petty-bourgeois democrats—peasants and intellectuals of the Narodnik persuasion. The group wavered between the Cadets and the revolutionary Social-Democrats, and in the First World War most of its members adopted a social-chauvinist position.

The Trudoviks spoke for the rich peasants, the kulaks, and after the February Revolution actively supported the Provisional Government. One of their representatives, Zarudny, became Minister of Justice following the July events and directed the police campaign against the Bolsheviks. After the October Revolution the Trudoviks sided with the counter-revolutionary forces.

7) The *first Provisional Government*, or the Provisional Committee of the State Duma, was formed on February 27 (March 12), 1917. On that day the Duma Council of Doyens sent a telegram to the tsar drawing his attention to the critical situation in the capital and urging immediate measures “to save the fatherland and the dynasty”. The tsar replied by sending the Duma President, M. V. Rodzyanko, a decree dissolving the Duma. By this time the insurgent people had surrounded the Duma building, the Taurida Palace, where Duma members were meeting in private conference, and blocked all the streets leading to it. Soldiers and armed workers were in occupation of the building. In this situation the Duma hastened to elect a Provisional Committee to “maintain order in Petrograd and for communication with various institutions and individuals”.

The Provisional Committee was composed of V. V. Shulgin and V. N. Lvov, both of the extreme Right, Octobrists S. I. Shidlovsky, I. I. Dmitryukov, M. V. Rodzyanko (chairman), Progressists V. A. Rzhevsky and A. I. Konovalov, Cadets P. N. Milyukov and N. V. Nekrasov, the Trudovik A. F. Kerensky, and the Menshevik N. S. Chkheidze.

8) The composition of the C.C. Bureau in Russia on March 9 (22), 1917 was as follows: A. I. Yelizarova, K. S. Yeremeyev, V. N. Zalezhsy, P. A. Zalutsky, M. I. Kalinin, V. M. Molotov, M. S. Olminsky, A. M. Smirnov, Y. D. Stasova, M. I. Ulyanova, M. I. Khakharev, K. M. Shvedchikov, A. C. Shlyapnikov and K. I. Shutko. On March 12 (25). G. I. Bokii

and M. K. Muranov were added, also J. V. Stalin, with voice but no vote.

The *Petrograd Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.* was formed at a meeting on March 2 (15), 1917, and was composed of all those who had served on the illegal committees and newly co-opted members. The composition was: B. V. Avilov, N. K. Antipov, B. A. Zhemchuzhin, V. N. Zalezhsy, M. I. Kalinin, N. P. Komarov, L. M. Mikhailov, V. M. Molotov, K. Orlov, N. I. Podvoisky, P. I. Stučka, V. V. Schmidt, K. I. Shutko and A. G. Shlyapnikov, representing the Central Committee Bureau.

9) This refers to the *Manifesto of the Russian Socialist-Democratic Labour Party to All Citizens of Russia*, issued by the Central Committee and published as a supplement to *Izvestia* of February 28 (March 13), 1917 (No. 1). Lenin learned of the Manifesto from an abridged version in the morning edition of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, March 9 (22), 1917. On the following day he wired *Pravda* in Petrograd via Oslo: "Have just read excerpts from the Central Committee Manifesto. Best wishes. Long live the proletarian militia, harbinger of peace and socialism!"

10) Socialist-Revolutionaries—members of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, a petty-bourgeois party in Russia, which arose at the end of 1901 and beginning of 1902 as a result of the merger of various Narodnik groups and circles. The Socialist-Revolutionaries were oblivious to the class differences between the proletariat and petty proprietors, glossed over the class differentiation and contradictions within the peasantry and negated the leading role of the proletariat in the revolution. The views of the Socialist-Revolutionaries were an eclectic mixture of the ideas of Narodism and revisionism. The Bolsheviki Party exposed their attempts to masquerade as socialists, carried out a determined struggle against them for influence over the peasantry and showed the danger to the working-class movement of their tactics of individual terrorism. The fact that the peasantry, to which the Socialist-Revolutionaries appealed, was not a homogeneous class determined their political and ideological instability and organisational disunity and their constant waverings between the liberal bourgeoisie and the proletariat. As early as the first Russian revolution (1905-07) the Right wing of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party broke away and formed the legal

Trudovik Popular Socialist Party whose outlook was close to that of the Cadets, and the Left wing formed the semi-anarchist League of Maximalists. The majority of Socialist-Revolutionaries adopted a social-chauvinist position during the First World War.

O.C.(Organising Committee)-ists—the leading Menshevik centre inaugurated at the August 1912 Conference of liquidators. In the First World War the Organising Committee followed a social-chauvinist policy, justified tsarist Russia's part in the war and carried on jingoist propaganda. Published a magazine *Nasha Zarya* (Our Dawn) and, after its closure, *Nashe Dyelo* (Our Cause), later renamed *Dyelo*, and the newspaper *Rabocheye Utro* (Workers' Morning), later renamed *Utro*. The O.C. functioned up to the elections of the Menshevik Central Committee in August 1917. Besides the O.C. which operated inside Russia, there was a Secretariat Abroad composed of five secretaries—P. B. Axelrod, I. S. Astrov-Poves, Y. O. Martov, A. S. Martynov and S. Y. Semkovsky. It followed a pro-Centrist line and used internationalist phraseology to cover up its support of the Russian social-chauvinists. The Secretariat Abroad published a newspaper, *Izvestia* (News), which appeared from February 1915 to March 1917.

Semkovsky's article "Russia Disintegrating?", to which Lenin evidently refers, appeared in *Nashe Slovo* No. 45, March 21. 1915.

11) Reference is to the agreement concluded on the night following March 1 (14), 1917 between the Duma Provisional Committee and the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik leaders of the Petrograd Soviet Executive Committee. The latter voluntarily surrendered power to the bourgeoisie and authorised the Duma Provisional Committee to form a Provisional Government of its own choice.

12) *Le Temps*—a daily paper published in Paris from 1861 to 1942. Spoke for the ruling element and was the factual organ of the French Foreign Ministry.

13) The Manifesto of the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was published in *Izvestia* on March 3 (16), 1917 (No. 4), simultaneously with the announcement of the formation of a Provisional Government under Prince Lvov. Drawn up by the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik members of the Executive

Committee, it declared that the democratic forces would support the new government “to the extent that it carries out its undertakings and wages a determined struggle against the old regime”.

The Manifesto did not mention the fact that the Soviet had authorised Kerensky to join the new government, inasmuch as on March 1 (14) the Executive Committee had decided “not to delegate democratic representatives to the government”. *Le Temps* reported this in a despatch from its correspondent. On March 2 (15) the Soviet, “defying the protest of the minority”, approved Kerensky’s entry into the government as Minister of Justice.

14) *Neue Züricher Zeitung*—a bourgeois newspaper, founded in Zurich in 1780 and until 1821 published under the name *Züricher Zeitung*, now the most influential paper in Switzerland.

National-Zeitung—a capitalist newspaper published in Berlin from 1848 to 1938; beginning with 1914 appeared under the name *Acht-Uhr Abendsblatt. National-Zeitung*.

15) The foreign press reported the appointment by the Petrograd Soviet of a special body to keep check on the Provisional Government. On the basis of this report, Lenin at first welcomed the organisation of this control body, pointing out, however, that only experience would show whether it would live up to expectations. Actually, this so-called Contact Committee, appointed by the Executive on March 8 (21) to “influence” and “control” the work of the Provisional Government, only helped the latter exploit the prestige of the Soviet as a cover for its counter-revolutionary policy. The Contact Committee consisted of M. I. Skobelev, Y. M. Steklov, N. N. Sukhanov, V. N. Filippovsky, N S. Chkheidze and, later V. M. Chernov and I. G. Tsereteli. It helped keep the masses from active revolutionary struggle for the transfer of power to the Soviets. The committee was dissolved in April 1917, when its functions were taken over by the Petrograd Soviet Executive Committee Bureau.

16) *Frankfurter Zeitung*—an influential German capitalist daily paper, published in Frankfurt-on-Main, from 1856 to 1943. Resumed publication in 1949 under the name *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*; speaks for West German monopoly interests.

17) *Vossische Zeitung*—a moderate liberal newspaper

published in Berlin from 1704 to 1934.

18) See Lenin's *The State and Revolution*.

19) Soon after its formation, the Provisional Government appointed the Octobrist M. A. Stakhovich Governor-General of Finland and the Cadet F. I. Rodichev Minister (or Commissioner) for Finnish Affairs. On March 8 (21), the Provisional Government issued its Manifesto "On Approval and Enforcement of the Constitution of the Grand Duchy of Finland". Under this Finland was allowed autonomy with the proviso that laws promulgated by the Finnish Diet would be subject to confirmation by the Russian Government. Laws that ran counter to Finnish legislation were to remain in force for the duration of the war.

The Provisional Government wanted the Finnish Diet to amend the Constitution to give "Russian citizens equal rights with Finnish citizens in commerce and industry", for under the tsarist government such equality was imposed in defiance of Finnish laws. At the same time, the Provisional Government refused to discuss self-determination for Finland "pending convocation of the constituent assembly". This led to a sharp conflict, resolved only after the Great October Socialist Revolution when, on December 18 (31), 1917, the Soviet Government granted Finland full independence.

20) *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* was written in the first half of 1916, and on June 19 (July 2) was sent to Petrograd via Paris. It was to have been published by the Parus publishing house which, on Maxim Gorky's initiative, was putting out a series of popular surveys of West-European countries involved in the war. Lenin maintained contact with the publishers through the editor of the series, M. N. Pokrovsky. On September 29, 1916, Gorky wrote Pokrovsky in Paris that Lenin's book was "really excellent" and would be put out in addition to the regular series. However, the Parus editors strongly objected to Lenin's criticism of Kautsky's renegade position and substantially altered the text, deleting all criticism of Kautsky's theory of ultra-imperialism and distorting a number of Lenin's formulations. The book was finally published in mid-1917 with a preface by Lenin, dated April 26.

Parus (Sail) and *Letopis* (Annals)—the names of the publishing house and magazine founded by Gorky in Petrograd.

Letopis—a magazine of literature, science and politics whose contributors included former Bolsheviks (the Machists V. A. Bazarov and A. A. Bogdanov) and Mensheviks. Gorky was literary editor, and among the other prominent writers contributing to *Letopis* were Alexander Blok, Valeri Bryusov, Fyodor Gladkov, Sergei Yesenin. A. V. Lunacharsky, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Vyacheslav Shishkov and A. Chaplygin. *Letopis* appeared from December 1915 to December 1917. The Parus publishing house existed from 1915 through 1918.

21) The *agrarian programme of the "104"*—the land reform bill the Trudovik members submitted to the 13th meeting of the First State Duma on May 23 (June 5) 1906. Its purpose was to “establish a system under which all the land, with its deposits and waters, would belong to the entire people, and farmlands would be allowed only those tilling them by their own labour” (*Documents and Materials of the State Duma*, Moscow, 1957, p. 172). The Trudoviks advocated organisation of a “national land fund” that would include all state, crown, monastery and church lands, also part of privately owned lands, which were to be alienated if the size of the holding exceeded the labour norm fixed for the given area. Partial compensation was to be paid for such alienated land. Small holdings were to remain the property of the owner, but would eventually be brought into the national fund. Implementation of the reform was to be supervised by local committees elected by universal, direct and equal suffrage and by secret ballot.