

The World Revolution

Gorter, Herman
1923

Apparently written in 1923 and published in English in Workers' Dreadnought in 1924. This red texts version is based on the MIA version, available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/gorter/1923/world-revolution.htm>.

In forming the Communist Workers' International, it is important to explain clearly the revolutionary battle of the proletariat, which is revealed in quite a new light by the Russian and German revolutions.

We cannot do this better than by comparing the strength of the opponents of counter-revolutions with the strength of the proletariat in the light of the Russian and German revolutions. Such a comparison will clearly demonstrate the correctness of the programme of the Communist Workers' International, and the necessity for its existence.

The real countries of proletarian revolt are England and Germany, and parts of the USA. These countries are truly proletarian, but history, as formerly in the Paris Commune, has caused the revolution to break out in a country less economically ready for it than they are. As happened formerly in France, the Russian revolution is a demonstration as to how revolution should *not* be made in proletarian countries. In just a few, but very important features, the Russian revolution, like the Paris Commune, may be followed as an example by the proletarian revolution in England, Germany, the USA, and other countries.

The Russian Revolution was in most of its features a bourgeois-democratic one, that is today only a capitalist revolution. Because it was partly proletarian, partly democratic-capitalist, the Russian Revolution possesses a double character, and has become an enormous new source of light for the proletariat of the world. In so far as it was a proletarian revolution, it shows the proletariat the way to victory. In so far as it was democratic-capitalist, the revolution reveals to the proletariat new and powerful opponents, because a very large part of the world is in the condition of Russia. The immense area which is in that condition is indeed the larger part of the world. It includes almost the whole of Asia, as well as South America, parts of Central and North America, and Africa. In this area there is a rising proletariat amongst the peasants and the revolution is threatening in many places. Workmen and peasants will take part in it. The Russian Revolution, both geographically and economically stands between Eastern America and West Europe, on the one hand, and Asia on the other. It throws out its light to both sides.

To the West it shows the proletariat a small but important part of what the proletariat must do to make the socialist revolution.

*To the East*¹ it shows to the agrarian people, inclining towards capitalism, but rising

¹ Lenin and his colleagues have played a strange role. On the one hand they have shown the world proletariat the way to Communism, on the other they have helped to establish world capitalism in Russia and Asia

to free themselves from feudal conditions, how they can do this with the help of the proletariat, and how they can carry out their bourgeois or peasant–capitalist revolution with the help of the proletariat and by betraying the proletariat.

On account of this double light which the Russian Revolution throws on the world revolution, we must take it as a point of departure in clearly exposing the conditions of the world proletarian struggle. The more is gradually revealed by the Russian Revolution, the better we shall understand the task before us.

We shall begin with an exposition of the double character of the Russian Revolution – and deal with it now in detail. Already we have referred to it in a general way. We shall thus deduce the strength of our opponents in Russia, Asia, and other such territories, in order, later on, to make clear the connection between the rising capitalism of Russia, Asia, and so on, with capitalism in Europe, which is making a desperate fight to escape annihilation. From this we shall prove the correct reasoning of the Communist Workers' International.

One fundamental factor must always be borne in mind by the worker pondering over the Russian Revolution. The population of Russia consists of 8 per cent proletarians, and 80 per cent peasants. The proletarians desired communism, the peasants wanted repartition of the soil and private ownership. As the peasants amounted to 80 per cent of the population, and the proletarians to 8 per cent only, the revolution was predominantly bourgeois.

The proletarians were by far the most radical and determined class and amongst the proletarians the Bolsheviks, as the most coherent and determined organisation, led the revolution and brought it to victory.

The peasants subjected themselves to the proletariat only on condition that they were all to be made private owners, and that the revolution should have a bourgeois character. The proletariat could not refuse such conditions, if they wanted to carry through a revolution, for without the support of the peasants they could not have made the revolution at all.

As the CWI has always been in all countries, *we are the sharpest opponents of the Mensheviks, Kautsky, the Independents, the bourgeois pacifists, etc., in their conception that the Russian Revolution should have stopped short at the bourgeois revolution.* This conception is not only cowardly nonsense, for this would have meant the victory of reaction and the return of the monarchy but above all because when a proletariat sees the way to world revolution it has the right and the duty to go that way. The possibility of the German and the world revolution existed and still exists.

The fault of the Bolsheviks lies not in the bourgeois democratic measures which they were and are forced to take. The fault lies in the programme and the action which the Bolsheviks prescribe to the European and American proletariat, whereby they tried to block the way to the proletarian world revolution and make the building up of world capitalism possible.

By that the Bolsheviks have shown and proved the building up of the Russian democratic republic is their aim, and not Russian Communism.

By that they have shown and proved, that they are following the peasants and that they have put the peasant capitalist revolution above the proletarian revolution.

By that they have shown and proved that they have made cause with bourgeois capitalist democracy and no longer with the proletariat.

(not to mention the peasants). For our part we shall always regard as more important the real communism towards which the English, German and North American workers are striving.

In order that the workers should understand these truths which are kept secret from them, we shall now show in detail, which measures of the Bolsheviks have a proletarian, and which a democratic bourgeois character.

It is well-known that the measures of the Bolsheviks must be divided into two parts; those from October 1917 to February 1921 (when the doings of Kronstadt and Petrograd took place) and those of the so-called new tendency which began in February, 1921. We shall see that the measures of both periods have, to a large extent, a bourgeois character.

First let us examine the measures of the first period. The chief characteristics of the economic policy were at that time the nationalisation of industry, commerce and transport, the State monopoly of the most important foodstuffs and raw materials, conscript labour, regulation of the State in the industrial unions, free maintenance, including free food, housing, fuel, clothing, etc., for the workers, officials and townspeople in general, and the principle of giving unpaid service to the State. All these measures were proletarian and communistic, as was the establishment of workers' soviets.

The establishment of peasants' soviets on the other hand was bourgeois capitalistic, for it was certain that the peasants would fight for private property and against communism.

A proletarian revolution in Germany and England will never give the peasants political rights till they have shown that they are really communists.

The partition of the big estates, and of the land generally, was bourgeois, for this distribution made enemies of communism the peasants, that is almost the entire population of Russia.

Not only the richer and middle peasants were thus rendered antagonistic, but also the small peasants, even the poorest of them, and those who were hitherto landless.

Through its seizure of the land, the peasantry, now enormously swollen in numbers, became the enemy of every kind of socialist agricultural society. A genuine proletarian revolution will never admit of the partition of the soil. On the contrary, it will allow all large landed properties to pass into communist management.

The peasants, taking possession of the land made between the industrial town proletariat and the rest of the population, an unbridgeable cleavage. The boycott of the towns by the peasants and the keeping back of food from the proletarians proves this. In the beginning the cleavage could only be bridged over by capitalist means; that is to say by concessions to the capitalistically minded peasants. The Bolsheviks were by the distribution of the soil condemned from the beginning to accept capitalism unless the world revolution should come to their aid.

The development after Kronstadt has shown this.

II

The proclamation by the Bolsheviks of the right to self-determination of all nations caused the detaching from Soviet Russia of Finland, the Baltic Provinces, Poland, the Ukraine, and the Caucasus. This resulted in the downfall of the proletarian revolution in most of these countries.

The self-determination slogan was a bourgeois-capitalist one. Either the Bolsheviks proclaimed it from weakness in the fear that if they did not give these States their freedom they could not smash up Czarism, or, as it appears now, they wanted, even then, a national Russian State. The doubts both as to the power of Communism to triumph and the necessity of nationalism were inspired by the peasants.

The enrolment of the proletariat into the Red Army was a proletarian–Communist measure. The admission of the peasants into the army was a bourgeois–capitalist measure, for the peasants would, and will, prove themselves enemies of Communism, both economically and militarily.

Undoubtedly the peasant was willing to fight against the counter–revolution, in so far as it threatened the private property of the peasants in the soil. They fought against Yudenitch, Koltchak and Wrangel. The Bolsheviks might be able to keep both the peasants and the proletarians in the army by giving them better food and clothing than they could get outside, but could the peasants still fight for the Bolsheviks after their own private property was secured and the counter–revolution of the big landowners no more? No, the peasants would certainly not do that.

A very interesting question in this regard was the fate of the Bolshevik campaign in Poland in 1920. Why did the Russian Army then suddenly retire? When the writer, on behalf of the Communist Workers' Party, asked this question in Moscow at the sitting of the Executive of the Third International in November, 1920, Trotsky and Karsky gave no clear answer. The explanations were confused. One said the fault lay with the civil service, another with the military. We now believe that the true answer which was kept from us is that the peasants did not want to continue the attack of European capitalism. As soon as their property was secured against the foreigner they would not war any more against European capitalism. The peasants are the majority of the Russian Army. One must no longer reckon on their assistance in a European revolution.

A genuine proletarian revolution will not have peasants in its army, for its army must be wholly Communist.

The peace of Brest–Litovsk was a bourgeois, or capitalist–Democratic one. A real proletarian revolution would have remained the enemy of all capitalist Powers, whilst waiting for and assisting the rising of the proletariat in other countries.

It was proletarian–Communist to give political power to the workers. It was bourgeois to give it to the peasants. A proletarian revolution in Germany and England will not give political power to such elements until their deeds have proved them Communists.

The suppression of the independence and self–expression of the workers was also bourgeois–capitalist. The workers and their organisations did not get the leadership and control of industry, transport and distribution.

The Bureaucratic despotism of the leaders was also bourgeois–capitalist. The corruption was also bourgeois–capitalist.

The party dictatorship of the Bolsheviks was in the highest degree bourgeois. Party dictatorship will always become so. In leader–dictatorship lies the kernel of the bourgeois capitalist revolution, and in it is the greatest proof that the Russian revolution was chiefly, and in its origin, a bourgeois capitalist one.

The party dictatorship was in its origin bourgeois capitalist. It began through the power of the peasants, the non–proletarian class. A party dictatorship could overpower and lead the peasant class in Russia. A proletarian class dictatorship could not do this, for a dictatorship of the proletarian class will always aspire to pure Communism. Once it has the power to govern the proletariat will not content itself with less. The enormous power, the great numbers of the peasants prevented pure Communism from being achieved.

The proletariat as a class could not lead the dictatorship. This could only be done by a party – the Bolshevik Party, and this only by NOT introducing pure Communism, by making concessions to the peasantry, the private owners of the land, and to the

capitalists. A proletarian class would never do this. The awakened proletariat will not make concessions; it will demand everything for itself. Its watchword will remain unto the end:

'We have nothing: we shall be everything'.

The Bolshevik party held the dictatorship through the might and power of the peasants. This party dictatorship, because of the might of the peasants, was of necessity mainly capitalistic. It dominated, instead of representing the proletariat, over which it was the despot. It may be that this dictatorship was inevitable; it may be that, under the circumstances, it was the best that could be had; nevertheless, it was a despotism. It dictated to the workers what concessions they must make and what advantages were to be given to the peasants.

It could not have been otherwise in a land so largely agrarian. Having originated from the power of the peasants; the dictatorship of the Bolsheviks was necessarily bourgeois–democratic.

We are proud that Rosa Luxemburg in her voice from the grave has pointed out the nature of the party dictatorship and its effect on the revolution just as we have done. She says a few dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and endless idealism direct and rule. Amongst them are in reality one dozen eminent heads who lead and an elite of the workmen which is called from time to time to applaud the speeches of the leaders and to vote unanimously for the resolutions laid before them. At bottom, therefore, it is a clique arrangement – a dictatorship it is true; but not a dictatorship of the proletariat, simply a dictatorship of a handful of politicians; in short a dictatorship in the bourgeois sense.

'Yes: dictatorship ... But this dictatorship must be the work of the class and not that of a leading minority in the name of the class; that is to say, it must, step by step, arise from the active participation of the class, remain under its direct influence, and be subordinated to the control of publicity and be the outcome of the political experience of the whole people'.

The Communist Workers' Party and the Communist Workers' International can echo the words of Rosa Luxemburg, but instead of the 'whole people' we always read the proletariat.

Rosa Luxemburg did not understand that all this could not happen in Russia; that no class dictatorship was possible there, because the proletariat was too small and the peasantry too mighty.

She did not see, because her life was too short, that the Bolsheviks had built their party dictatorship not only out of the might of the peasants, but that they were compelled to use their dictatorship through the might of the peasants for the bourgeois revolution in Russia. They used their party dictatorship always more in the interests of the peasants – that is to say, in the interests of capitalist private property, and against the proletariat and Communism.

The productive and class conditions in Russia forced the revolution to be to a great extent a bourgeois one. The proletarian class conditions gave the Bolsheviks the leadership. This leadership could not, on account of the productive and class conditions, be a class dictatorship; it had to be a party dictatorship, and these very conditions compelled the party dictatorship to be a bourgeois capitalist one.

Party dictatorship is typical of a bourgeois revolution, in a society based on private property. By such a revolution one class dispossesses another class, but itself remains on the basis of private property. The newly risen class uses and cheats the class beneath it.

A bourgeois revolution is always a revolution of a minority against the majority.

The proletarian revolution which aims at being truly Communist, must be a revolution of the majority against the minority. Therefore it must take place, or at least have its beginning, in a truly proletarian country.

If the revolution comes from the majority, or, at least represents the interests of the majority, then it does not require a party dictatorship, it has no need to cheat the masses by such means. Then the dictatorship of the class is inevitable.

The Party dictatorship in Russia was the surest sign that the revolution was bourgeois-capitalist.

We shall postpone, till we have treated the second period, a detailed exposure of the fact that even in the first period of their power the Bolsheviks showed their bourgeois-democratic or capitalist policy by their influence on the proletariat in other countries through the Third International.

III

We shall sum up the first period by saying that even in their so-called Communist revolutionary stage the Bolsheviks proved their capitalist character by the distribution of the soil, their slogan of self-determination of all nations, the peace of Brest-Litovsk, by admitting the peasants to the Soviets and giving them political power, and finally by their party dictatorship.

We shall now examine the second period, which began after February, 1921.

Hitherto, both the peasants and the proletariat, under the guidance of the Bolsheviks, had fulfilled their historic mission in striving, the proletariat to establish Communism, the peasants to establish the democratic-capitalist Republic.

In February 1921, *the rising in the fortress of Kronstadt, on the battleships and in Petersburg*, broke out. Then – as by a breath – Communism collapsed. Its foundations disappeared in an instant. It may be argued that the rising was very insignificant considering the huge size of the country. Moreover, the peasants were not, and are not, organised as a class; but the small act of a small group of peasants was sufficient – it is said that the warships were mostly manned by peasants' sons.

The Bolshevik party represented principally the vast millions who wanted land, and as soon as quite a small section of those millions showed that they wanted something more than land, the party at once gave way, and the proletariat, out of which the party had been evolved, had finished with its Communism. The proletariat was made the servant of the peasantry, the proletariat had to secure under the orders of its own party, which was, from now, no longer the representative of the proletariat and its Communism, but of the peasantry and its capitalism.

We shall recapitulate now the greatest changes in the changing over to capitalism, not in their chronological order, which is of small importance here, but to explain what has happened. The reader must understand that behind all these changes is the hidden influence of the peasants, which did not even move as a mass, which was not even organised. It only showed itself locally, but by its enormous numbers it made the whole Bolshevik party its tool. It was like an elementary power which forced the Bolsheviks – even men like Lenin – to stand against the class from which the Bolsheviks had sprung, and which was inimical to the peasantry.

We can cite examples from the bourgeois revolutions where the representatives of a class were compelled to rise against their class by the power of other classes. But in these bourgeois revolutions both or all the bourgeois classes, that is to say, the landed

proprietors, industrialists and financiers stood on this same basis. Such a fight was always small. But here in Russia the representatives of quite a new world – a Communist one – were opposed to the reactionaries who wanted to be the builders of the old capitalist order. They did what the reactionaries wanted, though it was against their own class. What the reactionaries wanted, of course, was to build up capitalism.

Without resistance all that was Communist disappeared. Industry was denationalised, at first partly. The absolute State monopoly of the most important food stuffs and raw materials was cancelled; the State regulation of trade unions was abolished. Private trading, at first only internal, afterwards also with foreign countries, was again introduced; the principle of unpaid service to the State disappeared; the principle of the free maintenance of the workers and employees was abandoned, and the wage system re-introduced.

Communism vanished like a ghost into the background, and capitalism re-appeared, even stronger, in the foreground.

Let us recall its main work, in detail, so that proletarians may see how capitalism is made by Communists in a peasant State. Thus the workers in Western Europe may no longer be fooled, but may learn that they who are not dwelling in a State controlled by peasants can bring about Communism.

Capitalist property re-appeared, and how? We take the following extract from a decree of the Russian Soviet Republic, dated 27th May, 1921 (published in *Izvestia* of June 18th, and in the French newspaper, *Journal des Débats*, in a French translation by a Russian delegate at the Hague Congress).

'All citizens have the right to engage in industrial and commercial occupations.

This right is founded on:

1. The right to hold property in houses, including the right to sell them, and to sell or let the ground on which such houses are situated.
2. The right to make contracts with local authorities to build on urban and rural land, with the right of ownership for 49 years.
3. The right to own houses, factories and workshops, industrial and commercial undertakings, machinery, and means of production, agricultural and industrial property, financial capital.
4. The right to mortgage these properties or to borrow money on land.
5. The right to inventions, trade marks, and author's royalties.
6. The right of married people and their children to testamentary or legal inheritance, up to 10,000 gold roubles, the right of legal enforcement of contracts.'

The private ownership of the soil naturally re-appeared. The law of May 15th states, it is true, that the whole land belongs to the Republic. In fact, under the mantle of the Socialist State the law gives the peasants full ownership. For the law declares that a peasant can only lose the right to use the soil, on three conditions:

1. If he himself ceases to use it;
2. For criminal reasons;
3. If the State claims the soil for its own purposes.

There are a few other restrictions, but in the main they are rules for personal acquisition of property. The Soviet Republic has returned to the policies of Stolypin, the last minister of the Czar.

The law makes two important stipulations. It gives the peasants the right to sub-let their land for one year (or, in exceptional cases, for two years).

The second and more important stipulation is the cancelling of the order which forbade the hiring of workmen. This is now permitted if all the members of a peasant family are at work.

The carrying out of the law regarding rent and the hiring of workers is left to the Peasant Committees; that is to say, the Soviet State gives the peasant absolute freedom on these important points. Agriculture thus becomes the basis of a capitalist State. In the present condition of Russia this will not be a rapid process, but if the harvests are good it will be more rapid than many people think.

Proprietors and landlords are created, and a rural proletariat is formed. A home market springs up and becomes the basis for the wholesaler and a reservoir of workers owning nothing but their labour, which may be exploited by capitalist industry and commerce.

This is the way Russia will go if the European revolution does not come to her aid. It is the way all capitalist States have grown up from a peasant population. In this case the capitalist State is being developed under the guidance of celebrated Communists and a small bureaucratic party which was once Communist.

IV

Even in a peasant country like Russia the proletariat has become so important, and its development has progressed so far, that its leaders, its party takes up the establishment of capitalism and runs it against the proletariat.

In the beginning of 1918 the Bolshevik party, which was still more or less Communist, tried to support itself by aid of the landless and the poor. Now it supports the peasant proprietors and creates tenant farmers and landless labourers – in short, it makes capitalism.

Industry is no longer in the absolute possession and control of the State. Small industry has quite freed itself from State control.

A part of the heavy and wholesale industry, including a few of the most important branches, has been handed over to trusts formed by State and private capital. Under these trusts the workers are mere wage workers. These trusts have a large measure of independence from State control, yet they are assisted by the State. They compete with private firms, and also with State industries.

Internal commerce in Russia is now unrestricted. One can buy and sell anything. Large and small capitalists are cropping up everywhere, both in town and country. Capitalism is growing up with commerce in Russia, as it formerly did in other countries, from the basis of a peasant State. The capital created by commerce is used in founding or enlarging banks and industries.

Foreign trade is apparently in the hands of the State, but actually this is no longer the case. The huge Russian Co-operative Society, Centrosojus, has already the privilege of foreign trade, with a few unimportant restrictions. The Centrosojus, which is spread over the whole country, especially where the peasants are, was always and still is a bourgeois-capitalist institution. Even now it conducts its commerce on purely capitalist principles. The great trusts still require the consent of the departments for their foreign trade, but they are too powerful for any demands to be refused. At the Hague, Krassin gave the representatives of the big States a long list of such commercial enterprises.

The Russian Government is prepared to give great concessions to foreign capitalists. It gave to Krupps four millions in foreign agricultural enterprises. It has given out various concessions in petroleum, forests, mines, and so on.

Local finances have been separated from State finances. One can understand what use the peasant proprietors have made of this power. Wages are introduced again, even indirect taxes on tobacco, coffee, matches, soap, petroleum, sugar, salt, beer and textiles. The end will be a State bank, which acts as agent for home and foreign trade and

discounts bills of exchange.

Sokolnikov declared at the Hague that these rights are already given to private persons and to the trusts which are partly State and partly private concerns, and that a constantly increasing bill of exchange business is being done.

At a sitting of the Financial Department in April, 1923, Aron Sheinman, director of the Russian State Bank, said that the financial section was in favour of allowing private banks.

In the large towns of Russia, the exchanges are again open. An army of contractors, merchants, bankers, agents, brokers, speculators, stock jobbers and profiteers are very loosely held in by a sort of State capitalism. There is a growing middle-class of shopkeepers and middlemen, small employers, salaried employees and intellectuals, all non-producing vampires, living on the proletariat. Beside them is the vast army of peasant owners.

The small proletariat is very weak, notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary. The army consists mainly of peasants' sons.

All are waiting for foreign trade to be quite free to everyone as well as to the co-operative societies, the trusts, and the high and mighty private persons. That will not be long.

Then all the bonds of capitalism will be loosened and the proletariat will be completely fettered.

Is there a great difference between the creation of a capitalism out of a peasant in former centuries, or even in the 19th century, in South Africa, Australia and North America and this creation in Russia?

Certainly the circumstances are different in the Colonies. There the peasants were free; in Russia they came out of despotism, even in part out of mediaeval conditions.

Yet are the Russian peasants free now?

No; the difference between the creation of capitalism in Russia to-day and in past times is very slight. In the past capitalism was created by capitalists who had sprung from the peasants or from foreign countries. Now capitalism is created by a party sprung out of the proletariat.

Poor Russian workers! Even before Kronstadt you had no power to guide and control the State, neither you nor your organisations. That power was held by a bureaucratic party and a dozen leaders. Nevertheless you had won something by the revolution: you had a few rights and capitalism had disappeared from the towns.

Now you, or rather your *class*, has no longer any hold over industry and commerce, even in the towns. It never secured possession of the soil; it no longer has either the most important food stuffs or the raw materials.

The obligation for all to work no longer exists. The State no longer supplies them with food and other necessaries. It gives nothing without money. There are capitalists again and capitalist organisations. Wage battles and unemployment have returned, and there is even compulsory arbitration. Your class are wage slaves precisely as before.

There is still a little State capitalism left, and the leaders of the capitalist State are the old favourite leaders of the Communist Party.

What is the object of your work? To what end do you create surplus value by your labour?

It serves capitalism. Firstly, the Government of the Soviet State uses it to enrich the peasantry, that this class may grow and assist the growth of a peasants' and capitalists'

Russia.

Communism in Russia is the sinking appearance. Capitalism is the rising and expanding reality.

It is certain that under the lead of the Bolsheviks will arise a mighty enemy of the proletarian revolution; a Russian capitalist State, only equalled in its vast richness of natural resources by the United States of America.

V

Asia

In many parts of the world conditions are similar, or begin to be similar, to those in Russia. In British and Dutch India and in China there are enormous numbers of small peasants who are oppressed by national and foreign Powers. The population of those countries now numbers seven or eight hundred millions of people, for the most part small peasants. The ferment against the misrule of the national and foreign Governments is growing – the revolution approaches. Moreover, there is a proletariat which is growing rapidly, both in numbers and in class consciousness. It is not impossible that the proletariat might secure the leadership of a revolution, or share it with other classes. Yet as the proletariat in the big modern capitalist industries is still weaker than in Russia, the revolution in those countries would produce, still more surely than in Russia, a nationalist capitalist State. The same thing would happen in Asiatic Turkey, Persia, Arabia, Afghanistan, where, except in a few of the seaports, there are few or no modern proletarians.

If Russia, with its heroic, conscious proletariat, must introduce capitalism, it is still more sure that when the nations of Asia start their revolution huge capitalist States will grow up there as enemies of the world proletariat. Russia makes itself a capitalist–nationalist State and a competitor of Western Europe, whilst North America promotes the capitalist development of Asia.

The capitalist development of the East has been enormously accelerated by the world war and the Russian revolution. Awakening Asia is the new enemy of the world proletarian revolution.

The Third International

The accomplishment of the Russian revolution was so mighty that the vanguard of the workers of Western Europe were impressed by it and obeyed the leaders of the Bolshevik Party, and the whole Third International followed Russia. Just as in Russia, what the Third International called upon the European workmen to do was partly proletarian–communist, and partly bourgeois–capitalist. Although these countries were for the most part proletarian, the European workers followed in adopting mixed tactics – partly proletarian, partly bourgeois.

The calls of Russia and the Third International to civil war and the formation of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils and a Red Army were proletarian–communist, but it did not dare all and proceed to the really fundamental measures of the proletarian revolution in Europe, and, in the first place in Germany. They did not claim as the basis of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils the destruction of the trade unions. The workshop councils alone can fight and are the essential bedrock of communism. By making peace with trade unionism the Russian Bolsheviks and the Third International showed that they were themselves still capitalist, and neither wished, nor dared, to smash up European capitalism.

Moreover, the Bolsheviks and the Third International did not call for the abolition of Parliamentarism in the revolution. Thus they left the European workers, who had never yet fought for themselves, under the delusion that a revolution can be made in Parliament and through leaders. A real proletarian revolution must abolish Parliamentarism when the revolution comes in sight. Parliament is the weapon of the bourgeoisie, the workshop councils are the weapon of the proletariat, which it will use [not?] in addition to but against Parliament.

By not doing this, Russia, consciously or unconsciously, was working not for the world proletarian revolution, but towards Russian capitalism.

The Third International did not demand the abolition of party dictatorship in Western Europe. Nothing has shown their bourgeois character more than this. This slavish subjection to party, was the pest and ruin of social democracy and of the proletariat, which was its slave. Before the world war the leader of the proletarian parties led scarce conscious masses. In the revolution the workers as a class in their workshop councils must decide for themselves in the conflict between the mighty powers of West Europe and North American capitalism, mighty still in their death throes, and because it is a question of life and death to them, mightier in their efforts than ever. The trade unions and the old political parties of the workers are too weak to combat capitalism in this strife.

Only the workshop councils and the Communist Workers' Party can conquer capitalism. They must for this purpose both interlock and act as a whole and form a unity for the fight.

In Russia this was not understood, and thus, as Rosa Luxemburg said, a dozen leaders dictate over a flock of sheep, which one calls to action when convenient, and through this flock of sheep, over the vast masses of the unthinking class. This method is bourgeois capitalist, through and through. By this method, more than any other, the Third International has led the proletarian revolution to defeat. The principle of the few dictating to the stupid mass has thrown the German proletariat into the abyss.

The real proletarian revolution, which is preparing in England, North America and Germany, cannot be made by a stupid mass led by a few wise leaders, only by the self-conscious, self-acting mass. History insures that the mass shall be conscious and self-acting, for as long as it is not self-reliant, it will be beaten, notwithstanding its leaders.

To make it, the working class, self-reliant has been the function of Western capitalism, for it has become so powerful, even in its death throes, that the proletarians, both individually and in the mass, must outstrip the capitalist class in thought and action.

The stupid leaders of the Third International showed as much knowledge as a cat of the conditions of Western Europe, the difference between them and those of Russia, and the real driving force of capitalism in Western Europe. They became the tools of the Russian leaders, and the great masses of the Western European proletariat bowed to the Third International.

VI

Even before the war I have laid down the premises on which the contentions in these articles are based, in many articles and in resolutions in which my signature is to be found with others. At the time there was no question of revolution in India and Asia, but it is now necessary to say that even in such countries the proletarian movement cannot join hands with the nationalist one and must by no means subject itself to it.

Lenin and the Third International have talked the proletariat into a combination with the capitalist nationalism of Asia. My reply is that we have never supported European

capitalism. We have urged the rising of India against European capitalism; but you of the Third International support the rising capitalism of Asia; you urge the subjection of the Asiatic proletariat to their native capitalism. There is no wonder that you do it, for peasant-capitalist Russia desires also a capitalist Asia.

In China and India these tactics have turned proletarians into the enemies of the revolution and one reflects now that China and Siberia also follow the tactics of Moscow, and one may confidently say that of the entire proletariat of Asia.

The world proletariat

One now reflects that the proletariat of the world; that is to say, of Europe, America, Australia, Africa and Asia is guided either by the Second or Third International. It is unnecessary to prove that the Second International is counter-revolutionary, and I have shown in these articles that the Third International is also counter-revolutionary. One may therefore safely say that the entire world proletariat has been turned against Communism.

All classes in all capitalist nations

All classes in all capitalist States are enemies of world revolution. The Third International has not explained this to the workers.

Many fake principles have penetrated from Moscow to Western Europe and North America. This has been largely through Lenin's book called *The Infantile Disease of Left Wing Communism*. See the ideas expressed in that book on Asquith and Lloyd George and on the splits in the bourgeois classes and parties in the capitalist States, of which, he declares, Communists may make use. Lenin contends there that Communists may take advantage of the differences between Monarchists and Republicans, democrats and reactionaries.

This has proved quite untrue. Against Communism all bourgeois parties in all countries, including the Social-Democrats and Independents of Germany, the Labour Party and the ILP of Britain, have formed an absolutely firm and united front.

Faith in such tactics has injured the cause of the proletariat, because, in Germany, for instance, instead of fighting both equally, it stood for the bourgeois republic against the monarchy in the case of the Kapp Putsch, and in the case of the murder of Rathenau.

Communism is absolutely opposed to capitalism in principle and practice. In the revolution from capitalism to Communism there is not a single economic or political action on which capitalists and Communists agree. To make use of the split between bourgeois parties is to attach oneself to one of them and to combine with capitalists. Such tactics are utterly bad, for the bourgeois parties will at the decisive moment turn against the Communists and the result will be a terrible defeat for them or the total corruption of the Communist Party.

The same may be said of the much-vaunted hope of support for the Communists from the peasants and middle classes. The Russian C. P. has counted on these in Europe also and shaped its tactics accordingly. Yet, although the difficult conditions which the Bolsheviks calculated would bring these classes over to the Communist revolution in many countries, these classes have not been won over.

Real revolutionaries know, nevertheless, that the victory of the proletariat is sure in the end. Sections of the bourgeois classes will eventually come over, but it is essential not to count upon their doing so in the beginning.

Even those tactics of combining with peasant bourgeois parties arose out of the peasant capitalist character of the Russian revolution, and the European workers only

accepted them because they were still bourgeois in their opinions.

The Russians, because they were bourgeois revolutionists, wanted a compromise to be made in Western Europe. They feared a really proletarian revolution, and therefore they advised the Communists to compromise.

A genuine proletarian revolution will stand on its feet and will oppose equally Democrats, Social–Democrats, Monarchists and Republicans.

VII

The International and the World Revolution

Let us consider Russia once more, and see how, while she appears to favour world revolution, in reality she is opposing it.

When the Menshevist rising broke out Russia was obliged to go back to capitalism and all those who adhered to Russia and the Third International gave up all revolutionary measures and preparations for the revolution.

Russia made treaties with capitalist States and private persons and returned to capitalist reconstruction by means of Trusts, concessions, recognition of private property in industry, agriculture and commerce, the re–establishment of the wage system; in fact the recognition of the principles of capitalism with the power of the peasants and middle class on a huge scale. Communism entirely disappeared and only a fraction of feeble State Capitalism remained.

Russia wants the proletariat of Western Europe, to adhere to the Communist slogans, otherwise the proletariat will desert Russia, which would not suit her, as she desires help from abroad in her capitalist reconstruction. The Communist slogan was to remain, but the action was to be Capitalist. Russia had no further use for revolution, either English or German it would have meant Russia's downfall because she was exhausted capitalistically. Therefore, away with the revolution in Europe.

And now began the terrible deception of the world proletariat, which embodies at the same time the destruction and re–construction of Capitalism, revolution and reform. So this game of compromise goes on with the slogans: Legal Workers' Councils, Control of Production, Taking Possession of Real Profits, The Workers' Government, all of which are impossible as reforms, and can only be attained through the revolution, but which the Third International and Russia wished to promote before the revolution.

Lastly, the emasculation of the revolution was concentrated in the principle of the 'United Front' of the proletariat. Unity from Noske, Scheidemann, Hilferding up to the Communist Party. The slogan is revolutionary for a united front is necessary for the revolution, but it must be a Communist unity.

In practice the United Front is Capitalist, because Capitalism demands a counter–revolutionary united front from Social–Democrats to Communists. The duplicity of this slogan surpasses anything else done in the workers' movement. It is the natural outcome of the capitalist Russian Revolution.

The Third International and the Communist Party in Germany, where revolution is constantly threatening, accepted this slogan. The unity of the workers who have not the same aim, most of whom are still under capitalist ideology, this unity is the surest capitalist means of rendering the proletariat helpless before the machine guns and of bringing them to the slaughter compared to which slaughtering of Communists, the Finnish and Hungarian Revolutions were child's play. Such a United Front ensures the defeat of the proletariat. At the moment of fighting the Social–Democrats will leave the Communists in

the lurch and a general slaughter of the proletariat is certain².

Russia is now a horrible picture with its revolutionary double nature. It lies there like a huge wreck on the shore, broken up by its revolution. There was a moment when a small lifeboat was sent out to save Soviet Russia. That boat was the KAPD, the best and largest part of the Spartacus Bund, with its new and really revolutionary policy for the world revolution. But Russia with its Bolshevik Government despised the KAPD and declined its help. She preferred the help of the enormous mass of the workers or capitalists assembled on the shore, who applauded or hissed, but by no means could, or wanted to bring help to Capitalist Russia.

To this crowd Russia capitulated, and returns with it to capitalism. That was just what she wanted, because her capitalist character was so immeasurably stronger than her proletarian one. The non-proletarian character of the Russian Revolution is most clearly shown by the refusal of really proletarian revolutionary help from Europe, the salvation of her own and the world proletariat. What proof can be stronger than that a government which has sprung from the proletariat itself refuses the sole salvation of the proletariat – the world proletariat?

We would advise our Russian comrades to say to the Communist Party and the Soviet Government: You have done giant work as a proletarian and government party. Very probably certain mistakes were made at the beginning of the revolution, only our Russian comrades can know this, we cannot decide that point clearly. This will remain so for all time. That you could not do everything in a proletarian and communist way, and that you had to retreat when the European revolution did not materialise, is not your fault. As proletarians we shall more strenuously fight you as our class enemies the more you return to capitalism. But your real fault, which neither we nor history can forgive, is to have foisted a counter-revolutionary programme and tactics on the world proletariat, and to have rejected the really revolutionary one which could have saved us.

This slogan is the keystone of the Moscow tactics. It is the last word of the capitalist Russian Revolution. It shows that Russia and the Third International, who, with their army for revolution want to build up capitalism and therefore ruin the proletariat by means of its holiest possession – that Russia and the Third International are the greatest enemies of the world revolution.

² When Karl Liebknecht in that historic hour in the Zirkus Busch fought with a small following against the fallacy of the United Front he saw in his mind's eye the cold rifle barrels, and the whole pack shouted 'Unity'. That is and was the slogan of the counter-revolution. But Karl Liebknecht's slogan was: First clearness, then Unity. Clearness as to the immediate tasks of the working class, which are: We want the factories! We want the land! Down with capitalist private property! All power to the Workers' Councils! The Dictatorship of the Proletariat! These are the slogans of the proletarian revolution. These are the only slogans of the working class.

Table of Contents

II	3
III	6
IV	8
V	10
Asia	10
The Third International	10
VI	11
The world proletariat	12
All classes in all capitalist nations	12
VII	13
The International and the World Revolution	13