RISE AND DECLINE OF NEO-COMMUNISM

By HAIM KANTOROVITCH

The popular and artistic descriptions of the Russian Revolution by J. Reed, Albert Rhys Williams and others, served as a warning to me not to take seriously anything that romantically inclined reporters, dreaming of socialism, might write about social or economic questions. What has happened in Russia? According to the above-named writers, and according to many of their friends, the soldiers in Russia wanted peace, the peasants land, and the workers socialism. The Kerensky government not giving them what they wanted, they then decided to make another revolution. The thought naturally occurred to them that if they should make a second revolution within a few months after the first, it would be wise to make it a Social Revolution. So they did. How very simple it was! And how beautifully they have done it! Read John Reed or Williams and you will find that the makers of the Russian Revolution were more like angels than human beings; what heroism and self-sacrifice these p e a s a n t s and s o l d i e r s showed, what bravery they exhibited! It really sounds more like a fairy tale than a statement of facts.

The Reeds and Williamses and their kind are socialists by sentiment. Socialism for them is an artistic dream—nothing more. They are really bourgeois intellectuals who come to hate present society out of sheer ennui. It is not their b u s i n e s s to inquire whether the Russian productive forces have developed to a point where a social revolution is possible; nor is it their business to inquire whether the peasants could ever be relied upon by the proletariat in its fight for socialism. They have seen the Russian Revolution, they have seen a grand uprising, they have met a few leaders and found them "jolly fellows"; they have read a few revolutionary proclamations that sounded terribly revolutionary to their tamed American minds—and they liked it all. At home they also tried to "frighten the philistines" by writing terrible stories and comitting as many little unconventionalities as were permissible in the literary circles of Greenwich Village. They liked the revolution. It was so different, so much more exciting than they had at any time dreamed!

I well remember a debate between John Reed and a certain New York Menshevist. Reed's opponent, thoroughly educated in

Marxism, asked Reed whether he believed that Bolshevism is not just the opposite of Marxism. Reed replied in somewhat these terms:

> **Oh, you fellows are not living beings; at best you are bookworms always thinking about what Marx said or meant to say. What we want is a revolution, and we are going to make it—not with books, but with rifles.**

The audience liked it very much, and through a very generous applause acknowledged Reed the victor of the debate. But if there were socialists in the audience to whom Marx is more than a name and socialism more than an artistic sentiment, I am sure that they must have shaken their heads gravely and said to themselves, "No, nothing good can come out of this kind of propaganda." The proletarian audience, with hate burning in their hearts towards existing capitalism, drank in the words of these romantic admirers of Bolshevism and found in them a momentary satisfaction like the drunkard in his wine, and like the latter, they did not give thought to the disappointment and disillusion that would come when the sobering-up process had set in.

What really happened in Russia is this. After the first revolution chaos prevailed. The peasants did not wait for the provisional government to finish its agrarian program. They simply seized the land of the big and even small landlords and divided it. They were ready to support any government that would ratify what they had already accomplished. The army was demoralized, the soldiers having deserted openly and in groups. The soldiers wanted peace (as well as the peasant and workers), but they cared very little what kind of peace they should get; they wanted peace, not because they were internationalists or pacifists, but because they wanted to go home to their families and to the new land that they were now acquiring. They cared not whether the kind of peace they should get would help or hinder international socialism. They would have supported any government that would have made an end to the war. Still worse were the conditions of Russian industry. Transportation was disorganized, raw materials scarce, and in some instances unobtainable. The prices of the means of life soared to such an alarming height that no manufacturer could afford to pay workers a living wage. As a consequence increased unemployment spread, and with it dissatisfaction with the government increased. "Why doesn't the government do something?" the masses demanded. What could the government do?

There were only two ways out—either to restore order by depriving the peasants of the expropriated lands and by shooting down the workers, or ratifying the expropriations of the land, nationalize the mines and factories, and get out of the war by all means. The Kerensky government could not do any of those things. It had no loyal army to rely upon, and, besides, it was a coalition government. It could not afford to break openly with either the workers and peasants or with the landlords and capitalists. There was no middle way. The Russian bourgeoisie was small and unorganized and powerless. The most sweeping social reforms were possible, reforms that would have brought the Russian workers nearer to socialism than the workers of any other country.

Neither the Social Revolutionists nor the Mensheviki correctly understood what they were to do. Moreover, none of them had the courage to do what the objective conditions required of them. The only party that understood clearly the latent possibilities of the moment was the Bolshevist party. Lenin, of course, knew very well that there could be no question about establishing socialism in Russia. In his polemic against Kamenev, Steklov and others who later became his chief helpers, he made this point very clear. "But," said Lenin, "if we can get the government in our hands, we will use it to strengthen the position of the Russian proletariat. It was only later that he expressed his belief in the possibility of establishing socialism in present-day Russia."

In a disorganized Russia, with a government that had the support of few, it was comparatively easy for a small but determined minority to get the state power in their hands through a military coup d'etat. We must not forget that the Bolsheviki were at first in favor of a popular democratic constitutional assembly. They took over the state power until the constitutional assembly met. They did not think then that democracy was a bourgeois prejudice. But when the constitutional assembly met, the Bolsheviki found that they were in the minority, and what is more, they understood that they could not get a majority in any national election at all, even though they had tried to satisfy the peasants by ratifying the land expropriations. At once they felt that the democratic way would not do for present-day Russia. They then dissolved the constitutional assembly and declared the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This was not enough. Being a small minority, they understood well enough that with freedom of speech, press and assembly,

with free discussion going on all over the country, they would not be able to hold out against the other parties, and they therefore had to declare all such institutions to be merely bourgeois prejudices, and abolish them. But even this was not enough. They also knew that though the bourgeois parties could not very well compete with them, the socialist parties could, and they thereupon began a war of extermination against all new and competing radical parties. The red terror was more against the Mensheviks and social republicans than against the bourgeoise. (1)

Now what was the influence of all this on the proletariat of other countries?

CHAPTER II

Long before the war and the Russian revolution it was apparent that there was great dissatisfaction within the rank and file of the socialist movement. Socialism in its last phase, though retaining its revolutionary phraseology, had in reality before the war become a social reform movement. It is true that the social revolution formally was the goal of the socialist movement. But the term social revolution had lost its significance; no practical value was attached to it. Political action had become the all-in-all. For the socialist movement the practical achievement was its real aim. In theory they were all Marxists; in practice they were really Bernsteinians. It is a curious fact that, while Bernstein has lost his theoretical fight against the orthodox Marxians, he none the less has won over to his side every socialist party in Europe, and even those who have never ceased calling him traitor. Plechanoff, Kausky, Mehring and others fought against Bernstein's philosophic heresies only, but modern socialism, in the form given it by Marx and Engels, is not a philosophy in the usual sense, *i. e.*, it is not one of those so-called systems thought out by a philosopher in his neatly furnished cabinet, without any relations to real life and the struggles that are going on beyond his cabinet. It has nothing to do with ultimate eternal truths for which philosophy is searching. "We have no ready made truths,"

1. It was not a question of theory at all. The Bolsheviki did not come at first with ready-made plans to execute. As a matter of fact, they took over the government because they were compelled to do it—compelled by the circumstances—and whatever they have done in Russia, no matter how much we disagree with them, was done because there was no other way at the time. It was terrible to read that the first proletarian government was arresting hundreds of socialists. The thought that the first Socialist Republic had to do away with freedom of speech, press and assembly was very grievous to every socialist, but nevertheless we all felt that there was no other way; all this was the result of Russian conditions. Above all, we knew that it was either the Bolsheviki or the monarchists, and whoever allied themselves with the latter to fight against the Soviet government became traitors to socialism, even if they did it with the best socialist intentions.

declared Marx and Engels at the beginning of their career; "we bring no dogmas; we come to interpret what is going on around us"—and what was going on around them? A terrible class struggle, a war for life or death between the upholders of the regime and those bent upon destroying it. They foresaw that it could end in no compromise and could not be fought with dapper hands or with polite, gentlemanly speeches in parliament. In a letter to his American friend, Wedemyer, Marx very clearly expressed what he thought to be his most important contribution to socialist tactics. In that letter he said:

> As far as I am concerned, I cannot claim to have discovered the existence of classes in modern society, or their strife against one another. Middle-class historians long ago described the evolution of the class struggle, and political economists showed the economic physiology of the classes. I have added as a new contribution the following propositions: (1) that the existence of classes is bound up with certain phases of material production; (2) that the class struggle leads necessarily to the dictatorship of the proletariat; (3) that this dictatorship is but the transition to the abolition of all classes and to the creation of a society of equals.

Marx, of course, knew very well that the dictatorship of the proletariat could not come about as a sudden act, as the result of a conspiracy, of a revolutionary minority. In the International Workingmen's Association (The First Internationale) Marx had to fight hard against the Blancists who held the above views; his hardest fight, however, was against the tactical views of Bakounine. As is well known, Bakounine was at first a very intimate friend of Marx, even a Marxist in a certain sense. He was the first to translate the Communist Manifesto into Russian. The fight between these two giants of the first internationale was entirely on questions of tactics; later, in the course of the fight, the differences in their respective philosophies came to light. Bakounine believed that the social revolution could take place at any time. The only thing needed is a small but determined revolutionary minority that should get hold of the state through an armed uprising, destroy it and free the people. Once they are free, they will organize their social life on an anarchistic basis. Bakounine looked with disfavor on all the activities of the labor movement that aimed at the betterment of the conditions of the working class under capitalism. Trade unions fighting for higher wages and less hours, political socialists fighting for political and social reforms, he considered as either fakirs or fools, and re-

garded their activities as harmful to the social revolution. First of all, he reasoned, they spend their time on worthless things. The condition of the working class cannot be bettered under capitalism, anyway, but what is more important is that this reform activity may instill the hope into the hearts and souls of the workers that revolution can be avoided, that we can, to use a modern expression, "gradually grow into socialism."

Marx and Engels could not agree to this view on the social revolution; this was just the opposite to the tactical consequences of their entire philosophy. Marx knew that revolutions cannot be made at will. Marx knew that "no social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed; and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the works of the old society." But he knew, moreover, that the "will to revolution," the class consciousness necessary for the accomplishment of the revolution, is not something that can be created by books and speeches. The class struggle that persistently goes on in daily life teaches socialism to the workers. The class struggle goes on, whether we recognize it or not; the workers will fight for any kind of relief they can get in their daily life, even if we advise them against it.

> The economic conditions have in the first place transformed the mass of a country into wage-workers. The domination of capital has created for this mass of people a common situation with common interest. Thus this mass is already a class as opposed to capital, but not yet united in its purpose. In the struggle . . . this mass unites and it is constituted as a class for itself. The interests which it defends are the interests of its class. But the struggle between class and class is a political struggle. (Misery of Philosophy. Eng., p. 189.)

Recognizing this, Marx and Engels knew that the work and struggles of the trade unions are not futile tasks, but are steps in the evolution of the class consciousness of the workers. Moreover, they recognized that everything gained by the workers on the economic or political field is a positive gain—positive in the sense that it gives to the workers a more favorable position in their fight against capitalism. "The undying achievement of Marx," says Clara Zetkin, who is now the most prominent leader of German communism, "is the fact that he has thrown a firm bridge between socialism and labor movement. Thanks to the Marxian conception of history, we conceived the inner tie between reform and revolution in history . . . he (Marx) showed us that reform and

revolution are not two different methods of the class struggle . . . but two different phases of historical development that are organically united." Every struggle for every reform is a step on our way to socialism. Even the super-revolutionist, Anton Panecok, who left the Comintern because the latter was not revolutionary enough for him, has this to say on the relations between reform and revolution: "A reform, achieved through a struggle, any achieved law in fact that is important for the workers, is for the proletariat a gain of power." Rosa Luxembourg, who is rapidly becoming the saint of the communist movement, has expressed the view of every Marxist on reform and revolution, in the following words:

> Can social-democracy be against social reforms? Of course not. And can we place our ultimate aim, the social revolution, in opposition to social reform? Certainly not. The practical struggle for social reforms, for democratic institutions—a struggle that aims to ameliorate the life of the working class, on the basis of the existing order, such a struggle is for social democracy the only way of the proletarian class struggle, for the conquest of political power and the abolition of wage slavery. (See Reform and Revolution—her reply to Bernstein.)

I could fill a book with quotations to show that this is the view of every Marxist in Europe, but this would be useless and would take up too much of my limited space. I will therefore quote only one more authority, one whom I hope no one will accuse of reformism. I mean Lenin. The Russian anarchists have criticised severely the Russian social democrats, who have always held the view that the Russian workers would have to first fight together with the other classes for a democratic republic and various other social reforms. The anarchists claimed that with the social democrats reforms are of primary and revolution of secondary importance. To this Lenin replied in his book, "Chto Dielat (What Is To Be Done, p. 46):

> We are not delaying (the Revolution); we only take the first step toward it, by the only road; namely, by the road of the democratic republic. Whoever wants to go to socialism by any other road than political democracy must arrive at, in the economic and political sense, absurd and reactionary conclusions.

And in another book of his, "Dvie Taktyki" (Two Tactics, p. 89), he plainly says:

> Revolutionary social democracy includes in its activities the fight for reforms; this fight is for it a part of the struggle for freedom and socialism.

Marx and Engels had also an entirely different view of the state than Bakounine. According to Bakounine, two states must be destroyed before anything can be done; according to Marx and Engels, the working class

> must first acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself as the nation (Communist Manifesto, p. 38.) The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest by degrees all capital from the bourgeoisie, to contralize all instruments of production *in the hands of the state*—that is, of the proletariat organized as the ruling class. (Com. Man., p. 41.) We see then, instead of destroying the state, the workers must use it to further their ends.

But more than anything else, Marx and Engels opposed the Blancist-Bakouninist idea that the revolution could be accomplished by an armed uprising of a minority. In what is called Engel's "last political testament," his preface to Marx's "War in France," published by the Labor News Co. under the title "The Revolutionary Act," he says that "with the successful utilization of the general franchise, an entirely new method of the proletarian struggle had come into being and had quickly been built up. . . . The rebellion of the old style, the street fight behind barricades, which up to 1848 had prevailed, has become antiquated." He even goes on to warn his readers that "the ruling classes, by some means or another, would get us where the rifle pops and the saber slashes." He also teaches us that "the time is past when revolutions can be carried through by small minorities at the head of unconscious masses."

We are now in a position to make a resumé of the Marxian conception of the social revolution:

(1) The social revolution cannot be made at will.

(2) The social revolution comes as the culminating point of a long-drawn-out class struggle.

(3) This class struggle is not created by class consciousness; on the other hand, class consciousness is created by the class struggle.

(4) The workers must continually fight for their daily demands; anything gained in this fight, whether by political and legislative reforms does not matter, strengthens the workers in their fight against capitalism.

(5) *Socialism cannot be established before capitalism has reached the zenith of its development.*

(6) The social revolution will be the mass action of the majority of the workers and cannot be the act of a conspiracy by a revo-

lutionary minority.

(7) The first act in the social revolution is the conquest of political power, the inauguration of the proletarian dictatorship, although this dictatorship is nothing else than the political rule of the working class, *i. e.*, the majority of the population.

CHAPTER III

As I said previously, in the last years before the war it became more and more evident that European social democracy, while holding fast to the Marxian view on social reform, practically abandoned the Marxian stand that reforms were valueless except as stimuli to further struggle which should culminate in the social revolution; from a means to goal (the social revolution), social reforms became a goal in themselves. It was evident that socialism daily lost more and more of its revolutionary character. The revolutionary minorities in the various European parties, as well as in this country, organized themselves in "left wings" and fought against these tendencies, but without success. The mass had either too much confidence in their leaders and followed them blindly, or lost all confidence in them and went over to the syndicalists. The left wing of the socialist movement, however, was not against the actual activities of the movement, but what they demanded was more revolutionary education for the masses. All we do now must be in the form of preparations for the coming revolution.

> It goes without saying . . . that all socialists will lend their assistance to all elements of the population that are fighting against reaction in favor of labor legislation and reform, but it does not follow that they should consider this the chief part of their work.

Thus one of the lefts summed up their position in 1912. It is possible that this cleavage between right and left might have gone on for years without causing a split, but that finally this split would have had to come we cannot question.

The war, with the great betrayal of the principles of the largest and oldest socialist parties, caused the split to come sooner than it would have under other conditions.

At the moment when the Russian Revolution triumphed, the socialist movement in Europe and America had not yet been split, but it had been demoralized and disorganized. The workers had lost all confidence in their leaders. They felt themselves fooled

and betrayed beyond hope. Even those who before believed that the war was a war for democracy, a war to end war, and had therefore applauded their leaders who helped to fool them, had already discovered their mistake. In the European countries, especially in the defeated ones, starvation and disease were added. The workers were enraged, they were anxious to do something desperate, but what? Their leaders could not suggest anything to them but patience. In the midst of all this came the Russian revolution. The Russian workers, a small minority of them, took up arms and did what the workers of the world had always dreamed of—why not imitate them? Why not emulate them?

Large masses, starving and disappointed, could not be expected to occupy themselves with the examination of whether the objective conditions were ripe for such an act. Their leaders, those who had not betrayed them, knew very well that what had been achieved in Russia could not, at least at that time, be achieved in any other country. They tried to explain it to the workers of their respective countries, but the workers had no more confidence in them. If the Russians could, why couldn't they? So they reasoned. The Russians suddenly became, in their eyes, the saviours of socialism. The Russians and those who allied themselves with them gained their confidence. They waited for them to tell them what to do. History placed a great responsibility on the leaders of the Russian revolution. How did they use this opportunity?

As a result of the Russian revolution the (third) communist international was organized. This new international was greeted with joy everywhere. The Russian Bolshevists, though they changed their name from social democrats to communists, repeatedly assured us that the change in name did not signify a change in theory or tactics—they were as they had been, Marxists. Steklov wrote a brochure, published by the Soviet government, to show that the new name was adopted only as a defensive measure, so that the masses, who knew little about the differences that existed between the various factions of the movement, would not confuse the revolutionary Marxists with the opportunists. The organizing of the new international meant, consequently, the reunion of all the revolutionary forces of the proletariat. Unity was urgently needed at that moment, and there were no others besides the Russian communists who could bring this about. But already at the first congress of the communists international it be-

came apparent that what the communists contemplated was not international unity of the proletariat, but international strife within the movement. Their slogan became, not "workers of the world unite," but "socialists of the world exterminate each other." This may seem exaggeration, but the facts I shall adduce will prove that it is not. The first duty of the communists all over the world was declared to be a splitting of the parties to which they belonged if they could not get control over them; and if they could get control, to expel every one that did not agree with them even in the slightest measure. The communist international could have had as its members the largest and most important parties in Europe. The Independent Social Democrats of Germany, at that time a large and powerful and really a revolutionary party; the French United Socialist party, the Italian Socialist party, even the Socialist party of America, and many other parties applied for admission, but the communist international refused them. It preferred the splitting up of these parties, the organizing of small and powerless communist sects, to the reunion of all socialist forces. I know some one will now ask, "Should Lenin and Sheidman, Trotsky and Noske have reunited.?" No, they should not have. Socialists of the type of Sheidman and Noske would not have entered the new international even had they been invited. They would not have been admitted if they would have applied for admission. But this Sheidman-Noske type of socialist could have been positively isolated and made harmless by the united front of all revolutionary socialists. But the communist international refused such a One of the famous 21 points was that if any one disagreed with even one point, or with any of the theses and resolutions of the communist international, he should be expelled. What was the result. The most important parties in Europe were split, torn to pieces by inner strifes. The real opportunists were given the chance to unite their forces and to demonstrate to the workers that the revolutionists are nothing but sectarians, fighting each other over hairsplitting differences. At the convention of the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany in 1921, in Halle, a delegate asked Zinoviev, who came to split the party, "Why not unite instead of splitting?" To this Zinoviev replied:

> Comrades, it has been said here, Would it not be better if we organize a united front against the bourgeoisie? Yes, of course, it would be very fine and very desirable, but to our regret, it is not possible as yet. The workers are already strong enough to throw off the bourgeoisie, even to-

> morrow, if we would only all stand united for communism. If the workers will remain in their dormant state, it is because we have not yet conquered the cursed inheritance of the rotten ideology within our own ranks.

In other words, we have to fight first of all the "enemy from within." In his opening speech at the second congress of the Communist International, Zinoviev made plain what he thought the immediate task of the communist movement to be: It is *to fight not the capitalists but the social democrats.* "Our fight against the second international," he said, "is not a fight between two factions of the same revolutionary proletarian movement, it is not a fight between different streams within the same class; it is practically a class struggle." This fight against all other socialists (and in this fight no difference was made between the "right" and the "center"), has gone so much over the limits that Lenin saw fit to rebuke his comrades for their excessive zeal. In his letter to the United Communist Party of Germany (August, 1921) he says:

> Some exaggerated the fight against the center, overstepped the bounds somewhat, thus transforming the fight into a sport and compromising revolutionary Marxism.

The fight against socialist heresy finally became a kind of "witch hunting" process, even within the communist ranks. They also began to split and fight each other, and they have continued to keep up this "revolutionary activity" to the present day.

Why has the communist international taken this attitude? Is it because the communist leaders are bad men or dishonest? Or have not the interests of the proletarian class struggle in their hearts? Certainly not. The communist leaders are neither bad nor dishonest; they are positively well-meaning, revolutionary socialists whose tactics were dictated to them by the singularity of the situation. This singularity was the complete hegemony of the Russian Bolshevists over the Communist International; the same people who were the leaders of the Russian Soviet government also became the leaders of the Communist International; the same men who had to fight the battles of the Soviet republic also had to fight the battles of the International Communist movement.

These men had, at the time when the new International was born, not only an actual war with the whites, but also a theoretical war with all other socialists. They considered, and I think rightly, that the pamphlets of Plechanoff and Kautsky, of Martov and

Bauer, were more dangerous for them than the guns of the white guards, or the blockade of the imperialist governments. Their socialist opponents attacked them especially on three points:

(1) That no social revolution could be made successfully by an armed minority.

(2) That socialism could not be established in an economically undeveloped country.

(3) That the Soviet government would not be able to hold out long against the capitalist countries of the world. The logical way for the Bolsheviki would have been for them to have drawn the attention of their critics to the specific Russian conditions, conditions so unique, which could not be found anywhere else. But the Bolsheviki, who were always distinguished for their revolutionary romanticism—and fanaticism—chose the opposite way. They made a virtue out of necessity; they simply rationalized their experience and satisfied themselves that what had been done in Russia could and would be done everywhere. Russia is an economically undeveloped country—so Lenin declared (in his report on "National and Colonial Problems" before the Second Congress of the Communist International) that

> we must give up the scientific prejudice that each country must inevitably pass through capitalist exploitation. In a time of mighty proletarian uprisings of a world-wide scope the Soviet regime can be established in those countries where capitalism has not yet developed.

Further than Lenin goes Bucharin, who says:

> From an examination of the process of a world revolution, we may draw the following general conclusions: The process of the world revolution begins in those countries where the state of development is lower and where the proletarian victory is easier to get . . . The less capitalistically developed a country is, which means the lower its revolutionary development, the more quickly may the revolution be accomplished. (Hillquit, p. 97.)

Neither Lenin nor Bucharin are willing to admit that they have deviated in any point from Marxism, yet it is easy to see that their conception of the social revolution is precisely the reverse of the Marxian.

The specific Russian conditions not only enabled but compelled a minority to make a revolution by means of an armed uprising; but the Bolshevik leaders did not see in this episode anything due to specific Russian conditions, and they quickly decided, and it has become an article of communist faith that "it is a minority which

carries out the revolution;" continuing, and "it might be fairly said that every revolution is undertaken by the minority, the majority only joining in during the course of the revolution and deciding its victorious issue." The writer of this calls himself a Marxist; in fact, he claims that he is the real upholder of Marxism, but what he says is against the latter as well as the spirit of Marxism. It is not Marxism, but Bakouninism.

As to the question of the necessity of an armed uprising, there is no communist from Lenin down to his American followers that has not insisted upon it. Kamenev expressed the views of his comrades very correctly in the following words:

> The center of contemporary life is the ultimate division of the whole capitalist society into two camps. . . . not only in Russia, but in all other countries . . . this is not enough, we know that these two camps come in conflict with arms in their hands . . . civil war is the sign of our time . . . who ever wants to . . . explain to the worker. . . . his real duties . . . must start out with the recognition that from now on the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are in open armed civil war. (Third International, p. 7.)

As you see, with Kamenev it is no more a question of what should be; he knows that the civil war is on, and that settles it. This was not only Kamenev's view—the first congress of the Communist International has in its initial declaration this sentence:

> The class struggle all over the world, in Europe and America, has become an open civil war.

And the second congress declared:

> The period in which we are living is the period of the direct civil war . . . everywhere . . . . where there is a labor movement of any significance, the workers are on the eve of bitter battles with arms in their hands. (P. 64.)

Their belief that the world revolution had already come was really phenomenal. Zinoviev predicted at the first congress of the Comintern that "it would perhaps take one year, and we would already begin to forget that there was a fight in Europe for Soviet power, because during this year the fight would be finished." This belief, of course, was not founded on sober examination of European conditions. It was a rationalization of a wish. The leaders of Soviet Russia, who were (and are) also the leaders of the Communist International, did not forget that Marx had once said that the revolution could begin in Russia, but could only succeed if fol-

lowed by a world revolution. As early as April 14, 1918, Trotsky said in a speech:

> We maintained in the first days of the revolution that the Russian revolution would succeed and free the Russian people only on the condition that it serves as a signal for the beginning of the revolution in all other countries; but if capitalism continues to rule in Germany, and in New York the stock exchange will have the upper hand, and British imperialism will retain its power, then we are lost.

A world revolution was a life necessity for them, and they succeeded in convincing themselves that it was ready to come.

But if the world revolution is ready to come, it is simply foolish for any one to fight for reforms, for momentary relief, and whoever does it is a traitor to the working class. If the class struggle in Europe and America has become an open civil war, what are needed are general headquarters and an army and rifles. The communist movement was organized, therefore, as one world-wide party, with no national autonomy, but with an iron military discipline, as befitted an army, and the "international" in Moscow became the general headquarters of this army.

It is sometimes said that as long as we shall have armies, we shall have wars. This may also be applied to the communists. They were originally organized as the revolutionary army, an army in the usual sense of the word, an army that was to begin and finish the social revolution in a short time—within a year, Zinoviev believed. Within an army in time of war there can, of course, be no freedom of discussion; soldiers must obey orders and not argue. That is why the Communist International inserted in its famous 21 points the clause that, if any one does not agree with everything, he shall be expelled; that is also why a point was inserted stating that the communist parties must have legal and illegal organizations; that is why democracy was banished from the party. Practical democracy, which both Marx and Engels considered an absolutely necessary condition for the social revolution, was discarded by the Bolsheviki, who could not get a majority in the Russian constituent convention; in fact, democracy was declared an anathema, a bourgeois prejudice for which the workers should have no use. This attitude had gone so far that a leader of the American communist party told me personally that if danger should arise and the democratic institutions of the United States be abolished, he would not raise a single finger to defend them. This also explains how it became possible for the German communists to entertain the thought that they

might, in alliance with German fascisti, work for the overthrow of the German republic. This is the old anarchistic impossibilist principle of "all or nothing," a principle which Marx and Engels abhorred.

CHAPTER V

The hopes for a speedy world revolution did not materialize. The workers were dissatisfied, and they demanded certain things—above all, work—but it seems that they were not ready for the revolution. What should the revolutionary army do meanwhile? It was necessary to do something, so the order was given out from the general headquarters, "Start the revolution by all means, call out a revolution artificially, get the workers to rise in arms, even if you have to fool them a little; it is, after all, for their own good." There were great strikes and much underlying labor unrest in Italy, so the Italian party was ordered to start the revolution, but before starting the revolution it had to expel all the reformists and see that none of them held a position in a union or co-operative society. Serrati, in the name of the great majority of the party, replied:

> We, living in Italy, knowing well the conditions of our country, know that to start a revolution now would be madness, and as to expelling the reformists, it would cause a split in our ranks and weaken us just at the moment when we need all the strength we can get. We cannot take away the jobs from all of the non-communists because they don't agree with us on certain principles. They may be bad socialists, but they are good specialists, able and experienced men, and to put inexperienced communists in their places would ruin our co-operation, and in the unions we have not the power to do it, even if we should wish to.

The Italian party, notwithstanding Serrati's admonition, was split, the majority expelled, its strength broken.

The German Communist party knew its duties. They knew that their business was to make a revolution; besides, they were steadily reminded of it by the communist international. But the great majority of the German workers did not want such a revolution. The communists then proceeded to compel the workers, to provoke them to it. The result was the tragic and infamous March "putch." That the German workers were not ready for the revolution is now admitted by the communists themselves. Zinoviev has this to say about both uprisings in Germany:

> In the year 1918-19 only a minority of the German workers followed Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. On the opposite pole, again only

a minority of the German workers followed the bloodhound Noske. The main mass, the center of the German working class, vacillated. This kernel—the general mass of the working class—sought peaceful means. That "middle" mass, which in the final instance decided the course of the struggle, at that time wanted no civil war, it feared the revolution, it reckoned that in a legal way—through the trade unions, through universal suffrage, through the German socialist party—it would slowly but surely improve its condition and secure a piece of bread and work.

The Spartacists, the vanguard of the workers, were still very weak numerically in the year 1919. In the years 1918-19 the Spartacists were held in very high esteem by the workers. Many workers silently recognized the courage and great devotion of the Spartacist minority to the cause of the working class, for they intercepted with their breast the cruelest blows of the counter-revolution, and they defended unflinchingly the interests of the entire working class. But even though the Spartacists enjoyed the esteem which they deserved, *nevertheless they were not followed.* The kernel of the working class regarded the daring Spartacus people not without sympathy. Yet when it came to action they supported the social democrats.

In March of the year 1921 the Spartacist vanguard of the working class threw itself anew into the struggle. The Communist vanguard itself attempted to replace by means of itself the greater mass of the working class, that greater mass which at that time was under the almost unrestricted influence of the German social democracy, by whom it was lulled to sleep with counter-revolutionary, sweet and senseless lullabies and hopes. And once more considerable sections of the German workers regarded not without sympathy the daring revolutionaries who time and again carried the blows of the counter-revolution. But once more these heroes remained without support from the greater mass of the workers. The vanguard, which rose up too early, was defeated.

(Worker, Dec. 8, 1923. "The German Working Classes, the German Communists and the German Social Democrats.")

Of course, it was very wrong of the German workers to follow the social democrats, but what could be done? The communists should have waited until the workers would have been communistically educated, but *impatience is the chief characteristic of neo-communism.* They started their March Revolution, a putch, as advocated by Bakounine. The national chairman of the party, Paul Levi, had protested. He had written a brochure to show that dishonest and anti-socialist means were being used to deceive the workers. Clara Zetkin, Hoffman and others protested; later they resigned from the central committee. The third congress of the Communists pronounced the March uprising a crime, but Paul Levi was expelled, and many others went with him, and the communist tactics remained the same.

In the article that I mentioned before, Zinoviev says:

> The lesson was not in vain. With the help of the Third World Congress of the Communist International, the German communist party was able to correctly gauge the mistakes of the past. The question of uprising, of the immediate struggle for power, was pushed aside in the year 1921, and without a moment's hesitation a new task was set—the winning over of a majority of the workers.

They have learned their lesson, it is true, but too late. Since March, 1921, the communist movement in Germany, as well as everywhere else, has been discredited. The workers view it with distrust and look upon the organization very much as upon a band of adventurers. But one thing they have succeeded in, and that is in breaking every party in Europe.

Chapter VI

On the eve of the third congress of the Communist International (June, 1921) a new spirit began to manifest itself within the communist movement. Lenin had published his "infantile sickness, left communism," in which he bitterly criticized his followers for believing and trying to practice what he himself was preaching or endorsing. But more frank than Lenin was the chief propagandist of Communism, Karl Radek. In an article entitled "Glossen Zur Congress der Communist International," published in the German Communist magazine "Die Internationale" (September, 1921), he says:

> The belief in a speedy world revolution was very widespread in our movement . . . The second congress did not do anything to correct this false view because the red army was then victorious over Poland, and it had aroused false hopes.

What were these hopes? Radek related that even Bucharin believed in the great role that the red army would play in the world revolution. One of the delegates told Radek very clearly:

> It is evident that as a result of our victory over Poland, we also shall succeed in breaking through in Germany and elsewhere and make the revolution.

So you see, the revolution was to be forced on the workers of the European countries by the red army. This was so original and so revolutionary that Bakounine himself did not dare to dream of it. But experience showed something quite different. In his "Re-

port on the Economic World Crisis," Trotsky summed up these experiences in the following words:

> We learned this through our defects, our disappointments and our great sacrifices as well as through our own erroneous acts . . . that we are not so immediately near our final goal—the conquest of power all over the world, and the world revolution. In 1919 we said to ourselves, it is a question of months, and now we say—it is perhaps a question of years. (Bulletin of the Third Congress of the Communist International, June 27, 1921, No. 2.)

What was to be done? The tactics of the Communist International, as expressed in the theses and resolutions of the second congress, were good for "war time only," but now that the realization had come that "perhaps it was a question of years" until the world revolution could arrive, what was the communist army to do meanwhile? Evidently it would not do now to try and create more splits, to isolate itself from the entire working class, and ignoring the latter's struggles for his immediate demands, go on shouting, "Make the social revolution." The third congress, therefore, adopted the so-called "new tactics," the tactics of the "united front."

The united front is a thorough departure from what was known as communism. Instead of anathematizing everybody that did not agree with them and always looking for points of disagreements, the communists were told to try and find some way to again unify proletarian forces, create a united front with the same people whom they before had declared as "lackeys of the bourgeois," as the real enemies of the proletariat, etc. Moreover, the necessity for a united front was declared to be the result of a new conviction of the communist leaders, the conviction that they needed a majority of the working class in their favor in order to accomplish their aim. The Bakounist ideas that largely determined the character of the communist movement were discarded, and a return to the old social democrat viewpoint effected. There were, of course, delegates at the third congress who understood perfectly well that the united front meant the abandonment of the chief principles of communism. Thus Delegate Tetracini, of Italy (to quote only one), said:

> It should not be said in the theses that we need a majority of the workers for communism, because this will be a weapon in the hands of the reformists against us, because they, the reformists, always argued that we must have a majority of the proletariat before the revolutionary fight can successfully begin.

anarcho-syndicalist elements. But the third congress, at last, repudiated its former tactics, expelled the anarchistic K. A. P. D. and rebuked its more ardent followers for their "Revolutionary Romanticism." Karl Radek interpreted the new tactics in the following words:

> It is clear that in 1918-1919 we fought with other methods. Then we strove with all our means for splits, we placed the dictatorship of the proletariat in the foreground, while now, without changing our general demands, we place concrete transitory demands in the foreground. The communist parties have now the task of beginning the struggle for the conquest of the majority of the proletariat. This struggle can obviously not consist in repeating, parrot-like, the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Our duty is to take part in all struggles of the proletariat, to explain, step by step, the meaning of each struggle, according to the worker's own experience; to extend the battle front more and more; to increase speed toward the final goal.

That this is the correct standpoint of social democracy will be admitted by every one who is but superficially acquainted with the social democratic view on reforms and partial struggles. The third congress has really abandoned their neo-communism and returned to social democratic tactics—but they lack the courage to acknowledge it.

The new tactics were of too "sharp a turn" for the communist movement. Most of the national sections revolted; in some parties splits occurred. The Comintern, therefore, hastened to give a new definition of the new tactics. "We want a united front with all the other factions of the labor movement, so that we can break them up from within."

Evidently none of the non-communist parties could agree to such a united front. A united front is only conceivable when all the parties to it have good intentions, but it is absolutely impossible when the party that asks for a united front simultaneously declares that its aim is to unite in order to move quickly and destroy its partners. Thus the Comintern defeated its own aim. The communist movement remained a sect isolated from the living and fighting working-class movement.

The new tactics of the united front have not only failed of their purpose, but they have also failed to strengthen the communist movement. From the reports of the fourth congress of the Communist International, we learn that every party in the Communist International is torn by internal strife, that the masses who

followed the communists are drifting from their pivot. Moreover, the iron discipline of the Communist International did not succeed in holding the national sections within the bonds of "true revolutionary communism." On the one hand there have developed left wings in all parties, who more and more tend to become anarchistic, and on the other hand, most of the communist parties are communist in name only, but reformists and opportunists in practice.

The situation in the International Communist movement from the third to the fourth congress is described by Zinoviev in the following manner:

> It is comparatively easy to adopt a resolution; but it is a much harder task when it comes to practical work; even the attempt to carry out an international membership week failed because our parties are still heterogeneous, because our parties are in many cases not yet communistic. During the past year we have attempted several international campaigns. Among these the campaign for the united front was of special importance, and it must be frankly stated that this campaign did not proceed without much hindrance. (Fourth report of Congress of the Communist International, English Translation, pp. 15-16.)

The situations in different parties are not more cheerful. "The French party had failed to apply the tactics of the Communist International." . . . There are in France today "three tendencies and two minor tendencies" that fight each other. The Italian communist party (that is, what is left of the Italian party) "has often acted against the policy of the executive in the Italian question." In Czecho-Slovakia the opportunist majority expelled the revolutionary minority. In Norway the communist party is only communist in name.[1] It is high time," says Zinoviev, "to take action in Norway so that the demands of the Communist International may be complied with." The executive of the Communist International had also "certain differences of opinion with the Polish party" on the agrarian question and the question of nationalities. "The Balkan Federation is functioning poorly." . . . . "In England . . . . we are growing very slowly; in no other country, perhaps, does the communist movement make such slow progress." . . . . "In America we have . . . a communist party with violent factional strife. Therefore, Amerca is one of our most difficult problems." . . . "In Hungary . . . the situation is pitiful." (See Zinoviev's Report to Fourth Congress. In Abridged Report (English) pp. 16-

1. The Norwegian party has been split since then.

19-20-, 22-23-25-26.) In general it can be said that the fourth congress showed that the "new tactic" was not effective in arresting the decline of the communist movement; on the contrary, it added theoretical confusion to the mood of despair that had set in on the movement. On account of its overvaluation of the revolutionary possibilities of the movement, the new tactic created instead of isolated revolutionary sects, isolated opportunist sects, trying desperately, but without success, to unite with the same "traitors and counter-revolutionists" whom they condemned only two years before.

VILLANELLE

We shall never go b a c k to the tender days
Of hand in hand and words unborn . . .
We will never again know wistful ways

We will meet perhaps. Though passion sways
Us closer than the love forsworn,
We shall never go b a c k to the tender days.

We shall speak, maybe. Though knowledge slays
In me the hate, in you the scorn,
We will never again know wistful ways.

What though I make you wistful lays . . .
Dew glistens even on the thorn.
We shall never go b a c k to the tender days.

What though you shout to heaven my praise . . .
The lute is drowned by the horn.
We will never again know wistful ways.

New buds reclaim a myriad Mays.
Full-blown *our* after-loves are born:
We will never again know wistful ways . . .
We shall never go b a c k to the tender days.

MARCIA NARDI.

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