

# Lenin

**SPEECHES  
AT THE EIGHTH PARTY  
CONGRESS**



*Workers of All Countries, Unite!*

V. I. Lenin

**Speeches  
at the Eighth Party  
Congress**



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### Speech Opening the Congress<sup>1</sup>

Comrades, our first words at this Congress must be dedicated to Comrade Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov. Comrades, as many people said at his funeral today, Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov was, for the Party as a whole and for the entire Soviet Republic, the principal organiser, but he was much more valuable for our Party Congress and much closer to it. We have lost a comrade who devoted his last days entirely to this Congress. His absence will affect the whole course of our proceedings, and this Congress will feel it with exceptional acuteness. Comrades, I propose that we honour his memory by rising. (*All rise.*)

Comrades, we are opening our Party Congress at a very difficult, complicated and peculiar stage in the Russian and in the world proletarian revolution. In the first period after the October Revolution the forces of the Party and of the Soviet government were almost entirely absorbed by the tasks of direct defence, of offering direct resistance to our enemies, the bourgeoisie at home and abroad, who could not reconcile themselves to the idea that the socialist republic could exist for any length of time. We nevertheless gradually began to consolidate our position and the tasks of construction, organisational tasks, began to come to the fore. I think that this work of construction and organisation should be the keynote of our Congress. The programme problems which, from the standpoint of theory, present a big difficulty and are in the main problems of our development, and those that have a special place on the Congress agenda—the organisational question, the question of the Red Army and, particularly, the question of work in the countryside—all

this requires that we should focus and concentrate our attention on the main question, which is a very difficult but gratifying one for socialists to grapple with, namely, the question of organisation. It must be particularly emphasised here that one of the most difficult problems of communist development, in a country of small peasant farms, one that we must deal with right now, is *the problem of our attitude towards the middle peasants.*

Comrades, it was natural that in the first period, when we had to fight for the Soviet Republic's right to existence, this question should not have been pushed into the foreground on an extensive scale. The relentless war against the rural bourgeoisie and the kulaks gave prominence to the organisation of the rural proletariat and semi-proletariat. But by its next step the Party, which wants to lay the sound foundations of communist society, must take up the task of correctly defining our attitude towards the middle peasants. This is a problem of a higher order. We could not present it on an extensive scale until we had made secure the basis for the existence of the Soviet Republic. This problem is a more complicated one and it involves defining our attitude towards a numerous and strong section of the population. This attitude cannot be defined simply by the answer—struggle or support. As regards the bourgeoisie our task is defined by the words "struggle", "suppression", and as regards the rural proletariat and semi-proletariat our task is defined by the words "our support", but this problem is undoubtedly more complicated. On this point, the socialists, the best representatives of socialism in the old days, when they still believed in the revolution and faithfully adhered to its theory and ideals, talked about *neutralising the peasantry*, i.e., making the middle peasants a social stratum which, if it did not actively help the proletarian revolution, at least would not hinder it, that would remain neutral and not go over to the side of our enemies. This abstract, theoretical formulation of the problem is quite clear but is inadequate. We have reached the stage of socialist development when we must draw up definite and detailed rules and regulations which have been tested by practical experience in the rural districts to guide us in our efforts to place our relations with the middle peasants *on the basis of a firm alliance* and so preclude the possibility of a repetition of those mistakes and

blunders we have repeatedly made in the past. These blunders estranged the middle peasants from us, although we of the Communist Party, the leading party, were the first who helped the Russian peasants to throw off the yoke of the landowners and establish real democracy, which gave us every ground for counting on their complete confidence. This is not the type of problem that calls for ruthless, swift suppression and attack, it is more complicated. But I shall allow myself to say confidently that after our twelve months of preliminary work we shall be able to cope with this problem.

A few words about our international situation. Comrades, you are all, of course, aware that the founding of the Third, Communist International<sup>2</sup> in Moscow is an event of the greatest significance insofar as our position in the world is concerned. We still have confronting us a vast, real and well-armed military force—all the strongest powers of the world. Nevertheless, we can confidently say to ourselves that what outwardly seems to be a gigantic force, and which physically is immeasurably stronger than we are, has been shaken. It is no longer a force. It no longer has its former stability. Therefore there is nothing utopian in our aim and in the task we set ourselves—to be victorious in the struggle against this giant. On the contrary, although we are now artificially cut off from the whole world, the newspapers every day report the growth of the revolutionary movement in all countries. Moreover, we know, we see, that this growing movement is assuming the Soviet form. And this is a guarantee that in establishing the Soviet government we discovered the *international, world form of the dictatorship of the proletariat*. We are firmly convinced that the proletariat all over the world has taken this path of struggle, the creation of these forms of proletarian rule, the rule of the workers and of the working people in general, and that no power on earth can halt the progress of the world communist revolution towards the world Soviet republic. (*Prolonged applause.*)

Comrades, permit me now on behalf of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party to declare the Eighth Congress open and proceed to the election of the presidium.

## Report of the Central Committee\*

(*Stormy prolonged applause. Cries of "Long live Ilyich!" "Long live Comrade Lenin!"*)

Comrades, permit me to begin with the political report of the Central Committee. To present a report on the Central Committee's political activities since the last Congress is tantamount to presenting a report on the whole of our revolution; and I think that everybody will agree that not only is it impossible for one individual to perform such a task in so short a time, but that it is, in general, beyond the powers of one individual. I have therefore decided to confine myself to those points which, in my opinion, are particularly important in the history of what our Party was called upon to do during this period and in the light of our present tasks. I must say that at a time like this I find it beyond my powers to devote myself exclusively to history, to reviewing the past without bearing in mind the present and the future.

To begin with foreign policy, it goes without saying that the outstanding features here were our relations with German imperialism and the Brest peace.<sup>3</sup> I think it is worth while dwelling on this question, because its importance is not merely historical. I think that the proposal the Soviet government made to the Allied powers, or, to put it more correctly, our government's consent to the well-known proposal for a conference to be held on Princes Islands<sup>4</sup>—I think that this proposal, and our reply, reflect, in some respects, and in important respects at that, the relations with imperialism that we established at the time of the Brest peace.

\* The report was delivered on March 18, 1919.—*Ed.*

That is why I think it important to deal with the history of this matter in view of the rapidity with which events are occurring.

When the Brest peace was decided on, the Soviet system and even Party development were still in the initial stages. You know that at that time our Party as a whole still possessed too little experience to determine, even approximately, how fast we should travel the path we had chosen. The chaotic conditions that, as you know, we had to take over from the past made it extremely difficult at that time to survey events and obtain an exact picture of what was going on. Moreover, our extreme isolation from Western Europe and all other countries deprived us of the objective material necessary to assess the possible rapidity or the ways in which the proletarian revolution in the West would develop. This complex situation made the question of the Brest peace a matter of no little dissension in the ranks of our Party.

But events have proved that this enforced retreat before German imperialism, which had taken cover behind an extremely oppressive, outrageous and predatory peace, was the only correct move in the relations between the young socialist republic and world imperialism (one half of world imperialism). At that time we, who had just overthrown the landowners and the bourgeoisie in Russia, had absolutely no choice but to retreat before the forces of world imperialism. Those who condemned this retreat from the point of view of a revolutionary were actually supporting a fundamentally wrong and non-Marxist position. They had forgotten the conditions, the long and strenuous process of development of the Kerensky period, and the enormous preparatory work done in the Soviets before we reached the stage when, in October, after the severe July defeats, after the Kornilov revolt,<sup>5</sup> the vast mass of working people was at last ready and determined to overthrow the bourgeoisie, and when the organised material forces necessary for this purpose had become available. Naturally, anything like this was then out of the question on an international scale. In view of this, the fight against world imperialism had this aim—to continue the work of disintegrating imperialism and of enlightening and uniting the working class, which had everywhere begun to stir, but whose actions have still not become completely definite.

Hence, the only correct policy was the one we adopted in respect of the Brest peace, although, of course, at the time, that policy intensified the enmity of a number of petty-bourgeois elements, who are not by any means necessarily hostile to socialism under all conditions, or in all countries. In this respect history offered us a lesson which we must learn thoroughly, for there can be no doubt that we shall often be called upon to apply it. This lesson is that the attitude the party of the proletariat should adopt towards the petty-bourgeois democratic parties, towards those elements, strata, groups and classes which are particularly strong and numerous in Russia, and which exist in all countries, constitutes an extremely complex and difficult problem. Petty-bourgeois elements vacillate between the old society and the new. They cannot be the motive force of either the old society, or the new. On the other hand, they are not bound to the old society to the same degree as the landowners and the bourgeoisie. Patriotism is a sentiment bound up with the economic conditions of life of precisely the small proprietors. The bourgeoisie is more international than the small proprietors. We came up against this fact during the period of the Brest peace, when the Soviet government set a higher value on the world dictatorship of the proletariat and the world revolution than on all national sacrifices, burdensome as they were. This compelled us to enter into a violent and ruthless clash with the petty-bourgeois elements. At that time a number of those elements joined forces with the bourgeoisie and the landowners against us, although, subsequently, they began to waver.

The question that several comrades have raised here as to our attitude towards the petty-bourgeois parties is dealt with extensively in our programme and will, in fact, crop up in the discussion of every point of the agenda. In the course of our revolution this question has ceased to be an abstract and general one, and has become concrete. At the time of the Brest peace our duty as internationalists was at all costs to help the proletarian elements to strengthen and consolidate their positions and this drove the petty-bourgeois parties away from us. After the German revolution, as we know, the petty-bourgeois elements again began to vacillate. Those events opened the eyes of many who, as the proletarian revolution was maturing, had assessed the situa-

tion from the point of view of the old type of patriotism, and had assessed it not only in a non-socialist way, but, in general, incorrectly. At the present time, owing to the difficult food situation and the war which we are still waging against the Entente,<sup>6</sup> a wave of vacillation is again sweeping through the petty-bourgeois democrats. We have been obliged to reckon with these vacillations before; but now we must all learn a tremendously important lesson, namely, that situations never repeat themselves in exactly the same form. The new situation is far more complex. It can be properly assessed, and our policy will be correct, if we draw on the experience of the Brest peace. When we consented to the proposal for a conference on Princes Islands we knew that we were consenting to an extremely harsh peace. On the other hand, however, we now know better how the tide of proletarian revolution is rising in Western Europe, how unrest is changing into conscious discontent, and how the latter is giving rise to a world, Soviet, proletarian movement. At that time we were groping, guessing when the revolution in Europe might break out—we presumed, on the basis of our theoretical conviction, that the revolution must take place—but today we have a number of facts showing how the revolution is maturing in other countries and how the movement began. That is why, in relation to Western Europe, in relation to the Entente countries, we have, or shall have, to repeat a good deal of what we did at the time of the Brest peace. It will be much easier for us to do this now that we have the experience of Brest. When our Central Committee discussed the question of participating in a conference on Princes Islands together with the Whites—which in fact amounted to the annexation of all the territory the Whites then occupied—this question of an armistice did not evoke a single voice of protest among the proletariat; and that also was the attitude of our Party. At any rate, I did not hear of any dissatisfaction, or indignation, from any quarter. The reason for this was that our lesson in international politics had borne fruit.

Insofar as concerns the petty-bourgeois elements, the problem facing the Party has not yet been fully solved. On a number of questions, in fact on all the questions on the agenda, we have, during the past year, laid the foundation for a correct solution of this problem, particularly in rela-

tion to the middle peasants. In theory we agree that the middle peasants are not our enemies, that they need special treatment, and that in their case the situations will vary in accordance with numerous circumstances attending the revolution, in particular, the answer to the question "For or against patriotism?" For us such questions are of second-rate importance, even of third-rate importance; but the petty bourgeoisie is completely blinded by them. Furthermore, all these elements waver in the struggle and become absolutely spineless. They do not know what they want, and are incapable of defending their position. Here we need extremely flexible and extremely cautious tactics, for sometimes it is necessary to give with one hand and take away with the other. The petty-bourgeois elements and not we are to blame for this, for they cannot make up their minds. We can see this in practice now. Only today we read in the newspapers what the German Independents,<sup>7</sup> who possess such strong forces as Kautsky and Hilferding, have set out to attain. You know that they wanted to incorporate the workers' councils in the constitution of the German democratic republic, i.e., marry the Constituent Assembly to the dictatorship of the proletariat. From our point of view this is such a mockery of common sense in our revolution, the German revolution, the Hungarian revolution and the maturing Polish revolution, that we can only express our amazement. It must be said that such vacillating elements are to be found in the most advanced countries. Educated, well-informed, intelligent people, even in such an advanced capitalist country as Germany, are sometimes a hundred times more muddle-headed and hysterical than our backward petty bourgeoisie. In this there is a lesson for Russia in respect of the petty-bourgeois parties and the middle peasants. For a long time we shall have a difficult, double problem. For a long time these parties are bound to take one step forward and two steps back because their economic status compels them to do so, and because their acceptance of socialism is not due to a definite conviction that the bourgeois system is worthless. We cannot expect them to be loyal to socialism, and it would be absurd to rely on their socialist convictions. They will support socialism only when they are convinced that there is no other way out, when the bourgeoisie is finally defeated and smashed.

I am unable to give you a systematic summary of the experience of the past year and have glanced at the past only in the light of what is required for our policy tomorrow and the day after. The chief lesson is that we must be extremely cautious in our attitude towards the middle peasants and the petty bourgeoisie. The experience of the past demands it, we know it from the experience of Brest. We shall have to change our line of conduct very often, and this may appear strange and incomprehensible to the casual observer. "How is that?" he will say. "Yesterday you were making promises to the petty bourgeoisie, while today Dzerzhinsky announces that the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks<sup>8</sup> will be stood against the wall. What a contradiction!" Yes, it is a contradiction. But the conduct of the petty-bourgeois democrats themselves is contradictory: they do not know where to sit, and try to sit between two stools, jump from one to the other and fall now to the right and now to the left. We have changed our tactics towards them, and whenever they turn towards us we say "Welcome" to them. We have not the slightest intention of expropriating the middle peasants; we certainly do not want to use force against the petty-bourgeois democrats. We say to them, "You are not a serious enemy. Our enemy is the bourgeoisie. But if you join forces with them, we shall be obliged to apply the measures of the proletarian dictatorship to you, too."

I shall now deal with questions of internal development, briefly touch on the main features which characterise our political experience and sum up the political activities of the Central Committee during this period. These political activities of the Central Committee manifested themselves daily in questions of immense importance. Were it not for the fact that we worked together so well and so harmoniously, as I have already told you, we would not have been able to act as we did, we would not have been able to solve these urgent problems. As to the question of the Red Army, which is now rousing so much discussion, and which stands as a special item on the agenda of this Congress, we adopted a host of minor, individual decisions which the Central Committee of our Party submitted to and got carried in the Council of People's Commissars and the All-Russia Central Executive Committee. A still larger number of important individual assignments were made by the respective People's Commis-



sars, all of which systematically and consistently pursued one common line.

The organisation of a Red Army was an entirely new question which had never been dealt with before, even theoretically. Marx once said that it is to the credit of the Paris Communards that they carried into effect decisions which were not borrowed from some preconceived theories, but were dictated by actual necessity. Marx said this about the Communards in a somewhat ironical vein because there were two predominant trends in the Commune—the Blanquists and the Proudhonists<sup>9</sup>—and both were compelled to act contrary to their doctrines. We, however, acted in conformity with the tenets of Marxism. At the same time, the political activities of the Central Committee in each concrete case were determined entirely by what was absolutely indispensable. We were often obliged to feel our way. This will be strongly emphasised by any historian capable of presenting an integrated picture of the activities of the Central Committee of the Party and of the Soviet government during the past year. This fact becomes all the more striking when we try to embrace our past experience in a single glance. But this did not deter us in the least even on October 10, 1917, when the question of seizing power was decided. We did not doubt that we should have to experiment, as Comrade Trotsky expressed it. We undertook a task which nobody in the world has ever attempted on so large a scale.

This is also true of the Red Army. When the war drew to a close the army began to break up, and many people thought at the time that this was a purely Russian phenomenon. But we see that the Russian revolution was in fact the dress rehearsal, or one of the rehearsals, for the world proletarian revolution. When we discussed the Treaty of Brest, when the question of peace arose early in January 1918, we did not yet know when, and in which other countries, armies would begin to disintegrate. We proceeded from experiment to experiment; we endeavoured to create a volunteer army, feeling our way, testing the ground and experimenting to find a solution to the problem in the given situation. And the nature of the problem was clear. Unless we defended the socialist republic by force of arms, we could not exist. A ruling class would never surrender its power to an oppressed class. And the latter would have to prove in practice that it

is capable not only of overthrowing the exploiters, but also of organising its self-defence and of staking everything on it. We have always said that there are different kinds of wars. We condemned the *imperialist* war, but we did not reject *war in general*. Those who accused us of being militarists were hopelessly muddled. And when in the report of the Berne Conference<sup>10</sup> of yellow socialists I read that Kautsky had said that the Bolsheviks had introduced not socialism but militarism, I smiled and shrugged my shoulders. As if there was ever a big revolution in history that was not connected with war! Of course not! We are living not merely in a state, but *in a system of states*, and it is inconceivable for the Soviet Republic to exist alongside of the imperialist states for any length of time. One or the other must triumph in the end. And before that end comes there will have to be a series of frightful collisions between the Soviet Republic and the bourgeois states. If the ruling class, the proletariat, wants to hold power, it must, therefore, prove its ability to do so by its military organisation. How was a class which had hitherto served as cannon-fodder for the military commanders of the ruling imperialist class to create its own commanders? How was it to solve the problem of combining the enthusiasm, the new revolutionary creative spirit of the oppressed and the employment of the store of the bourgeois science and technology of militarism in their worst forms without which this class would not be able to master modern technology and modern methods of warfare?

Here we were faced with a problem which a year's experience has now summed up for us. When we included the question of bourgeois specialists in the revolutionary programme of our Party, we summed up the Party's practical experience in one of the most important questions. As far as I remember the earlier teachers of socialism, who foresaw a great deal of what would take place in the future socialist revolution and discerned many of its features, never expressed an opinion on this question. It did not exist for them, for it arose only when we proceeded to create a Red Army. That meant creating an army filled with enthusiasm out of an oppressed class which had been used as mere cannon-fodder, and it meant compelling that army to utilise all that was most coercive and abhorrent in what we had inherited from capitalism.

This contradiction, with which we are faced in connection with the Red Army, faces us in every organisational field. Take the question which engaged our attention most of all, namely, the transition from workers' control to workers' management in industry. Following the decrees and decisions passed by the Council of People's Commissars and local Soviet authorities—all of which contributed to our political experience in this field—actually the only thing left for the Central Committee to do was to sum up. In a matter like this it was scarcely able to give a lead in the true sense of the word. One has only to recall how clumsy, immature and casual were our first decrees and decisions on the subject of workers' control of industry. We thought that it was an easy matter; practice showed that it was necessary to build, but we gave no answer whatever to the question as to *how* to build. Every nationalised factory, every branch of nationalised industry, transport, and particularly railway transport—that most striking example of highly centralised capitalist machinery built on the basis of large-scale engineering, and most vital for the state—all embodied the concentrated experience of capitalism, and created immense difficulties for us.

We are still far from having overcome these difficulties. At first we regarded them in an entirely abstract way, like revolutionary preachers, who had absolutely no idea of how to set to work. There were lots of people, of course, who accused us—and all the socialists and Social-Democrats are accusing us today—of having undertaken this task without knowing how to finish it. But these accusations are ridiculous, made by people who lack the spark of life. As if one can set out to make a great revolution and know beforehand how it is to be completed! Such knowledge cannot be derived from books and our decision could spring only from the experience of the masses. And I say that it is to our credit that amidst incredible difficulties we undertook to solve a problem with which until then we were only half familiar, that we inspired the proletarian masses to display their own initiative, that we nationalised the industrial enterprises, and so forth. I remember that in Smolny<sup>11</sup> we passed as many as ten or twelve decrees at one sitting. That was an expression of our determination and desire to stimulate the spirit of experiment and initiative among the proletarian

masses. We now have experience. Now, we have passed, or are about to pass, from workers' control to workers' management of industry. Instead of being absolutely helpless as we were before, we are now armed with experience, and as far as this is possible, we have summed it up in our programme. We shall have to discuss this in detail when we deal with the question of organisation. We would not have been able to do this work had we not had the assistance and collaboration of the comrades from the trade unions.

In Western Europe the situation is different. There our comrades regard the trade unions as an evil, because they are commanded so completely by yellow representatives of the old type of socialism that the Communists do not see that much advantage is to be gained from their support. Many West-European Communists, even Rosa Luxemburg, are advocating the dissolution of the trade unions.<sup>12</sup> That shows how much more difficult this problem is in Western Europe. In this country we could not have held out for a single month had it not been for the support of the trade unions. In this we have the experience of a vast amount of practical work, which enables us to set to work to solve extremely difficult problems.

Take the question of the specialists which faces us at every turn, which arises in connection with every appointment, and which the leaders of our economy, and the Central Committee of the Party, are continually having to face. Under existing conditions the Central Committee of the Party cannot perform its functions if it adheres to hard and fast forms. If we could not appoint comrades able to work independently in their particular fields, we should be unable to function at all. It was only thanks to the fact that we had organisers like Yakov Sverdlov that we were able to work under war conditions without a single conflict worth noting. And in this work we were obliged to accept the assistance offered us by people who possessed knowledge acquired in the past.

In particular, take the administration of the War Department. We could not have solved that problem had we not trusted the General Staff and the big specialists in organisation. There were differences of opinion among us on particular questions, but fundamentally, there was no room for doubt. We availed ourselves of the assistance of bourgeois

experts who were thoroughly imbued with the bourgeois mentality, who were disloyal to us, and will remain disloyal to us for many years to come. Nevertheless, the idea that we can build communism with the aid of pure Communists, without the assistance of bourgeois experts, is childish. We have been steeled in the struggle, we have the forces, and we are united; and we must proceed with our organisational work, making use of the knowledge and experience of those experts. This is an indispensable condition, without which socialism cannot be built. Socialism cannot be built unless we utilise the heritage of capitalist culture. The only material we have to build communism with is what has been left us by capitalism.

We must now build in a practical way, and we have to build communist society with the aid of our enemies. This looks like a contradiction, an irreconcilable contradiction, perhaps. As a matter of fact, this is the only way the problem of building communism can be solved. And reviewing our experience, glancing at the way this problem confronts us every day, surveying the practical activities of the Central Committee, it seems to me that, in the main, our Party has found a solution to this problem. We have encountered immense difficulties, but this was the only way the problem could be solved. The bourgeois experts must be hemmed in by our organised, constructive and united activities so that they will be compelled to fall in line with the proletariat, no matter how much they resist and fight at every step. We must set them to work as a technical and cultural force so as to preserve them and to transform an uncultured and barbarian capitalist country into a cultured communist country. And it seems to me that during the past year we have learned how to build, that we have taken the right road, and shall not now be diverted from this road.

I should also like to deal briefly with the food question and the question of the countryside. Food has always been our most difficult problem. In a country where the proletariat could only assume power with the aid of the peasantry, where the proletariat had to serve as the agent of a petty-bourgeois revolution, our revolution was largely a *bourgeois* revolution until the Poor Peasants' Committees<sup>13</sup> were set up, i.e., until the summer and even the autumn of 1918. We are not afraid to admit that. We accomplished the October

Revolution so easily because the peasants as a whole supported us and fought the landowners for they saw that as far as they were concerned we would go the limit, because we were giving legal effect to what the Socialist-Revolutionary newspapers had been printing, to that which the cowardly petty bourgeoisie had promised, but could not carry out. But from the moment the Poor Peasants' Committees began to be organised, our revolution became a *proletarian* revolution. We were faced with a problem which even now has not been fully solved, and it is extremely important that we have put it on a practical footing. The Poor Peasants' Committees were a transition stage. The first decree on their organisation was passed by the Soviet government on the recommendation of Comrade Tsyurupa, who at that time was in charge of food affairs. We have to save the non-agricultural population that was tormented by hunger. That could be done only with the aid of Poor Peasants' Committees, which were proletarian organisations. And only when the October Revolution began to spread to the rural districts and was consummated, in the summer of 1918, did we acquire a real proletarian base; only then did our revolution *become a proletarian revolution in fact*, and not merely in our proclamations, promises and declarations.

We have not yet solved the problem that faces our Party of creating the necessary forms of organisation of the rural proletariat and semi-proletariat. Recently I visited Petrograd and attended the First Congress of Farm Labourers of Petrograd Gubernia. I then saw how we were feeling our way in this matter, but I think that progress will undoubtedly be made. I must say that the principal lesson we learned from our work of political leadership in the past year was that we must find organisational support in this field. We took a step in this direction when we formed the Poor Peasants' Committees, held new elections to the Soviets and revised our food policy, where we had encountered immense difficulties. In those outlying parts of Russia which are now becoming Soviet—the Ukraine and the Don region—this policy may have to be modified. It would be a mistake to draw up stereotyped decrees for all parts of Russia; it would be a mistake for the Bolshevik Communists, the Soviet officials in the Ukraine and the Don, to apply these decrees to other regions wholesale, without discrimination. We shall meet

with no few peculiar situations; we shall under no circumstances bind ourselves to uniform patterns; we shall not decide once and for all that our experience, the experience of Central Russia, must be applied in its entirety to every region. We have only just taken up the problems of real development; we are only just taking the first steps in this direction. An immense field of work is opening before us.

I said that the first decisive step the Soviet government took was to create the Poor Peasants' Committees. This measure was carried out by our food supply officials and was dictated by necessity. But in order to complete our tasks we must have something more than temporary organisations like these Committees. Alongside the Soviets we have the trade unions, which we are using as a school for training the backward masses. The top layer of workers who actually administered Russia during the past year, who bore the brunt of the work in carrying out our policy, and who were our mainstay—this layer in Russia is an extremely thin one. We have become convinced of that, we are feeling it. If a future historian ever collects information on the groups which administered Russia during these seventeen months, on how many hundreds, or how many thousands of individuals were engaged in this work and bore the entire, incredible burden of administering the country—nobody will believe that it was done by so few people. The number was so small because there were so few intelligent, educated and capable political leaders in Russia. This layer was a thin one in Russia, and in the course of the recent struggle it overtaxed its strength, became overworked, did more than its strength allowed. I think that at this Congress we shall devise practical means of utilising ever new forces on a mass scale in industry and—what is more important—in the rural districts, of enlisting in Soviet activities workers and peasants who are on, or even below, the average level. Without their assistance on a mass scale further activities, I think, will be impossible.

Since my time has almost expired, I want to say only a few words about our attitude towards the middle peasants. The attitude we should take towards the middle peasants was, in principle, quite clear to us even before the revolution. The task that faced us was to *neutralise* them. At a

meeting in Moscow<sup>14</sup> where the question of our attitude towards petty-bourgeois parties was discussed, I quoted the exact words of Engels, who not only pointed out that the middle peasants were our allies, but also expressed the view that it would be possible, perhaps, to dispense with coercion, with repressive measures even as regards the big peasants. In Russia, this assumption did not prove correct; we were, are, and will be, in a state of open civil war with the kulaks. This is inevitable. We have seen it in practice. But owing to the inexperience of our Soviet officials and to the difficulties of the problem, the blows which were intended for the kulaks<sup>15</sup> very frequently fell on the middle peasants. In this respect we have sinned a great deal, but the experience we have gained will enable us to do everything to avoid this in future. Such is the problem that now faces us not theoretically but practically. You are well aware that the problem is a difficult one. We have no advantages to offer the middle peasant; he is a materialist, a practical man, who demands definite material advantages, which at present we are not in a position to offer and which the country will have to dispense with for, perhaps, many months of a severe struggle that now promises to end in complete victory. But there is a good deal we can do in our practical administrative work—we can improve our administrative machinery and eliminate a host of abuses. The line of our Party, which has not done enough to form a bloc, an alliance, an agreement with the middle peasants, can and must be corrected.

This, in brief, is all I can say at present about the economic and political work of the Central Committee during the past year. I must now very briefly deal with the second part of the duty entrusted to me by the Central Committee—to make the Central Committee report on organisation. This duty could have been performed in the way it should really be performed only by Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov, who had been appointed to make the report on this question on behalf of the Central Committee. His unbelievably phenomenal memory, in which he retained the greater part of his report, and his personal acquaintance with the work of organisation in the various localities would have made it possible for him to deliver this report better than anybody else. I am unable to replace him even in one-hundredth part, for in this work we were obliged to rely, and were absolutely

justified in relying, entirely on Comrade Sverdlov, who very often adopted decisions on his own responsibility.

I can give you short excerpts from the written reports now available. The Secretariat of the Central Committee, which was unable to complete its work in time, has most definitely promised that the written reports will be ready for printing next week, that they will be mimeographed and distributed to the Congress delegates. They will supplement the brief, fragmentary remarks which I can make here. In the material of the report available at present in writing, we find, first of all, figures relating to the number of incoming documents: 1,483 in December 1918, 1,537 in January 1919 and 1,840 in February. The distribution of these documents in percentages is given, but I will take the liberty of not reading this. Comrades who are interested will see from the report when distributed that, for instance, 490 persons visited the Secretariat in November. And the comrades who handed me the report say it can be only half the number of visitors the Secretariat dealt with, because dozens of delegates were received daily by Comrade Sverdlov, and more than half of these were probably not Soviet but Party officials.

I must draw attention to the report on the activities of the Federation of Foreign Groups.<sup>16</sup> I know something of the work in this field only insofar as I have been able to cast a glance at the material on the foreign groups. At first there were seven such groups, now there are nine. Comrades living in purely Great-Russian districts, who have not had the opportunity of becoming directly acquainted with these groups and who have not seen the reports in the newspapers, will please read the excerpts from the newspapers, which I shall take the liberty of not reading in full. I must say that here we see the real foundation of what we have done for the Third International. The Third International was founded in Moscow at a short congress, and Comrade Zinoviev will make a detailed report on this and on everything proposed by the Central Committee on all questions concerning the International. The fact that we succeeded in doing so much in so short a time at the congress of Communists in Moscow is due to the tremendous preparatory work that was performed by the Central Committee of our Party and by the organiser of the congress, Comrade Sverdlov. Propaganda

and agitation were carried on among foreigners in Russia and a number of foreign groups were organised. Dozens of members of these groups were fully acquainted with the main plans and with the guiding lines of general policy. Hundreds of thousands of war prisoners from armies which the imperialists had created solely in their own interests, upon returning to Hungary, Germany and Austria, thoroughly infected those countries with the germs of Bolshevism. And the fact that groups and parties sympathising with us predominate in those countries is due to work which is not visible on the surface and which is only briefly summed up in the report on the organisational activities of the foreign groups in Russia; it constituted one of the most significant features in the activities of the Russian Communist Party as one of the units of the world communist party.

Further, the material handed to me contains data on the reports received by the Central Committee, and the organisations from which they were received. And here our Russian lack of organisational ability stands out in all its shameful wretchedness. Reports were received regularly from organisations in four gubernias, irregularly from fourteen, and isolated reports from sixteen. The gubernias in question are enumerated in the list, which permit me not to read. Of course, this lack of organisational ability, these extreme organisational drawbacks, are very largely, but not entirely, to be explained by the conditions of civil war. Least of all should we use this to hide behind, to excuse and defend ourselves. Organisational activity was never a strong point with the Russians in general, nor with the Bolsheviks in particular; nevertheless the chief problem of the proletarian revolution is *that of organisation*. It is not without reason that the question of organisation is here assigned a most prominent place. This is a thing we must fight for, and fight for with firmness and determination, using every means at our disposal. We can do nothing here except by prolonged education and re-education. This is a field in which revolutionary violence and dictatorship can be applied only by way of abuse and I make bold to warn you against such abuse. Revolutionary violence and dictatorship are excellent things when applied in the right way and against the right people. But they cannot be applied in the field of organisation. We have by no means solved this problem of education, re-education and

prolonged organisational work, and we must tackle it systematically.

We have here a detailed financial report. Of the various items, the largest is in connection with workers' book publishing and with newspapers: 1,000,000, again 1,000,000 and again 1,000,000—3,000,000; Party organisations, 2,800,000; editorial expenses, 3,600,000. More detailed figures are given in this report, which will be duplicated and distributed to all the delegates. Meanwhile the comrades can get their information from the representatives of the groups. Permit me not to read these figures. The comrades who submitted the reports gave in them what is most important and illustrative—the general results of the propaganda work performed in the sphere of publication. The Kommunist Publishing House released sixty-two books. A net profit of 2,000,000 in 1918 was earned by the newspaper *Pravda*, 25,000,000 copies of which were issued during the year. The newspaper *Bednota*<sup>17</sup> earned a net profit of 2,370,000 and 33,000,000 copies were issued. The comrades of the Organising Bureau of the Central Committee have promised to rearrange the detailed figures they possess in such a way as to give at least two comparable criteria. It will then be clear what vast educational work is being performed by the Party, which for the first time in history is using modern large-scale capitalist printing equipment in the interests of the workers and peasants and not in the interests of the bourgeoisie. We have been accused thousands and millions of times of having violated the freedom of the press and of having renounced democracy. Our accusers call it democracy when the capitalists can buy out the press and the rich can use the press in their own interests. We call that plutocracy and not democracy. Everything that bourgeois culture has created for the purpose of deceiving the people and defending the capitalists we have taken from them in order to satisfy the political needs of the workers and peasants. And in this respect we have done more than any socialist party has done in a quarter of a century, or in half a century. Nevertheless, we have done far too little of what has to be done.

The last item in the material handed to me by the Bureau concerns circular letters. Fourteen of these were issued, and the comrades who are not acquainted with them, or who are not sufficiently acquainted with them, are invited to read

them. Of course, the Central Committee was far from being as active as it should have been in this respect, but you must bear in mind the conditions under which we worked, when we were obliged to give political instructions on a number of questions every day, and only in exceptional, even rare, cases were we able to do so through the Political Bureau or the plenary meeting of the Central Committee. Under such circumstances it was impossible for us to send out frequent political circulars.

I repeat that we, as the militant organ of a militant party, in time of civil war, cannot work in any other way. If we did, it would be only a half-measure, or a parliament, and in the era of dictatorship questions cannot be settled, nor can the Party, or the Soviet organisations, be directed by parliamentary means. Comrades, now that we have taken over the bourgeois printing-presses and papers the importance of the Central Committee's circular letters is not so great. We send out in the form of circular letters only such instructions as cannot be published, for in our activities, which were conducted publicly in spite of their vast dimensions, underground work nevertheless remained, still remains, and will remain. We were never afraid of being reproached for our underground methods and secrecy, but on the contrary were proud of them. And when we found ourselves in a situation in which, after overthrowing our bourgeoisie, we were faced with the hostility of the European bourgeoisie, secrecy remained a feature of our activities and underground methods a feature of our work.

With this, comrades, I conclude my report. (*Applause.*)

## Report on the Party Programme\*

(*Applause.*) Comrades, according to the division of subjects agreed on between Comrade Bukharin and myself, it is my task to explain the point of view of the commission on a number of concrete and most disputed points, or points which interest the Party most at the present time.

I shall begin by dealing briefly with the points which Comrade Bukharin touched on at the end of his report as points of dispute among us in the commission. The first relates to the structure of the preamble to the programme. In my opinion, Comrade Bukharin did not quite correctly explain here the reason the majority on the commission rejected all attempts to draw up the programme in such a way that everything relating to the old capitalism would be deleted. By the way Comrade Bukharin spoke he sometimes seemed to imply that the majority on the commission was apprehensive of what might be said about this, apprehensive that they would be accused of insufficient respect for the past. There can be no doubt that when the position of the majority is presented in this way it seems rather ridiculous. But this is very far from the truth. The majority rejected these attempts because they would be wrong. They would not correspond to the real state of affairs. Pure imperialism, without the fundamental basis of capitalism, has never existed, does not exist anywhere, and never will exist. This is an incorrect generalisation of everything that was said of the syndicates, cartels, trusts and finance capitalism, when finance capitalism was depicted as though it had none of the foundations of the old capitalism under it.

\* This report was delivered on March 19, 1919.—*Ed.*

That is wrong. It would be particularly wrong for the era of the imperialist war and for the era following the imperialist war. Engels in his time, in one of his reflections on the future war, wrote that it would involve much more severe devastation than that caused by the Thirty Years' War; that in a large degree mankind would be reduced to savagery, that our artificial apparatus of trade and industry would collapse. At the beginning of the war the traitor-socialists and opportunists boasted of the tenacity of capitalism and derided the "fanatics or semi-anarchists", as they called us. "Look," they said, "these predictions have not come true. Events have shown that they were true only of a very small number of countries and for a very short period of time!" And now, not only in Russia and not only in Germany, but even in the victor countries, a gigantic collapse of modern capitalism is beginning, a collapse, so gigantic that it frequently removes this artificial apparatus and restores the old capitalism.

When Comrade Bukharin stated that an attempt might be made to present an integral picture of the collapse of capitalism and imperialism, we objected to it in the commission, and I must object to it here. Just try it, and you will see that you will not succeed. Comrade Bukharin made one such attempt in the commission, and himself gave it up. I am absolutely convinced that if anybody could do this, it is Comrade Bukharin, who has studied this question very extensively and thoroughly. I assert that such an attempt cannot be successful, because the task is a wrong one. We in Russia are now experiencing the consequences of the imperialist war and the beginning of the dictatorship of the proletariat. At the same time, in a number of the regions of Russia, cut off from each other more than formerly, we frequently see a regeneration of capitalism and the development of its early stage. That is something we cannot escape. If the programme were to be written in the way Comrade Bukharin wanted, it would be a wrong programme. At best, it would be a reproduction of all the best that has been said of finance capitalism and imperialism, but it would not reproduce reality, precisely because this reality is not integral. A programme made up of heterogeneous parts is inelegant (but that, of course, is not important), but any other programme would simply be incorrect. However unpleasant it may be, what-

ever it may lack in proportion, we shall be unable for a long time to escape this heterogeneity, this necessity of constructing from different materials. When we do escape it, we shall create another programme. But then we shall already be living in a socialist society. It would be ridiculous to pretend that things will be then what they are now.

We are living at a time when a number of the most elementary and fundamental manifestations of capitalism have been revived. Take, for instance, the collapse of transport, which we are experiencing so well, or rather so badly, in our own case. This same thing is taking place in other countries, too, even in the victor countries. And what does the collapse of transport mean under the imperialist system? A return to the most primitive forms of commodity production. We know very well what our profiteers or bagmen are. This latter word, I think, has up to now been unknown to foreigners. And now? Speak to the comrades who have arrived for the Congress of the Third International. It turns out that similar words are beginning to appear in both Germany and Switzerland. And this is a category you cannot fit into any dictatorship of the proletariat; you have to return to the very dawn of capitalist society and commodity production.

To escape from this sad reality by creating a smooth and integral programme is to escape into something ethereal that is not of this world, to write a wrong programme. And it is by no means reverence for the past, as Comrade Bukharin politely hinted, which induced us here to insert passages from the old programme. What appeared to be implied was this: the programme was written in 1903<sup>18</sup> with the participation of Lenin; the programme is undoubtedly a bad one; but since old people love most of all to recall the past, in a new era a new programme has been drawn up which, out of reverence for the past, repeats the old programme. If it were so, such cranks ought to be laughed at. I assert that it is not so. The capitalism described in 1903 remains in existence in 1919 in the Soviet proletarian republic just because of the disintegration of imperialism, because of its collapse. Capitalism of this kind can be found, for instance, in Samara and in Vyatka gubernias, which are not very far from Moscow. In a period when civil war is rending the country, we shall not soon emerge from this situation, from this profiting. That is why any other structure of the programme

would be incorrect. We must state what actually exists; the programme must contain what is absolutely irrefutable, what has been established in fact. Only then will it be a Marxist programme.

Theoretically, Comrade Bukharin understands this perfectly and says that the programme must be concrete. But it is one thing to understand and another to act upon this understanding. Comrade Bukharin's concreteness is a bookish description of finance capitalism. In reality we have heterogeneous phenomena to deal with. In every agricultural gubernia there is free competition side by side with monopoly industry. Nowhere in the world has monopoly capitalism existed in a whole series of branches without free competition, nor will it exist. To write of such a system is to write of a system which is false and removed from reality. If Marx said of manufacture that it was a superstructure on mass small production, imperialism and finance capitalism are a superstructure on the old capitalism. If its top is destroyed, the old capitalism is exposed. To maintain that there is such a thing as integral imperialism without the old capitalism is merely making the wish father to the thought.

This is a natural mistake, one very easily committed. And if we had an integral imperialism before us, which had entirely altered capitalism, our task would have been a hundred thousand times easier. It would have resulted in a system in which everything would be subordinated to finance capital alone. It would then only have remained to remove the top and to transfer what remained to the proletariat. That would have been extremely agreeable, but it is not so in reality. In reality the development is such that we have to act in an entirely different way. *Imperialism is a superstructure on capitalism*. When it collapses, we find ourselves dealing with the destruction of the top and the exposure of the foundation. That is why our programme, if it is to be a correct one, must state what actually exists. There is the old capitalism, which in a number of branches has grown to imperialism. Its tendencies are exclusively imperialist. Fundamental questions can be examined only from the point of view of imperialism. There is not a single major question of home or foreign policy which could be settled in any way except from the point of view of this tendency. This is not what the programme now speaks about. In reality, there



exists a vast subsoil of the old capitalism. There is the superstructure of imperialism, which led to the war, and from this war followed the beginnings of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is a phase you cannot escape. This fact is characteristic of the very rate of development of the proletarian revolution throughout the world, and will remain a fact for many years to come.

West-European revolutions will perhaps proceed more smoothly; nevertheless, very many years will be required for the reorganisation of the whole world, for the reorganisation of the majority of the countries. And this means that during the present transition period, we cannot escape this mosaic reality. We cannot cast aside this patchwork reality, however inelegant it may be; we cannot cast away one bit of it. If the programme were drawn up otherwise than it has been drawn up, it would be a wrong programme.

We say that we have arrived at the dictatorship. But we must know *how* we arrived at it. The past keeps fast hold of us, grasps us with a thousand tentacles, and does not allow us to take a single forward step, or compels us to take these steps badly in the way we are taking them. And we say that for the situation we are arriving at to be understood, it must be stated how we proceeded and what led us to the socialist revolution. We were led to it by imperialism, by capitalism in its early commodity production forms. All this must be understood, because it is only by reckoning with reality that we can solve such problems as, let us say, our attitude towards the middle peasants. And how is it, indeed, that there is such a category as a middle peasant in the era of purely imperialist capitalism? It did not exist even in countries that were simply capitalist. If we are to solve the problem of our attitude towards this almost medieval phenomenon (the middle peasants) purely from the point of view of imperialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat, we shall be absolutely unable to make ends meet, and we shall land in many difficulties. But if we are to change our attitude towards the middle peasant—then also have the goodness to say in the theoretical part where he came from and what he is. He is a small commodity producer. And this is the ABC of capitalism, of which we must speak, because we have not yet grown out of it. To brush this aside and say, "Why should we study the ABC

when we have studied finance capitalism?" would be highly frivolous.

I have to say the same thing about the *national question*. Here too the wish is father to the thought with Comrade Bukharin. He says that we must not recognise the right of nations to self-determination. A nation means the bourgeoisie together with the proletariat. And are we, the proletarians, to recognise the right to self-determination of the despised bourgeoisie? That is absolutely incompatible! Pardon me, it is compatible with what actually exists. If you eliminate this, the result will be sheer fantasy. You refer to the process of differentiation which is taking place within the nations, the process of separation of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie. But let us see how this differentiation will proceed.

Take, for instance, Germany, the model of an advanced capitalist country whose organisation of capitalism, finance capitalism, was superior to that of America. She was inferior in many other respects, in technical development and production and in the political sphere, but in respect of the organisation of finance capitalism, in respect of the transformation of monopoly capitalism into state monopoly capitalism, Germany was superior to America. She is a model, it would seem. But what is taking place there? Has the German proletariat become differentiated from the bourgeoisie? No! It was reported that the majority of the workers are opposed to Scheidemann in only a few of the large towns. But how did this come about? It was owing to the alliance between the Spartacists<sup>19</sup> and the thrice-accursed German Menshevik-Independents, who make a muddle of everything and want to wed the system of workers' councils to a Constituent Assembly! And this is what is taking place in that very Germany! And she, mark you, is an advanced country.

Comrade Bukharin says, "Why do we need the right of nations to self-determination?" I must repeat what I said opposing him in the summer of 1917, when he proposed to delete the minimum programme and to leave only the maximum programme.<sup>20</sup> I then retorted, "Don't halloo until you're out of the wood." When we have conquered power, and even then only after waiting a while, we shall do this. We have conquered power, we have waited a while, and

now I am willing to do it. We have gone directly into socialist construction, we have beaten off the first assault that threatened us—now it will be in place. The same applies to the right of nations to self-determination. “I want to recognise only the right of the working classes to self-determination,” says Comrade Bukharin. That is to say, you want to recognise something that has not been achieved in a single country except Russia. That is ridiculous.

Look at Finland; she is a democratic country, more developed, more cultured than we are. In Finland a process of separation, of the differentiation of the proletariat is taking a specific course, far more painful than was the case with us. The Finns have experienced the dictatorship of Germany; they are now experiencing the dictatorship of the Allied powers. But thanks to the fact that we have recognised the right of nations to self-determination, the process of differentiation has been facilitated there. I very well recall the scene when, at Smolny, I handed the act to Svinhufvud<sup>21</sup>—which in Russian means “pighead”—the representative of the Finnish bourgeoisie, who played the part of a hangman. He amiably shook my hand, we exchanged compliments. How unpleasant that was! But it had to be done, because at that time the bourgeoisie were deceiving the people, were deceiving the working people by alleging that the Muscovites, the chauvinists, the Great Russians, wanted to crush the Finns. It had to be done.

Yesterday, was it not necessary to do the same thing in relation to the Bashkirian Republic?<sup>22</sup> When Comrade Bukharin said, “We can recognise this right in some cases”, I even wrote down that he had included in the list the Hottentots, the Bushmen and the Indians. Hearing this enumeration, I thought, how is it that Comrade Bukharin has forgotten a small trifle, the Bashkirs? There are no Bushmen in Russia, nor have I heard that the Hottentots have laid claim to an autonomous republic, but we have Bashkirs, Kirghiz and a number of other peoples, and to these we cannot deny recognition. We cannot deny it to a single one of the peoples living within the boundaries of the former Russian Empire. Let us even assume that the Bashkirs have overthrown the exploiters and we have helped them to do so. This is possible only when a revolution has fully matured, and it must be done cautiously, so as not to retard by one’s

interference that very process of the differentiation of the proletariat which we ought to expedite. What, then, can we do in relation to such peoples as the Kirghiz, the Uzbeks, the Tajiks, the Turkmen, who to this day are under the influence of their mullahs? Here, in Russia, the population, having had a long experience of the priests, helped us to overthrow them. But you know how badly the decree on civil marriage is still being put into effect. Can we approach these peoples and tell them that we shall overthrow their exploiters? We cannot do this, because they are entirely subordinated to their mullahs. In such cases we have to wait until the given nation develops, until the differentiation of the proletariat from the bourgeois elements, which is inevitable, has taken place.

Comrade Bukharin does not want to wait. He is possessed by impatience: “Why should we? When we have ourselves overthrown the bourgeoisie, proclaimed Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, why should we act thus?” This has the effect of a rousing appeal, it contains an indication of our path, but if we were to proclaim only this in our programme, it would not be a programme, but a proclamation. We may proclaim Soviet power, and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and express the contempt for the bourgeoisie they deserve a thousand times over, but in the programme we must write just what actually exists with the greatest precision. And then our programme will be incontrovertible.

We hold a strictly class standpoint. What we are writing in the programme is a recognition of what has actually taken place since the time we wrote of the self-determination of nations in general. At that time there were still no proletarian republics. It was when they appeared, and only as they appeared, that we were able to write what is written here: “A federation of states organised after the *Soviet type*.” The Soviet type is not yet Soviets as they exist in Russia, but the Soviet type is becoming international. And this is all we can say. To go farther, one step farther, one hair’s breadth farther, would be wrong, and therefore unsuitable for a programme.

We say that account must be taken of the stage reached by the given nation on its way from medievalism to bourgeois democracy, and from bourgeois democracy to proletarian

democracy. That is absolutely correct. All nations have the right to self-determination—there is no need to speak specially of the Hottentots and the Bushmen. The vast majority, most likely nine-tenths of the population of the earth, perhaps 95 per cent, come under this description, since all countries are on the way from medievalism to bourgeois democracy or from bourgeois democracy to proletarian democracy. This is an absolutely inevitable course. More cannot be said, because it would be wrong, because it would not be what actually exists. To reject the self-determination of nations and insert the self-determination of the working people would be absolutely wrong, because this manner of settling the question does not reckon with the difficulties, with the zigzag course taken by differentiation within nations. In Germany it is not proceeding in the same way as in our country—in certain respects more rapidly, and in other respects in a slower and more sanguinary way. Not a single party in our country accepted so monstrous an idea as a combination of the Soviets and a Constituent Assembly. And yet we have to live side by side with these nations. Now Scheidemann's party is already saying that we want to conquer Germany. That is of course ridiculous, nonsensical. But the bourgeoisie have their own interests and their own press, which is shouting this to the whole world in hundreds of millions of copies; Wilson, too, is supporting this in his own interests. The Bolsheviks, they declare, have a large army, and they want, by means of conquest, to implant their Bolshevism in Germany. The best people in Germany—the Spartacists—told us that the German workers are being incited against the Communists; look, they are told, how bad things are with the Bolsheviks! And we cannot say that things with us are very good. And so our enemies in Germany influence the people with the argument that the proletarian revolution in Germany would result in the same disorders as in Russia. Our disorders are a protracted illness. We are contending with desperate difficulties in creating the proletarian dictatorship in our country. As long as the bourgeoisie, or the petty bourgeoisie, or even part of the German workers, are under the influence of this bugbear—"the Bolsheviks want to establish their system by force"—so long will the formula "the self-determination of the working people" not help matters. We must arrange

things so that the German traitor-socialists will not be able to say that the Bolsheviks are trying to impose their universal system, which, as it were, can be brought into Berlin on Red Army bayonets. And this is what may happen if the principle of the self-determination of nations is denied.

Our programme must not speak of the self-determination of the working people, because that would be wrong. It must speak of what actually exists. Since nations are at different stages on the road from medievalism to bourgeois democracy and from bourgeois democracy to proletarian democracy, this thesis of our programme is absolutely correct. With us there have been very many zigzags on this road. Every nation must obtain the right to self-determination, and that will make the self-determination of the working people easier. In Finland the process of separation of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie is remarkably clear, forceful and deep. At any rate, things will not proceed there as they do in our country. If we were to declare that we do not recognise any Finnish nation, but only the working people, that would be sheer nonsense. We cannot refuse to recognise what actually exists; it will itself compel us to recognise it. The demarcation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is proceeding in different countries in their own specific ways. Here we must act with utmost caution. We must be particularly cautious with regard to the various nations, for there is nothing worse than lack of confidence on the part of a nation. Self-determination of the proletariat is proceeding among the Poles. Here are the latest figures on the composition of the Warsaw Soviet of Workers' Deputies.<sup>23</sup> Polish traitor-socialists—333, Communists—297. This shows that, according to our revolutionary calendar, October in that country is not very far off. It is somewhere about August or September 1917. But, firstly, no decree has yet been issued stating that all countries must live according to the Bolshevik revolutionary calendar; and even if it were issued, it would not be observed. And, secondly, the situation at present is such that the majority of the Polish workers, who are more advanced than ours and more cultured, share the standpoint of social-defencism, social-patriotism. We must wait. We cannot speak here of the self-determination of the working people. We must carry on propaganda in behalf of this

differentiation. This is what we are doing, but there is not the slightest shadow of doubt that we must recognise the self-determination of the Polish nation now. That is clear. The Polish proletarian movement is taking the same course as ours, towards the dictatorship of the proletariat, but not in the same way as in Russia. And there the workers are being intimidated by statements to the effect that the Muscovites, the Great Russians, who have always oppressed the Poles, want to carry their Great-Russian chauvinism into Poland in the guise of communism. Communism cannot be imposed by force. When I said to one of the best comrades among the Polish Communists, "You will do it in a different way", he replied, "No, we shall do the same thing, but better than you". To such an argument I had absolutely no objections. They must be given the opportunity of fulfilling a modest wish—to create a better Soviet power than ours. We cannot help reckoning with the fact that things there are proceeding in rather a peculiar way, and we cannot say: "Down with the right of nations to self-determination! We grant the right of self-determination only to the working people." This self-determination proceeds in a very complex and difficult way. It exists nowhere but in Russia, and, while foreseeing every stage of development in other countries, we must decree nothing from Moscow. That is why this proposal is unacceptable in principle.

I now pass to the other points which I am to deal with in accordance with the plan we have drawn up. I have given the first place to the question of *small proprietors and middle peasants*. In this respect, Clause 47 states:

"With regard to the middle peasants, the policy of the Russian Communist Party is to draw them into the work of socialist construction gradually and systematically. The Party sets itself the task of separating them from the kulaks, of winning them to the side of the working class by carefully attending to their needs, by combating their backwardness with ideological weapons and under no circumstances with measures of suppression, and by striving in all cases where their vital interests are concerned to come to practical agreements with them, making concessions to them in determining the methods of carrying out socialist reforms."

It seems to me that here we are formulating what the founders of socialism have frequently said regarding the

middle peasants. The only defect of this clause is that it is not sufficiently concrete. We could hardly give more in a programme. But it is not only questions of programme we must discuss at the Congress, and we must give profound, thrice-profound consideration to the question of the middle peasants. We have information to the effect that in the revolts which have occurred in some places, a *general plan* is clearly discernible, and that this plan is obviously connected with the military plan of the whiteguards, who have decided on a general offensive in March and on the organisation of a number of revolts. In the presidium of the Congress there is a draft of an appeal in the name of the Congress, which will be reported to you. These revolts show as clear as can be that the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries and a part of the Mensheviks—in Bryansk it was the Mensheviks who worked to provoke the revolt—are acting as actual agents of the whiteguards. A general offensive of the whiteguards, revolts in the villages, the interruption of railway traffic—perhaps it will be possible to overthrow the Bolsheviki in this way? Here the role of the middle peasants stands out especially clearly, forcibly and insistently. At the Congress we must not only lay particular stress on our accommodating attitude towards the middle peasants, but also think over a number of measures, as concrete as possible, which will directly give at least something to the middle peasants. These measures are absolutely essential for self-preservation and for the struggle against all our enemies; they know that the middle peasant vacillates between us and them and they are endeavouring to win him away from us. Our position is now such that we possess vast reserves. We know that both the Polish and the Hungarian revolutions are growing, and very rapidly. These revolutions will furnish us with proletarian reserves, will ease our situation and will to a very large extent reinforce our proletarian base, which is weak. This may happen in the next few months, but we do not know just when. You know that an acute moment has now come and therefore the question of the middle peasants now assumes tremendous practical importance.

Further, I should like to dwell on the question of *co-operation*—that is Clause 48 of our programme. To a certain extent this clause has become obsolete. When we were drafting it in the commission, co-operatives existed in our country,

but there were no consumers' communes; a few days later, however, the decree on the merging of all forms of co-operatives into a single consumers' commune was issued. I do not know whether this decree<sup>24</sup> has been published and whether the majority of those here present are acquainted with it. If not, it will be published tomorrow or the day after. In this respect, this clause is already out of date, but it nevertheless appears to me that it is necessary, for we all know very well that it is a pretty long way from decrees to fulfilment. We have been toiling and moiling over the co-operatives since April 1918, and although we have achieved considerable success, it is not yet a decisive success. We have at times succeeded in organising the population in the co-operatives to such an extent that in many of the uyezds 98 per cent of the rural population are already so organised. But these co-operatives, which existed in capitalist society, are saturated with the spirit of bourgeois society, and are headed by Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, by bourgeois experts. We have not yet been able to establish our authority over them, and here our task remains unaccomplished. Our decree is a step forward in that it creates consumers' communes; it orders that all forms of co-operation all over Russia shall be merged. But this decree, too, even if we carry it into effect entirely, leaves the autonomous sections of workers' co-operatives within the future consumers' communes, because representatives of the workers' co-operatives who have a practical knowledge of the matter told us, and proved it, that the workers' co-operatives, as a more highly developed organisation, should be preserved, since their operations are essential. There were quite a few differences and disputes within our Party over the question of co-operation; there was friction between the Bolsheviks in the co-operatives and the Bolsheviks in the Soviets. In principle, it seems to me that the question should undoubtedly be settled in the sense that this apparatus, the only one for which capitalism paved the way among the people, the only one operating among a rural population still at the level of primitive capitalism, must be preserved at all costs; it must be developed and must not, under any circumstances, be discarded. The task here is a difficult one because in the majority of cases the leaders of the co-operatives are bourgeois specialists, very frequently real white-

guards. Hence the hatred for them, a legitimate hatred, hence the fight against them. But it must, of course, be conducted skilfully: *we must put a stop to the counter-revolutionary attempts of the co-operators, but this must not be a struggle against the apparatus of the co-operatives*. While getting rid of the counter-revolutionary leaders, we must establish our authority over the apparatus itself. Here our aim is exactly the same as it is in the case of the bourgeois experts, which is another question I should like to refer to.

The question of the *bourgeois experts* is provoking quite a lot of friction and divergences of opinion. When I recently had occasion to speak to the Petrograd Soviet, among the written questions submitted to me there were several devoted to the question of rates of pay. I was asked whether it is permissible in a socialist republic to pay as much as 3,000 rubles. We have, in fact, included this question in the programme, because dissatisfaction on these grounds has gone rather far. The question of the bourgeois experts has arisen in the army, in industry, in the co-operatives, everywhere. It is a very important question of the period of transition from capitalism to communism. We shall be able to build up communism only when, with the means provided by bourgeois science and technology, we make it more accessible to the people. There is no other way of building a communist society. But in order to build it in this way, we must take the apparatus from the bourgeoisie, we must enlist all these experts in the work. We have intentionally explained this question in detail in the programme in order to have it settled radically. We are perfectly aware of the effects of Russia's cultural underdevelopment, of what it is doing to Soviet power—which in principle has provided an immensely higher proletarian democracy, which has created a model of such democracy for the whole world—how this lack of culture is reducing the significance of Soviet power and reviving bureaucracy. The Soviet apparatus is accessible to all the working people in word, but actually it is far from being accessible to all of them, as we all know. And not because the laws prevent it from being so, as was the case under the bourgeoisie; on the contrary, our laws assist in this respect. But in this matter laws alone are not enough. A vast amount of educational, organisational and cultural work is required; this cannot be done rapidly

by legislation but demands a vast amount of work over a long period. This question of the bourgeois experts must be settled quite definitely at this Congress. The settlement of the question will enable the comrades, who are undoubtedly following this Congress attentively, to lean on its authority and to realise what difficulties we are up against. It will help those comrades who come up against this question at every step to take part at least in propaganda work.

The comrades here in Moscow who are representing the Spartacists at the Congress told us that in western Germany, where industry is most developed, and where the influence of the Spartacists among the workers is greatest, engineers and managers in very many of the large enterprises would come to the Spartacists, although the Spartacists have not yet been victorious there, and say, "We shall go with you." That was not the case in our country. Evidently, there the higher cultural level of the workers, the greater proletarianisation of the engineering personnel, and perhaps a number of other causes of which we do not know, have created relations which differ somewhat from ours.

At any rate, here we have one of the chief obstacles to further progress. We must immediately, without waiting for the support of other countries, immediately, at this very moment develop our productive forces. We cannot do this without the bourgeois experts. That must be said once and for all. Of course, the majority of these experts have a thoroughly bourgeois outlook. They must be placed in an environment of comradely collaboration, of worker commissars and of communist nuclei; they must be so placed that they cannot break out; but they must be given the opportunity of working in better conditions than they had under capitalism, since this group of people, which has been trained by the bourgeoisie, will not work otherwise. To compel a whole section of the population to work under coercion is impossible—that we know very well from experience. We can compel them not to take an active part in counter-revolution, we can intimidate them so as to make them dread to respond to the appeals of the whiteguards. In this respect the Bolsheviks act energetically. This can be done, and this we are doing adequately. This we have all learned to do. But it is impossible in this way to compel a whole section to work. These people are accustomed to do cultural

work, they advanced it within the framework of the bourgeois system, that is, they enriched the bourgeoisie with tremendous material acquisitions, but gave them to the proletariat in infinitesimal doses—nevertheless they did advance culture, that was their job. As they see the working class promoting organised and advanced sections, which not only value culture but also help to convey it to the people, they are changing their attitude towards us. When a doctor sees that the proletariat is arousing the working people to independent activity in fighting epidemics, his attitude towards us completely changes. We have a large section of such bourgeois doctors, engineers, agronomists and co-operators, and when they see in practice that the proletariat is enlisting more and more people to this cause, they will be conquered *morally*, and not merely be cut off from the bourgeoisie politically. Our task will then become easier. They will then of themselves be drawn into our apparatus and become part of it. To achieve this, sacrifices are necessary. To pay even two thousand million for this is a trifle. To fear this sacrifice would be childish, for it would mean that we do not comprehend the tasks before us.

The chaos in our transport, the chaos in industry and agriculture are undermining the very life of the Soviet Republic. Here we must resort to the most energetic measures, straining every nerve of the country to the utmost. We must not practise a policy of petty pinpricks with regard to the experts. These experts are not the servitors of the exploiters, they are active cultural workers, who in bourgeois society served the bourgeoisie, and of whom all socialists all over the world said that in a proletarian society they would serve *us*. In this transition period we must accord them the best possible conditions of life. That will be the best policy. That will be the most economical management. Otherwise, while saving a few hundred millions, we may lose so much that no sum will be sufficient to restore what we have lost.

When we discussed the question of rates of pay with the Commissar for Labour, Schmidt, he mentioned facts like these. He said that in the matter of equalising wages we have done more than any bourgeois state has done anywhere, or can do in scores of years. Take the pre-war rates of pay: a manual labourer used to get one ruble a day, twenty-five

rubles a month, while an expert got five hundred rubles a month, not counting those who were paid hundreds of thousands of rubles. The expert used to receive twenty times more than the worker. Our present rates of pay vary from six hundred rubles to three thousand rubles—only five times more. We have done a great deal towards equalising the rates. Of course, we are now overpaying experts, but to pay them a little more for giving us their knowledge is not only worth while, but necessary and theoretically indispensable. In my opinion, this question is dealt with in sufficient detail in the programme. It must be particularly stressed. Not only must it be settled here in principle, but we must see to it that every delegate to the Congress, on returning to his locality, should, in his report to his organisation and in all his activities, secure its execution.

We have already succeeded in bringing about a thorough change of attitude among the vacillating intellectuals. Yesterday we were talking about legalising the petty-bourgeois parties, but today we are arresting the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries; by this switching back and forth we are applying a very definite system. A consistent and very firm line runs through these changes of policy, namely, *to cut off counter-revolution and to utilise the cultural apparatus of the bourgeoisie*. The Mensheviks are the worst enemies of socialism, because they clothe themselves in a proletarian disguise; but the Mensheviks are a non-proletarian group. In this group there is only an insignificant proletarian upper layer, while the group itself consists of petty intellectuals. This group is coming over to our side. We shall take it over wholly, as a group. Every time they come to us, we say, "Welcome!" With every one of these vacillations, part of them come over to us. This was the case with the Mensheviks and the *Novaya Zhizn* people<sup>25</sup> and with the Socialist-Revolutionaries; this will be the case with all these vacillators, who will long continue to get in our way, whine and desert one camp for the other—you cannot do anything with them. But through all these vacillations we shall be enlisting groups of cultured intellectuals into the ranks of Soviet workers, and we shall cut off those elements that continue to support the whiteguards.

The next question which, according to the division of subjects, falls to my share is the *question of bureaucracy and of*

*enlisting the broad mass of the people in Soviet work*. We have been hearing complaints about bureaucracy for a long time; the complaints are undoubtedly well founded. We have done what no other state in the world has done in the fight against bureaucracy. The apparatus which was a thoroughly bureaucratic and bourgeois apparatus of oppression, and which remains such even in the freest of bourgeois republics, we have destroyed to its very foundations. Take, for example, the courts. Here, it is true, the task was easier; we did not have to create a new apparatus, because anybody can act as a judge basing himself on the revolutionary sense of justice of the working classes. We have still by no means completed the work in this field but in a number of respects we have made the courts what they should be. We have created bodies on which not only men, but also women, the most backward and conservative section of the population, can be made to serve without exception.

The employees in the other spheres of government are more hardened bureaucrats. The task here is more difficult. We cannot live without this apparatus; every branch of government creates a demand for such an apparatus. Here we are suffering from the fact that Russia was not sufficiently developed as a capitalist country. Germany, apparently, will suffer less from this, because her bureaucratic apparatus passed through an extensive school, which sucks people dry but compels them to work and not just wear out armchairs, as happens in our offices. We dispersed these old bureaucrats, shuffled them and then began to place them in new posts. The tsarist bureaucrats began to join the Soviet institutions and practise their bureaucratic methods, they began to assume the colouring of Communists and, to succeed better in their careers, to procure membership cards of the Russian Communist Party. And so, they have been thrown out of the door but they creep back in through the window. What makes itself felt here most is the lack of cultured forces. These bureaucrats may be dismissed, but they cannot be re-educated all at once. Here we are confronted chiefly with organisational, cultural and educational problems.

We can fight bureaucracy to the bitter end, to a complete victory, only when the whole population participates in the work of government. In the bourgeois republics not only is this impossible, *but the law itself prevents it*. The best of the

bourgeois republics, no matter how democratic they may be, have thousands of legal hindrances which prevent the working people from participating in the work of government. What we have done, was to remove these hindrances, but so far we have not reached the stage at which the working people could participate in government. Apart from the law, there is still the level of culture, which you cannot subject to any law. The result of this low cultural level is that the Soviets, which by virtue of their programme are organs of government *by the working people*, are in fact organs of government *for the working people* by the advanced section of the proletariat, but not by the working people as a whole.

Here we are confronted by a problem which cannot be solved except by prolonged education. At present this task is an inordinately difficult one for us, because, as I have had frequent occasion to say, the section of workers who are governing is inordinately, incredibly *small*. We must secure help. According to all indications, such a reserve is growing up within the country. There cannot be the slightest doubt of the existence of a tremendous thirst for knowledge and of tremendous progress in education—mostly attained outside the schools—of tremendous progress in educating the working people. This progress cannot be confined within any school framework, but it is tremendous. All indications go to show that we shall obtain a vast reserve in the near future, which will replace the representatives of the small section of proletarians who have overstrained themselves in the work. But, in any case, our present situation in this respect is extremely difficult. Bureaucracy has been defeated. The exploiters have been eliminated. But the cultural level has not been raised, and therefore the bureaucrats are occupying their old positions. They can be forced to retreat only if the proletariat and the peasants are organised far more extensively than has been the case up to now, and only if real measures are taken to enlist the workers in government. You are all aware of such measures in the case of every People's Commissariat, and I shall not dwell on them.

The last point I have to deal with is the question of *the leading role of the proletariat and disfranchisement*. Our Constitution recognises the precedence of the proletariat in respect of the peasants and disfranchises the exploiters. It was this that the pure democrats of Western Europe at-

tacked most. We answered, and are answering, that they have forgotten the most fundamental propositions of Marxism, they have forgotten that with them it is a case of bourgeois democracy, whereas we have passed to *proletarian* democracy. There is not a single country in the world which has done even one-tenth of what the Soviet Republic has done in the past few months for the workers and the poor peasants in enlisting them in the work of administering the state. That is an absolute truth. Nobody will deny that in the matter of true, not paper, democracy, in the matter of enlisting the workers and peasants, we have done more than has been done or could be done by the best of the democratic republics in hundreds of years. It was this that determined the significance of the Soviets, it was owing to this that the Soviets have become a slogan for the proletariat of all countries.

But this in no way saves us from stumbling over the inadequate culture of the people. We do not at all regard the question of disfranchising the bourgeoisie from an absolute point of view, because it is theoretically quite conceivable that the dictatorship of the proletariat may suppress the bourgeoisie at every step without disfranchising them. This is theoretically quite conceivable. Nor do we propose our Constitution as a model for other countries. All we say is that whoever conceives the transition to socialism without the suppression of the bourgeoisie is not a socialist. But while it is essential to suppress the bourgeoisie as a class, it is not essential to deprive them of suffrage and of equality. We do not want freedom for the bourgeoisie, we do not recognise equality of exploiters and exploited, but this question is so handled in the programme that the Constitution does not prescribe such measures as the inequality of workers and peasants. They were embodied in the Constitution *after* they were already in actual practice. It was not even the Bolsheviks who drew up the Constitution of the Soviets; it was drawn up to their own detriment by the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries before the Bolshevik revolution. They drew it up in accordance with the conditions actually obtaining. The organisation of the proletariat proceeded much more rapidly than the organisation of the peasants, which fact made the workers the bulwark of the revolution and gave them a virtual advantage. The next task is gradu-



ally to pass from these advantages to their equalisation. Nobody drove the bourgeoisie out of the Soviets either before or after the October Revolution. *The bourgeoisie themselves left the Soviets.*

That is how the matter stands with the question of suffrage for the bourgeoisie. It is our task to put the question with absolute clarity. We do not in the least apologise for our behaviour, but give an absolutely precise enumeration of the facts as they are. As we point out, our Constitution was obliged to introduce this inequality because the cultural level is low and because with us organisation is weak. But we do not make this an ideal; on the contrary, in its programme the Party undertakes to work systematically to abolish this inequality between the better organised proletariat and the peasants. We shall abolish this inequality as soon as we succeed in raising the cultural level. We shall then be able to get along without such restrictions. Even now, after some seventeen months of revolution, these restrictions are of very small practical importance.

These, comrades, are the main points on which I believed it necessary to dwell in the general discussion of the programme, in order to leave their further consideration to the debate. (*Applause.*)

### **Speech Closing the Debate on the Party Programme\***

(*Applause.*) Comrades, I could not divide this part of the question with Comrade Bukharin, after preliminary consultation, in such detail as was the case with the report. Perhaps it will prove unnecessary. I think the debate that unfolded here revealed primarily one thing—the absence of any definite and formulated counter-proposal. Many speakers dealt with separate points in a desultory way, but made no counter-proposals. I shall deal with the chief objections, which were mainly directed against the preamble. Comrade Bukharin told me that he is one of those who believe that it is possible in the preamble to combine a description of capitalism with a description of imperialism in such a way as to form an integral whole, but since this has not been done, we shall have to accept the existing draft.

Many of the speakers argued—and it was particularly emphasised by Comrade Podbelsky—that the draft presented to you is wrong. The arguments Comrade Podbelsky advanced were very strange indeed. For instance, he said that in Clause 1 the revolution is referred to as the revolution of such-and-such a date, and for some reason this suggested to Comrade Podbelsky the idea that even this revolution is numbered. I may say that in the Council of People's Commissars we have to deal with numerous documents with index numbers, and often we get a little tired of them. But why convey this impression here? What has an index number to do with the question? We fix the day of the holiday and celebrate it. Can it be denied that it was precisely on October 25 that we captured power? If you were to attempt

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\* This speech was delivered on March 19, 1919.—*Ed.*

to change this in any way, it would be artificial. If you call the revolution the October-November Revolution, you provide a pretext for saying that it was not accomplished in one day. Of course, it was accomplished in a longer period—not in October, not in November, and not even in one year. Comrade Podbelsky took exception to the fact that one of the clauses speaks of the *impending* social revolution. On these grounds he made it appear that the programme was guilty of the crime of “offending Her Majesty the social revolution”. Here we are in the middle of the social revolution and yet the programme says that it is impending! This argument is obviously groundless, because the revolution referred to in our programme is the world social revolution.

We are told that we approach the revolution from the economic point of view. Should we do so or not? Many over-enthusiastic comrades here went as far as to talk about a world Economic Council, and about subordinating all the national parties to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. Comrade Pyatakov almost went as far as to say the same. (*Pyatakov, from his place*: “Do you think that would be a bad thing?”) Since he now says that it would not be a bad thing, I must reply that if there were anything like this in the programme, there would be no need to criticise it: the authors of such a proposal would have dug their own graves. These over-enthusiastic comrades have overlooked the fact that in the programme we must take our stand on what actually exists. One of these comrades—I think it was Sunitsa, who criticised the programme very vigorously and said it was worthless, and so forth—one of these over-enthusiastic comrades said that he did not agree that it must contain what actually exists, and proposed that it should contain what does not exist. (*Laughter.*) I think that this argument is so obviously false that the laughter it evokes is quite natural. I did not say that it must contain only what actually exists. I said that we must *proceed from what has been definitely established*. We must say and prove to the proletarians and working peasants that the communist revolution is inevitable. Did anybody here suggest that it is not necessary to say this? Had anybody made such a suggestion, it would have been proved to him that he was wrong. Nobody made any such suggestion, nor will anybody do so, because it is an undoubted fact that our Party came to

power with the aid not only of the communist proletariat, but also of all the peasants. Shall we confine ourselves to telling these people who are now marching with us: “The Party’s only function is to carry on socialist construction. The communist revolution has been accomplished, put communism into effect.” Such an opinion would be utterly groundless, it would be wrong from the theoretical point of view. Our Party has absorbed directly, and still more indirectly, millions of people who are now beginning to understand the class struggle, to understand the transition from capitalism to communism.

It may now be said, and it would be no exaggeration at all to do so, of course that nowhere, in no other country, have the working people displayed such keen interest in the question of transforming capitalism into socialism as the working people in our country today. Our people are giving more thought to this than the people of any other country. Is the Party not to give a reply to this question? We must demonstrate scientifically how this communist revolution will progress. All the other proposals fall short in this respect. Nobody wanted to delete it entirely. There was some vague talk about it being possible to abbreviate it, about not quoting from the old programme because it is wrong. But if the old programme were wrong, how could it have served as the basis of our activities for so many years? Perhaps we shall have a common programme when the world Soviet Republic is set up; by that time we shall probably have drafted several more programmes. But it would be premature to draft one now, when only one Soviet Republic exists in what was formerly the Russian Empire. Even Finland, which is undoubtedly advancing towards a Soviet Republic, has not yet reached it. And yet the Finnish people are the most cultured of the peoples that inhabit what was formerly the Russian Empire. Consequently, it is utterly wrong to demand that the programme should now reflect a finished process. It would be on a par with inserting the demand for a world Economic Council. We ourselves have not yet grown accustomed to this ugly word *Sovnarkhoz*—Economic Council; as for foreigners, it is said that some of them searched the railway directory, thinking that there was a station of that name. (*Laughter.*) We cannot dictate such words to the whole world by means of decrees.

To be international, our programme must take into account the class factors which are characteristic of the economy of all countries. It is characteristic of all countries that capitalism is still developing in a great many places. This is true of the whole of Asia, of all countries which are advancing towards bourgeois democracy; it is true of a number of parts of Russia. For instance, Comrade Rykov, who is closely familiar with the facts in the economic field, told us of the new bourgeoisie which have arisen in our country. This is true. The bourgeoisie are emerging not only from among our Soviet government employees—only a very few can emerge from their ranks—but from the ranks of the peasants and handicraftsmen who have been liberated from the yoke of the capitalist banks, and who are now cut off from railway communication. This is a fact. How do you think you will get round this fact? You are only fostering your own illusions, or introducing badly digested book-learning into reality, which is far more complex. It shows that even in Russia, capitalist commodity production is alive, operating, developing and giving rise to a bourgeoisie, in the same way as it does in every capitalist society.

Comrade Rykov said, "We are fighting against the bourgeoisie who are springing up in our country because the peasant economy has not yet disappeared; this economy gives rise to a bourgeoisie and to capitalism." We do not have exact figures about it, but it is beyond doubt that this is the case. So far a Soviet Republic exists only within the boundaries of what was formerly the Russian Empire. It is maturing and developing in a number of countries, but it does not yet exist in any other country. It would, therefore, be fantastic to claim in our programme something we have not yet reached; it would merely express a desire to escape unpleasant reality, which shows that the birth-pangs of other countries bringing forth socialist republics are undoubtedly more severe than those we experienced. We found it easy because on October 26, 1917, we gave legal effect to what the peasants had demanded in the resolutions of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. This is not the case in any other country. A Swiss comrade and a German comrade told us that in Switzerland the peasants took up arms against the strikers as never before, and that in Germany there is not the faintest indication in the rural districts of the likelihood

of the appearance of councils of agricultural labourers and small peasants. In our country, however, Soviets of Peasants' Deputies were formed almost over the entire country in the first few months of the revolution. We, a backward country, created them. Here a gigantic problem arises, for which the people in the capitalist countries have not yet found a solution. Were we a model capitalist nation? Survivals of serfdom were still to be found in this country right up to 1917. But no nation organised on capitalist lines has yet shown how this problem can be solved in practice. We achieved power under exceptional conditions, when tsarist despotism stimulated a great burst of effort to bring about a radical and rapid change; and under these exceptional conditions we were able for several months to rely on the support of all the peasants. This is a historical fact. Right up to the summer of 1918, up to the time of the formation of the Poor Peasants' Committees, we were holding on as a government because we enjoyed the support of all the peasants. This is impossible in any capitalist country. And it is this fundamental economic fact that you forget when you talk about radically redrafting the whole programme. Without this your programme will have no scientific foundation.

We must take as our point of departure the universally recognised Marxist thesis that a programme must be built on a scientific foundation. It must explain to the people how the communist revolution arose, why it is inevitable, what its significance, nature, and power are, and what problems it must solve. Our programme must be a summary for agitational purposes, a summary such as all programmes were, such as, for instance, the Erfurt Programme<sup>26</sup> was. Every clause of that programme contained material for agitators to use in hundreds of thousands of speeches and articles. Every clause of our programme is something that every working man and woman must know, assimilate and understand. If they do not know what capitalism is, if they do not understand that small peasant and handicraft economy constantly, inevitably and necessarily engenders this capitalism—if they do not understand this, then even if they were to declare themselves Communists a hundred times and flaunt the most radical communism, it would not be worth a brass farthing, because we value communism only when it is based on economic facts.

The socialist revolution will cause many changes even in some of the advanced countries. The capitalist mode of production still exists in all parts of the world, and in many places it still bears its less developed forms in spite of the fact that imperialism has mobilised and concentrated finance capital. There is not a country in the world, even the most developed, where capitalism is to be found exclusively in its most perfect form. There is nothing like it even in Germany. When we were collecting material for our particular assignments, the comrade in charge of the Central Statistical Board informed us that in Germany the peasants *concealed* from the Food Supply Departments 40 per cent of their surplus potatoes. Small peasant farms, which engage in free, petty trading, and petty profiteering, are still to be found in a capitalist country where capitalism has reached its full development. Such facts must not be forgotten. Of the 300,000 members of the Party who are represented here, are there many who fully understand this question? It would be ridiculous conceit to imagine that because we, whose good fortune it was to draft this programme, understand all this, the entire mass of Communists also understands it. They do not, and they need this ABC. They need it a hundred times more than we do, because people who have not grasped, who have not understood what communism is and what commodity production is, are far removed from communism. We come across these cases of small commodity economy every day, in every question of practical economic policy, food policy, agricultural policy, on matters concerning the Supreme Economic Council. And yet we are told that we ought not to speak about it in the programme! If we heeded this advice we would only show that we are incapable of solving this problem, and that the success of the revolution in our country is due to exceptional circumstances.

Comrades from Germany visit us to study the forms of the socialist system. And we must act in such a way as to prove to our comrades from abroad that we are strong, to enable them to see that in our revolution we are not in the least exceeding the bounds of reality, and to provide them with material that will be absolutely irrefutable. It would be absurd to set up our revolution as the ideal for all countries, to imagine that it has made a number of brilliant discoveries and has introduced a heap of socialist innovations. I

have not heard anybody make this claim and I assert that we shall not hear anybody make it. We have acquired practical experience in taking the first steps towards destroying capitalism in a country where specific relations exist between the proletariat and the peasants. Nothing more. If we behave like the frog in the fable and become puffed up with conceit, we shall only make ourselves the laughing-stock of the world, we shall be mere braggarts.

We educated the party of the proletariat with the aid of the Marxist programme, and the tens of millions of working people in our country must be educated in the same way. We have assembled here as ideological leaders and we must say to the people: "We educated the proletariat, and in doing so we always took our stand first and foremost on an exact economic analysis." This cannot be done by means of a manifesto. The manifesto of the Third International is an appeal, a proclamation, it calls attention to the tasks that confront us, it is an appeal to the people's sentiments. Take the trouble to prove scientifically that you have an economic basis, and that you are not building on sand. If you cannot do that, do not undertake to draw up a programme. To do it, we must necessarily review what we have lived through in these fifteen years. Fifteen years ago we said that we were advancing towards the social revolution, and now we have arrived; does that fact weaken our position? On the contrary, it reinforces and strengthens it. It all amounts to this, that capitalism is developing into imperialism, and imperialism leads to the beginning of the socialist revolution. It is tedious and lengthy, and not a single capitalist country has yet gone through this process, but it is necessary to deal with this in the programme.

That is why the theoretical arguments that have been levelled against this hold no water. I have no doubt that if we were to set ten or twenty writers, who are well able to expound their ideas, to work for three or four hours a day, they would, in the course of a month, draw up a better and more integral programme. But to demand that this should be done in a day or two, as Comrade Podbelsky does, is ridiculous. We worked for more than a day or two, or even a couple of weeks. I repeat that if it were possible to select a commission of thirty persons and set them to work several hours a day for a month, and moreover, not allow them to

be disturbed by telephone calls, there can be no doubt that they would produce a programme five times better than this one. But nobody here has disputed essentials. A programme which says nothing about the fundamentals of commodity economy and capitalism will not be a Marxist international programme. To be international it is not enough for it to proclaim a world Soviet republic, or the abolition of nations, as Comrade Pyatakov did when he said: "We don't want any nations. What we want is the union of all proletarians." This is splendid, of course, and eventually it will come about, but at an entirely different stage of communist development. Comrade Pyatakov said in a patronising tone: "You were backward in 1917, but you have made progress." We made progress when we put into the programme something that began to conform to reality. When we said that nations advance from bourgeois democracy to proletarian government, we stated what was a fact, although in 1917 it was merely an expression of what you desired.

When we establish with the Spartacists that complete comradely confidence needed for united communism, the comradely confidence that is maturing day by day, and which, perhaps, will come into being in a few months' time, we shall record it in the programme. But to proclaim it when it does not yet exist, would mean dragging them into something for which their own experience has not yet prepared them. We say that the Soviet type has acquired international significance. Comrade Bukharin mentioned the Shop Stewards' Committees in Britain.<sup>27</sup> These are not quite Soviets. They are developing but they are still in the embryonic stage. When they burst into full bloom, we shall "see what happens". But the argument that we are presenting Russian Soviets to the British workers is beyond all criticism.

I must now deal with the question of self-determination of nations. Our criticism has served to exaggerate the importance of this question. The defect in our criticism was that it attached special significance to this question, which, in substance, is of less than secondary importance in the programme's general structure, in the sum total of programme demands.

While Comrade Pyatakov was speaking I was amazed and asked myself what it was, a debate on the programme, or a dispute between two Organising Bureaus? When Comrade

Pyatakov said that the Ukrainian Communists act in conformity with the instructions of the Central Committee of the R.C.P.(B.), I was not sure about the tone in which he said it. Was it regret? I do not suspect Comrade Pyatakov of that, but what he said was tantamount to asking what was the good of all this self-determination when we have a splendid Central Committee in Moscow. This is a childish point of view. The Ukraine was separated from Russia by exceptional circumstances, and the national movement did not take deep root there. Whatever there was of such a movement the Germans killed. This is a fact, but an exceptional fact. Even as regards the language it is not clear whether the Ukrainian language today is the language of the vast majority or not. The mass of working people of the other nations greatly distrusted the Great Russians whom they regarded as a kulak and oppressor nation. That is a fact. A Finnish representative told me that among the Finnish bourgeoisie, who hated the Great Russians, voices are to be heard saying: "The Germans proved to be more savage brutes, the Entente proved to be more savage, we had better have the Bolsheviks." This is the tremendous victory we have gained over the Finnish bourgeoisie in the national question. This does not in the least prevent us from fighting it as our class enemy and from choosing the proper methods for the purpose. The Soviet Republic, which has been established in the country where tsarism formerly oppressed Finland, must declare that it respects the right of nations to independence. We concluded a treaty<sup>28</sup> with the short-lived Red Finnish Government and agreed to certain territorial concessions, to which I heard quite a number of utterly chauvinistic objections, such as: "There are excellent fisheries there, and you have surrendered them." These are the kind of objections which induce me to say, "Scratch some Communists and you will find Great-Russian chauvinists."

I think that the case of Finland, as well as of the Bashkirs, shows that in dealing with the national question one cannot argue that economic unity should be effected under all circumstances. Of course, it is necessary! But we must endeavour to secure it by propaganda, by agitation, by a voluntary alliance. The Bashkirs distrust the Great Russians because the Great Russians are more cultured and have utilised their culture to rob the Bashkirs. That is why the term

Great Russian is synonymous with the terms "oppressor", "rogue" to Bashkirs in those remote places. This must be taken into account, it must be combated, but it will be a lengthy process. It cannot be eliminated by a decree. We must be very cautious in this matter. Exceptional caution must be displayed by a nation like the Great Russians, who earned the bitter hatred of all the other nations; we have only just learned how to remedy the situation, and then, not entirely. For instance, at the Commissariat of Education, or connected with it, there are Communists, who say that our schools are uniform schools, and therefore don't dare to teach in any language but Russian! In my opinion, such a Communist is a Great-Russian chauvinist. Many of us harbour such sentiments and they must be combated.

That is why we must tell the other nations that we are out-and-out internationalists and are striving for the voluntary alliance of the workers and peasants of all nations. This does not preclude wars in the least. War is another question, and arises out of the very nature of imperialism. If we are fighting Wilson, and Wilson uses a small nation as his tool, we say that we shall oppose that tool. We have never said anything different. We have never said that a socialist republic can exist without military forces. War may be necessary under certain circumstances. But at present, the essence of the question of the self-determination of nations is that different nations are advancing in the same historical direction, but by very different zigzags and bypaths, and that the more cultured nations are obviously proceeding in a way that differs from that of the less cultured nations. Finland advanced in a different way. Germany is advancing in a different way. Comrade Pyatakov is a thousand times right when he says that we need unity. But we must strive for it by means of propaganda, by Party influence, by forming united trade unions. But here, too, we must not act in a stereotyped way. If we do away with this point, or formulate it differently, we shall be deleting the national question from the programme. This might be done if there were people with no specific national features. But there are no such people, and we cannot build socialist society in any other way.

I think, comrades, that the programme proposed here should be accepted as a basis and then referred back to the

commission, which should be enlarged by the inclusion of representatives of the opposition, or rather, of comrades who have made practical proposals, and that the commission should put forward (1) the amendments to the draft that have been enumerated, and (2) the theoretical objections on which no agreement can be reached. I think this will be the most practical way of dealing with the matter, and one that will most speedily lead to a correct decision. (*Applause.*)

## Report on Work in the Countryside\*

(*Prolonged applause.*) Comrades, I must apologise for having been unable to attend all the meetings of the committee elected by the Congress to consider the question of work in the countryside.<sup>29</sup> My report will therefore be supplemented by the speeches of comrades who have taken part in the work of the committee from the very beginning. The committee finally drew up theses which were turned over to a commission and which will be reported on to you. I should like to dwell on the general significance of the question as it confronts us following the work of the committee and as, in my opinion, it now confronts the whole Party.

Comrades, it is quite natural that as the proletarian revolution develops we have to put in the forefront first one then another of the most complex and important problems of social life. It is perfectly natural that in a revolution which affects, and is bound to affect, the deepest foundations of life and the broadest mass of the population, not a single party, not a single government, no matter how close it may be to the people, can possibly embrace all aspects of life *at once*. And if we now have to deal with the question of work in the countryside, and in connection with this question to give prominence to the position of the middle peasants, there is nothing strange or abnormal in this from the standpoint of the development of the proletarian revolution in general. It is natural that the proletarian revolution had to begin with the fundamental relation between two hostile classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The principal task was to transfer power to the working class, to secure its

\* This report was delivered on March 23, 1919.—*Ed.*

dictatorship, to overthrow the bourgeoisie and to deprive them of the economic sources of their power which would undoubtedly be a hindrance to all socialist construction in general. Since we are acquainted with Marxism, none of us have ever for a moment doubted the truth of the thesis that the very economic structure of capitalist society is such that the deciding factor in that society must be either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. We now see many former Marxists—from the Menshevik camp, for example—who assert that in a period of decisive struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie *democracy in general* can prevail. This is what is said by the Mensheviks, who have come to a complete agreement with the Socialist-Revolutionaries. As though it were not the bourgeoisie themselves who create or abolish democracy as they find most convenient for themselves! And since that is so, there can be no question of democracy in general at a time of acute struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It is astonishing how rapidly these Marxists or pseudo-Marxists—our Mensheviks, for example—expose themselves, and how rapidly their true nature, the nature of petty-bourgeois democrats, comes to the surface.

All his life Marx fought most of all the illusions of petty-bourgeois democracy and bourgeois democracy. Marx scoffed most of all at empty talk of freedom and equality, when it serves as a screen for the freedom of the workers to starve to death, or the equality between the one who sells his labour-power and the bourgeois who allegedly freely purchases that labour in the open market as if from an equal, and so forth. Marx explains this in all his economic works. It may be said that the whole of Marx's *Capital* is devoted to explaining the truth that *the basic forces of capitalist society are, and must be, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat*—bourgeoisie, as the builder of this capitalist society, as its leader, as its motive force, and the proletariat, as its grave-digger and as the only force capable of replacing it. You can hardly find a single chapter in any of Marx's works that is not devoted to this. You might say that all over the world the socialists of the Second International have vowed and sworn to the workers time and again that they understand this truth. But when matters reached the stage of the real and, moreover, decisive struggle for power between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie we find that our

Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, as well as the leaders of the old socialist parties all over the world, forgot this truth and began to repeat in purely parrot fashion the philistine phrases about democracy in general.

Attempts are sometimes made to lend these words what is considered to be greater force by speaking of the "dictatorship of democracy". That is sheer nonsense. We know perfectly well from history that the dictatorship of the democratic bourgeoisie meant nothing but the suppression of the insurgent workers. That has been the case ever since 1848—at any rate, beginning no later, and isolated examples may be found even earlier. History shows that it is precisely in a bourgeois democracy that a most acute struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie develops extensively and freely. We have had occasion to convince ourselves of this truth in practice. And the measures taken by the Soviet Government since October 1917 have been distinguished by their firmness on all fundamental questions precisely because we have never departed from this truth and have never forgotten it. The issue of the struggle for supremacy waged against the bourgeoisie can be settled only by the dictatorship of one class—the proletariat. Only the dictatorship of the proletariat can defeat the bourgeoisie. Only the proletariat can overthrow the bourgeoisie. And only the proletariat can secure the following of the people in the struggle against the bourgeoisie.

However, it by no means follows from this—and it would be a profound mistake to think it does—that in further building communism, when the bourgeoisie have been overthrown and political power is already in the hands of the proletariat, we can continue to carry on without the participation of the middle, intermediary elements.

It is natural that at the beginning of the revolution—the proletarian revolution—the whole attention of its active participants should be concentrated on the main and fundamental issue, the supremacy of the proletariat and the securing of that supremacy by a victory over the bourgeoisie—making it certain that the bourgeoisie cannot regain power. We are well aware that the bourgeoisie still enjoy the advantages derived from the wealth they possess in other countries or the monetary wealth they possess, sometimes even in our own country. We are well aware that there are social

elements who are more experienced than proletarians and who aid the bourgeoisie. We are well aware that the bourgeoisie have not abandoned the idea of returning to power and have not ceased attempting to restore their supremacy.

But that is by no means all. The bourgeoisie, who put forward most insistently the principle "my country is wherever it is good for me", and who, as far as money is concerned, have always been international—*the bourgeoisie internationally are still stronger than we are*. Their supremacy is being rapidly undermined, they are being confronted with such facts as the Hungarian revolution—about which we were happy to inform you yesterday and are today receiving confirming reports—and they are beginning to understand that their supremacy is shaky. They no longer enjoy freedom of action. But now, if you take into account the material means on the world scale, we cannot help admitting that in the material respect the bourgeoisie are at present still stronger than we are.

That is why nine-tenths of our attention and our practical activities were devoted, and had to be devoted, to this fundamental question—the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the establishment of the power of the proletariat and the elimination of every possibility of the return of the bourgeoisie to power. That is perfectly natural, legitimate, and unavoidable, and in this field very much has been accomplished.

Now, however, we must decide the question of other sections of the population. We must—and this was our unanimous conclusion in the agrarian committee, and on this, we are convinced, all Party workers will agree, because we merely summed up the results of their observations—we must now decide *the question of the middle peasants* in its totality.

Of course, there are people who, instead of studying the course taken by our revolution, instead of giving thought to the tasks now confronting us, instead of all this, make every step of the Soviet government a butt for the derision and criticism, of the type we hear from those gentlemen, the Mensheviks and the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries. These people have still not understood that they must make a choice between us and the bourgeois dictatorship. We have displayed great patience, even indulgence, towards these



people. We shall allow them to enjoy our indulgence once more. But in the very near future we shall set a limit to our patience and indulgence, and if they do not make their choice, we shall tell them in all seriousness to go to Kolchak. (*Applause.*) We do not expect particularly brilliant intellectual ability from such people. (*Laughter.*) But it might have been expected that after experiencing the bestialities of Kolchak they ought to understand that we are entitled to demand that they should choose between us and Kolchak. If during the first few months that followed the October Revolution there were many naive people who were stupid enough to believe that the dictatorship of the proletariat was something transient and fortuitous, today even the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries ought to understand that there is something logically necessary in the struggle that is being waged because of the onslaught of the whole international bourgeoisie.

Actually only two forces have been created—the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Whoever has not learned this from Marx, whoever has not learned this from the works of all the great socialists, has never been a socialist, has never understood anything about socialism, and has only called himself a socialist. We are allowing these people a brief period for reflection and demand that they make their decision. I have mentioned them because they are now saying or will say: “The Bolsheviks have raised the question of the middle peasants; they want to make advances to them.” I am very well aware that considerable space is given in the Menshevik press to arguments of this kind, and even far worse. We ignore such arguments, we never attach importance to the jabber of our adversaries. People who are still capable of running to and fro between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat may say what they please. We are following our own road.

Our road is determined above all by considerations of class forces. A struggle is developing in capitalist society between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. As long as that struggle has not ended we shall give our keenest attention to fighting it out to the end. It has not yet been brought to the end, although in that struggle much has already been accomplished. The hands of the international bourgeoisie are no longer free; the best proof of this is that the Hun-

garian proletarian revolution has taken place. It is therefore clear that our rural organisational work has already gone beyond the limits to which it was confined when everything was subordinated to the fundamental demand of the struggle for power.

This development passed through two main phases. In October 1917 we seized power *together with the peasants as a whole*. This was a bourgeois revolution, inasmuch as the class struggle in the rural districts had not yet developed. As I have said, the real proletarian revolution in the rural districts began only in the summer of 1918. Had we not succeeded in stirring up this revolution our work would have been incomplete. The first stage was the seizure of power in the cities and the establishment of the Soviet form of government. The second stage was one which is fundamental for all socialists and without which socialists are not socialists, namely, to single out the proletarian and semi-proletarian elements in the rural districts and to ally them to the urban proletariat in order to wage the struggle against the bourgeoisie in the countryside. This stage is also in the main completed. The organisations we originally created for this purpose, the Poor Peasants' Committees, had become so consolidated that we found it possible to replace them by properly elected Soviets, i.e., to reorganise the village Soviets so as to make them the organs of class rule, the organs of proletarian power in the rural districts. Such measures as the law on socialist land settlement and the measures for the transition to socialist farming, which was passed not very long ago by the Central Executive Committee and with which everybody is, of course, familiar, sum up our experience from the point of view of our proletarian revolution.

The main thing, the prime and basic task of the proletarian revolution, we have already accomplished. And precisely because we have accomplished it, a more complicated problem has come to the fore—*our attitude towards the middle peasants*. And whoever thinks that the prominence being given this problem is in any way symptomatic of a weakening of the character of our government, of a weakening of the dictatorship of the proletariat, that it is symptomatic of a change, however partial, however minute, in our basic policy, completely fails to understand the aims

of the proletariat and the aims of the communist revolution. I am convinced that there are no such people in our Party. I only wanted to warn the comrades against people not belonging to the workers' party who will talk in this way, not because it follows from any system of ideas, but because they merely want to spoil things for us and to help the white-guards—or, to put it more simply, to incite against us the middle peasant, who is always vacillating, who cannot help vacillating, and who will continue to vacillate for a fairly long time to come. In order to incite the middle peasant against us they will say, "See, they are making advances to you! That means they have taken your revolts into account, they are beginning to wobble", and so on and so forth. All our comrades must be armed against agitation of this kind. And I am certain that they will be armed—provided we succeed now in having this question treated from the standpoint of the class struggle.

It is perfectly obvious that this fundamental problem—*how precisely to define the attitude of the proletariat towards the middle peasants*—is a more complex but no less urgent problem. Comrades, from the theoretical point of view, which has been mastered by the vast majority of the workers, this question presents no difficulty to Marxists. I will remind you, for instance, that in his book on the agrarian question, written at a time when he was still correctly expounding the teachings of Marx and was regarded as an indisputed authority in this field, Kautsky states in connection with the transition from capitalism to socialism that the task of a socialist party is to *neutralise the peasants*, i.e., to see to it that in the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie the peasant should remain neutral and should not be able to give active assistance to the bourgeoisie against us.

Throughout the extremely long period of the rule of the bourgeoisie, the peasants sided with the bourgeoisie and supported their power. This will be understood if you consider the economic strength of the bourgeoisie and the political instruments of their rule. We cannot count on the middle peasant coming over to our side immediately. But if we pursue a correct policy, after a time these vacillations will cease and the peasant will be able to come over to our side.

It was Engels—who together with Marx laid the foundations of scientific Marxism, that is, the teachings by which

our Party has always guided itself, and particularly in time of revolution—it was Engels who established the division of the peasants into small peasants, middle peasants, and big peasants, and this division holds good for most European countries even today. Engels said, "Perhaps it will not everywhere be necessary to suppress even the big peasant by force." And that we might ever use force in respect of the middle peasant (the small peasant is our friend) is a thought that has never occurred to any sensible socialist. That is what Engels said in 1894, a year before his death, when the agrarian question came to the fore.<sup>30</sup> This point of view expresses a truth which is sometimes forgotten, but with which we are all in theory agreed. In relation to the landowners and the capitalists our aim is complete expropriation. *But we shall not tolerate any use of force in respect of the middle peasants.* Even in respect of the rich peasants we do not say as resolutely as we do of the bourgeoisie—absolute expropriation of the rich peasants and the kulaks. This distinction is made in our programme. We say that the resistance and the counter-revolutionary efforts of the rich peasants must be suppressed. That is not complete expropriation.

The basic difference in our attitude towards the bourgeoisie and the middle peasant—complete expropriation of the bourgeoisie and an alliance with the middle peasant who does not exploit others—this basic line is accepted by everybody in theory. But this line is not consistently followed in practice; the people in the localities have not yet learned to follow it. When, after having overthrown the bourgeoisie and consolidated its own power, the proletariat started from various angles to create a new society, the question of the middle peasant came to the fore. Not a single socialist in the world denied that the building of communism would take different courses in countries where large-scale farming prevails and in countries where small-scale farming prevails. That is an elementary truth, an ABC. And from this truth it follows that as we approach the problems of communist construction our principal attention must to a certain extent be concentrated precisely on the middle peasant.

Much will depend on how we define our attitude towards the middle peasant. Theoretically, that question has been solved; but we know perfectly well from our own experience

that there is a difference between solving a problem theoretically and putting the solution into practice. We are now directly confronted with that difference, which was so characteristic of the great French Revolution, when the French Convention launched into sweeping measures but did not possess the necessary support to put them into effect, and did not even know on what class to rely for the implementation of any particular measure.

Our position is an infinitely more fortunate one. Thanks to a whole century of development, we know on which class we are relying. But we also know that the practical experience of that class is extremely inadequate. The fundamental aim was clear to the working class and the workers' party—to overthrow the power of the bourgeoisie and to transfer power to the workers. But *how* was that to be done? Everyone remembers with what difficulty and at the cost of how many mistakes we passed from workers' control to workers' management of industry. And yet that was work within our own class, among the proletarians, with whom we had always had to deal. But now we are called upon to define our attitude towards a new class, a class the urban worker does not know. We have to determine our attitude towards a class which has no definite and stable position. The proletariat in the mass is in favour of socialism, the bourgeoisie in the mass are opposed to socialism. It is easy to determine the relations between these two classes. But when we come up against people like the middle peasants we find that *they are a class that vacillates*. The middle peasant is partly a property-owner and partly a working man. He does not exploit other working people. For decades the middle peasant defended his position with the greatest difficulty, he suffered the exploitation of the landowners and the capitalists, he bore everything. Yet he is a property-owner. Our attitude towards this vacillating class therefore presents enormous difficulties. In the light of more than a year's experience, in the light of more than six months' proletarian work in the rural districts, and in the light of the class differentiation in the rural districts that has already taken place, we must most of all beware here lest we are too hasty, lest we are inadequately theoretical, lest we regard what is in process of being accomplished, but has not yet been realised, as having been accomplished. In

the resolution which is being proposed to you by the commission elected by the committee, and which will be read to you by a subsequent speaker, you will find sufficient warning against this.

From the economic point of view, it is obvious that we must help the middle peasant. Theoretically, there is no doubt of this. But because of our habits, our level of culture, the inadequacy of the cultural and technical forces we are in a position to place at the disposal of the rural districts, and because of the helpless manner in which we often approach the rural districts, comrades frequently resort to coercion and thus spoil everything. Only yesterday a comrade gave me a pamphlet entitled *Instructions and Regulations on Party Work in Nizhni-Novgorod Gubernia*, issued by the Nizhni-Novgorod Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), and in this pamphlet, for example, I find this on p. 41. "The whole burden of the emergency tax decree must be placed on the shoulders of the village kulaks and profiteers and *the middle element of the peasants generally*." Well, well! These people have indeed "understood". This is either a printer's error—and it is impermissible that such printer's errors should be made—or a piece of rushed, hasty work, which shows how dangerous all haste is in this matter. Or—and this is the worst surmise of all, one I would not like to make with regard to the Nizhni-Novgorod comrades—they have simply failed to understand. It may very well be that it is an oversight.<sup>31</sup>

We have, in practice, cases like the one related by a comrade in the commission. He was surrounded by peasants, and every one of them asked: "Tell me, am I a middle peasant or not? I have two horses and one cow. . . . I have two cows and one horse", etc. And this agitator, who tours the uyezds, is expected to possess an infallible thermometer with which to gauge every peasant and say whether he is a middle peasant or not. To do that you must know the whole history of the given peasant's farm, his relation to higher and lower groups—and we cannot know that accurately.

Considerable practical ability and knowledge of local conditions are required here, and we do not yet possess them. You need not be ashamed to confess it; it must be admitted frankly. We were never utopians and never imagined that we would build communist society with the im-

maculate hands of immaculate Communists, born and educated in an immaculately communist society. That is a fairy-tale. We have to build communism out of the debris of capitalism, and only the class which has been steeled in the struggle against capitalism can do that. The proletariat, as you are very well aware, is not free from the shortcomings and weaknesses of capitalist society. It is fighting for socialism, but at the same time it is fighting against its own shortcomings. The best and foremost section of the proletariat, which carried on a desperate struggle in the cities for decades, was in a position to acquire in the course of that struggle the culture of life in the capital and other cities, and to a certain extent did acquire it. You know that even in advanced countries the rural districts were condemned to ignorance. Of course, we shall raise the level of culture in the rural districts, but that will be the work of many, many years, that is what our comrades everywhere are forgetting and what is being strikingly brought home to us by every word uttered by people who come from the rural districts; not by the intellectuals who work here, not by the officials—we have listened to them a lot—but by people who have in practice observed the work in the rural districts. It was these opinions that we found particularly valuable in the agrarian committee. These opinions will be particularly valuable now—I am convinced of that—for the whole Party Congress, for they come not from books, and not from decrees, but from experience.

All this obliges us to work for the purpose of introducing the greatest possible clarity into our attitude towards the middle peasant. This is very difficult, because *such clarity does not exist in reality*. Not only is this problem unsolved, it is *insoluble*, if you want to solve it *immediately and all at once*. There are people who say that there was no need to write so many decrees. They blame the Soviet Government for setting about writing decrees without knowing how they were to be put into effect. These people, as a matter of fact, do not realise that they are sinking to the white-guard position. If we had expected that life in the rural districts could be completely changed by writing a hundred decrees, we would have been absolute idiots. But if we had refrained from indicating in decrees the road that must be followed, we would have been traitors to socialism. These

decrees, while in practice they could not be carried into effect fully and immediately, played an important part as propaganda. While formerly we carried on our propaganda by means of general truths, *we are now carrying on our propaganda by our work*. That is also preaching, but it is preaching by action—only not action in the sense of the isolated sallies of some upstarts, at which we scoffed so much in the era of the anarchists and the socialism of the old type. Our decree is a call, but not the old call “Workers, arise and overthrow the bourgeoisie!” No, it is a call to the people, it calls them to practical work. *Decrees are instructions which call for practical work on a mass scale*. That is what is important. Let us assume that decrees do contain much that is useless, much that in practice cannot be put into effect; but they contain material for practical action, and the purpose of a decree is to teach practical steps to the hundreds, thousands, and millions of people who heed the voice of the Soviet government. This is a trial in practical action in the sphere of socialist construction in the rural districts. If we treat matters in this way we shall acquire a good deal from the sum total of our laws, decrees, and ordinances. We shall not regard them as absolute injunctions which must be put into effect instantly and at all costs.

We must avoid everything that in practice may tend to encourage individual abuses. In places careerists and adventurers have attached themselves to us like leeches, people who call themselves Communists and are deceiving us, and who have wormed their way into our ranks because the Communists are now in power, and because the more honest government employees refused to come and work with us on account of their retrograde ideas, while careerists have no ideas, and no honesty. These people, whose only aim is to make a career, resort in the localities to coercion, and imagine they are doing a good thing. But in fact the result of this at times is that the peasants say, “Long live Soviet power, but *down with the communia!*” (i.e., communism). This is not an invention; these facts are taken from real life, from the reports of comrades in the localities. We must not forget what enormous damage is always caused by lack of moderation, by all rashness, and haste.

We had to hurry and, by taking a desperate leap, to

get out of the imperialist war at any cost, for it had brought us to the verge of collapse. We had to make most desperate efforts to crush the bourgeoisie and the forces that were threatening to crush us. All this was necessary, without this we could not have triumphed. But if we were to act in the same way towards the middle peasant it would be such idiocy, such stupidity, it would be so ruinous to our cause, that only provocateurs could deliberately act in such a way. The aim here must be an entirely different one. Here our aim is not to smash the resistance of obvious exploiters, to defeat and overthrow them—which was the aim we previously set ourselves. No, now that this main purpose has been accomplished, more complicated problems arise. You cannot create anything here by coercion. *Coercion applied to the middle peasants would cause untold harm.* This section is a numerous one, it consists of millions of individuals. Even in Europe, where it nowhere reaches such numbers, where technology and culture, urban life and railways are tremendously developed, and where it would be easiest of all to think of such a thing, nobody, not even the most revolutionary of socialists, has ever proposed adopting measures of coercion towards the middle peasant.

When we were taking power we relied on the support of the peasants as a whole. At that time the aim of all the peasants was the same—to fight the landowners. But their prejudice against large-scale farming has remained to this day. The peasant thinks that if there is a big farm, that means he will again be a farm-hand. That, of course, is a mistake. But the peasant's idea of large-scale farming is associated with a feeling of hatred and the memory of how landowners used to oppress the people. That feeling still remains, it has not yet died.

We must particularly stress the truth that here by the very nature of the case coercive methods can accomplish nothing. The economic task here is an entirely different one; there is no upper layer that can be cut off, leaving the foundation and the building intact. That upper layer which in the cities was represented by the capitalists does not exist in the villages. *Here coercion would ruin the whole cause.* Prolonged educational work is required. We have to give the peasant, who not only in our country but all over the world is a practical man and a realist, concrete

examples to prove that the “communia” is the best possible thing. Of course, nothing will come of it if hasty individuals flit down to a village from a city to chatter and stir up a number of intellectual-like and at times unintellectual-like squabbles, and then quarrel with everyone and go their way. That sometimes happens. Instead of evoking respect, they evoke ridicule, and deservedly so.

On this question we must say that we do encourage communes, but they must be so organised *as to gain the confidence of the peasants.* And until then we are pupils of the peasants and not their teachers. Nothing is more stupid than people who know nothing about farming and its specific features, rushing to the village only because they have heard of the advantages of socialised farming, are tired of urban life and desire to work in rural districts—it is most stupid for such people to regard themselves as teachers of the peasants in every respect. *Nothing is more stupid than the very idea of applying coercion in economic relations with the middle peasant.*

The aim is not to expropriate the middle peasant but to bear in mind the specific conditions in which the peasant lives, to learn from him methods of transition to a better system, *and not to dare to give orders!* That is the rule we have set ourselves. (*General applause.*) That is the rule we have endeavoured to set forth in our draft resolution, for in that respect, comrades, we have indeed sinned a great deal. We are by no means ashamed to confess it. We were inexperienced. Our very struggle against the exploiters was taken from experience. If we have sometimes been condemned on account of it, we can say, “Dear capitalist gentlemen, you have only yourselves to blame. If you had not offered such savage, senseless, insolent, and desperate resistance, if you had not joined in an alliance with the world bourgeoisie, the revolution would have assumed more peaceful forms.” Now that we have repulsed the savage onslaught on all sides we can change to other methods, because we are acting not as a narrow circle, but as a party which is leading the millions. The millions cannot immediately understand a change of course, and so it frequently happens that blows aimed at the kulaks fall on the middle peasants. That is not surprising. It must only be understood that this is due to historical conditions which have now been

outlived and that the new conditions and the new tasks in relation to this class demand a new psychology.

Our decrees on peasant farming are in the main correct. We have no grounds for renouncing a single one of them, or for regretting a single one of them. But if the decrees are right, *it is wrong to impose them on the peasants by force*. That is not contained in a single decree. They are right inasmuch as they indicate the roads to follow, inasmuch as they call to practical measures. When we say, "Encourage associations", we are giving instructions which must be tested many times before the final *form* in which to put them into effect is found. When it is stated that we must strive to gain the peasants' voluntary consent, it means that they must be persuaded, and persuaded by practical deeds. They will not allow themselves to be convinced by mere words, and they are perfectly right in that. It would be a bad thing if they allowed themselves to be convinced merely by reading decrees and agitational leaflets. If it were possible to reshape economic life in this way, such reshaping would not be worth a brass farthing. It must first be proved that such association is better, people must be united in such a way that they become actually united and are not at odds with each other—it must be proved that association is advantageous. That is the way the peasant puts the question and that is the way our decrees put it. If we have not been able to achieve that so far, there is nothing to be ashamed of and we must admit it frankly.

We have so far accomplished only the fundamental task of every socialist revolution—that of defeating the bourgeoisie. That in the main has been accomplished, although an extremely difficult half-year is beginning in which the imperialists of the world are making a last attempt to crush us. We can now say without in the least exaggerating that *they themselves understand that after this half-year their cause will be absolutely hopeless*. Either they take advantage now of our state of exhaustion and defeat us, an isolated country, or we emerge victorious not merely in regard to our country alone. In this half-year, in which the food crisis has been aggravated by a transport crisis, and in which the imperialist powers are endeavouring to attack us on several fronts, our situation is extremely difficult. But *this is the last difficult half-year*. We must continue to mobilise all our

forces in the struggle against the external enemy who is attacking us.

But when we speak of the aims of our work in the rural districts, in spite of all the difficulties, and in spite of the fact that our experience has been wholly concerned with the immediate task of crushing the exploiters, we must remember, and never forget, that our aims in the rural districts, in relation to the middle peasant, are entirely different.

All the class-conscious workers—from Petrograd, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, or Moscow—who have been to the rural districts related examples of how a number of misunderstandings which appeared to be irremovable, and a number of conflicts which appeared to be very serious, were removed or mitigated when intelligent working men came forward and spoke, not in the bookish language, but in a language understood by the peasants, when they spoke not as commanders who take the liberty of giving orders without knowing anything of rural life, but as comrades, explaining the situation and appealing to their sentiments as working people against the exploiters. And by such comradely explanation they accomplished what could not be accomplished by hundreds of others who conducted themselves like commanders and superiors.

That is the spirit that permeates the resolution we are now submitting to you.

I have endeavoured in my brief report to dwell on the underlying principles, on the general political significance of this resolution. I have endeavoured to show—and I should like to think that I have succeeded—that from the point of view of the interests of the revolution as a whole we are making no change of policy, we are not changing the line. The whiteguards and their henchmen are shouting, or will shout, that we are. Let them shout. We do not care. We are pursuing our aims in a most consistent manner. We must transfer our attention from the aim of suppressing the bourgeoisie to the aim of arranging the life of the middle peasant. We must live in peace with him. In a communist society the middle peasants will be on our side only when we alleviate and improve their economic conditions. If tomorrow we could supply one hundred thousand first-class tractors, provide them with fuel, provide them with drivers—you know very well that this at present is sheer fantasy—the

middle peasant would say, "I am for the communia" (i.e., for communism). But in order to do that we must first defeat the international bourgeoisie, we must compel them to give us these tractors, or so develop our productive forces as to be able to provide them ourselves. That is the only correct way to pose this question.

The peasant needs the industry of the towns; he cannot live without it, and it is in our hands. If we set about the task properly, the peasant will be grateful to us for bringing him these products, these implements and this culture from the towns. They will be brought to him not by exploiters, not by landowners, but by his fellow-workers, whom he values very highly, but values in a practical manner, for the actual help they give, at the same time rejecting—and quite rightly rejecting—all domineering and "orders" from above.

First help, and then endeavour to win confidence. If you set about this task correctly, if every step taken by every one of our groups in the uyezds, the volosts, the food procurement groups, and in every other organisation is made properly, if every step of ours is carefully checked from this point of view, we shall gain the confidence of the peasant, and only then shall we be able to proceed farther. What we must now do is to help him and advise him. This will not be the orders of a commander, but the advice of a comrade. The peasant will then be entirely on our side.

This, comrades, is what is contained in our resolution, and this, in my opinion, must become the decision of the Congress. If we adopt this, if it serves to determine the work of all our Party organisations, we shall cope with the second great task before us.

We have learned how to overthrow the bourgeoisie, how to suppress them, and we are proud of the fact. But we have not yet learned how to regulate our relations with the millions of middle peasants, how to win their confidence, and we must frankly admit it. But we have understood the task, we have set it, and we say in all confidence, with full knowledge and determination, that we shall cope with this task—and then socialism will be absolutely invincible. (*Prolonged applause.*)

### Speech Closing the Congress\*

Comrades, all the items on our agenda have been dealt with. Permit me to say a few words in closing the Congress.

Comrades, it is not only the loss of one of our best organisers and practical leaders, Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov, that has made the time at which we assembled here a very difficult one. It is a particularly difficult time because international imperialism is making a last and exceptionally strenuous effort to crush the Soviet Republic—of this there is now no doubt. We do not doubt that the fierce attacks launched in the West and the East, accompanied as they are by a number of whiteguard revolts and attempts to dismantle the railway line in several places, are deliberate measures apparently decided on in Paris by the Entente imperialists. We all know, comrades, how difficult it was for Russia, after four years of imperialist war, to take up arms in defence of the Soviet Republic against the imperialist plunderers. We all know what a burden this war is, how it is exhausting us. But we also know that this war is being fought with redoubled vigour and dauntless courage only because for the first time in world history, an army, an armed force, has been created, which knows what it is fighting for; and because, for the first time in world history, workers and peasants are making incredible sacrifices in the knowledge that they are defending the Soviet Socialist Republic, the rule of the working people over the capitalists; they know that they are defending the cause of the world proletarian socialist revolution.

Amidst these difficult conditions we accomplished a great deal in a very short time. We managed to endorse our programme unanimously, as was the case with every vital decision of the Congress. We are convinced that in spite of its

\* This speech was delivered on March 23, 1919.—*Ed.*

numerous literary and other shortcomings this programme has already gone into the history of the Third International as the programme which sums up the results of the new stage in the world movement for the emancipation of the proletariat. We are convinced that in many countries, where we have far more allies and friends than we imagine, the mere translation of our programme will provide the most effective answer to the question as to what has been done by the Russian Communist Party, which is one of the units of the international proletariat. Our programme will serve as extremely effective material for propaganda and agitation; it is a document which will lead the workers to say, "Here are our comrades, our brothers; here our common cause is becoming reality."

Comrades, we succeeded in passing a number of other important decisions at this Congress. We approved of the formation of the Third, Communist International, which was founded here in Moscow. We adopted a unanimous decision on the military question. Vast though the differences of opinion may have appeared at first, diverse as may have been the views of the many comrades who very frankly criticised the shortcomings of our military policy, we on the commission found no difficulty in arriving at an absolutely unanimous decision, and we shall leave this Congress convinced that our chief defender, the Red Army, for the sake of which the whole country is making such incalculable sacrifices, will find in every delegate to the Congress, in every member of the Party, a warm, unselfish and devoted assistant, leader, friend and collaborator.

Comrades, we were able to solve the organisational problems confronting us with such ease because the solutions had been indicated by the entire history of the relations between the Party and the Soviets. All we were called upon to do was sum up. On the subject of our work in the rural districts, the Congress, in a unanimous decision speedily arrived at, laid down our policy on a question that is particularly important and particularly difficult, and one that in other countries is even regarded as insoluble—the attitude of the proletariat which has overthrown the bourgeoisie towards the vast masses of middle peasants. We are all convinced that this Congress decision will help to consolidate our power. We are convinced that in the trying period through

which we are now passing, when the imperialists are making their final effort to overthrow the Soviet government by force, and when an acute food shortage and the chaotic state of the transport have once again rendered the position of hundreds, thousands and millions of people desperate, the resolution we adopted and the spirit which animated the delegates to this Congress will help us to bear these trials and to live through this difficult half-year.

We are convinced that *this will be the last difficult half-year*. This conviction of ours is greatly strengthened by the news we announced to the Congress the other day—the news of the success of the proletarian revolution in Hungary. Up to now Soviet power has been victorious in only one country, among the peoples which once constituted the former Russian Empire; and short-sighted people, who found it exceptionally difficult to abandon routine and old habits of thought (even though they may have belonged to the socialist camp), imagined that this surprising swing towards proletarian Soviet democracy was due entirely to the peculiar conditions prevailing in Russia; they thought that perhaps the specific features of this democracy reflected, as in a distorting mirror, the peculiar features of former, tsarist Russia. If there was ever any foundation for such an opinion, there is certainly none whatever now. Comrades, the news received today gives us a picture of the Hungarian revolution. We learn from today's news that the Allied powers have presented a brutal ultimatum to Hungary demanding free passage for their troops. The bourgeois government, seeing that the Allied powers wanted to move their troops through Hungary, seeing that Hungary would be subjected to the frightful sufferings of a new war—this government of bourgeois compromisers voluntarily resigned, voluntarily opened negotiations with the Communists, our Hungarian comrades, who were in prison, and voluntarily admitted that there was no way out of the situation except by transferring power to the working people. (*Applause.*)

It was said that we were usurpers. At the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918, the only words with which the bourgeoisie and many of their followers described our revolution were "violence" and "usurpation". Even now we hear statements to the effect that the Bolshevik government is holding on by force, although we have repeatedly demonstrated that



this is absurd. But if such absurdities could be uttered in the past, they have now been silenced by what has occurred in Hungary. Even the bourgeoisie has realised that there can be no government authority except that of the Soviets. The bourgeoisie of a more cultured country sees more clearly than our bourgeoisie did on the eve of October 25 that the country is perishing, that trials of increasing severity are being imposed on the people, and that, therefore, political power must be transferred to the Soviets, that the workers and peasants of Hungary, the new, Soviet, proletarian democracy must save her.

Comrades, the difficulties which face the Hungarian revolution are immense. Hungary is a small country compared with Russia and can be stifled by the imperialists much more easily. However great the difficulties which undoubtedly still face Hungary, we have achieved a *moral victory* in addition to a victory for Soviet power. A most radical, democratic and compromising bourgeoisie realised that at a moment of extreme crisis, when a new war is menacing a country already exhausted by war, a Soviet government is a historical necessity, that in such a country there can be no government but a Soviet government, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Comrades, behind us there is a long line of revolutionaries who sacrificed their lives for the emancipation of Russia. The lot of the majority of these revolutionaries was a hard one. They suffered the persecution of the tsarist government, but it was not their good fortune to see the triumph of the revolution. A better fortune has fallen to our lot. Not only have we seen the triumph of our revolution, not only have we seen it become consolidated amidst unprecedented difficulties, create new forms of government and win the sympathy of the whole world, but we are also seeing the seed sown by the Russian revolution springing up in Europe. This imbues us with the absolute and unshakable conviction that no matter how difficult the trials that may still befall us, and no matter how great the misfortunes that may be brought upon us by that dying beast, international imperialism, that beast will perish, and socialism will triumph throughout the world. (*Prolonged applause.*)

I declare the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party closed.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *The Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.)* was held in Moscow from March 18 to 23, 1919. The following questions were on the agenda: 1) report of the Central Committee; 2) the programme of the R.C.P.(B.); 3) founding the Communist International; 4) the military situation and the military policy; 5) work in the countryside; 6) questions of organisation, and 7) the elections of the Central Committee.

Lenin made the opening and closing speeches, the Central Committee report, the reports on the Party programme and work in the countryside, and a speech on the war question.

The Congress centred its attention on the discussion and adoption of the new Party programme drafted under the guidance and with the direct participation of Lenin.

After Lenin's speech closing the debate on the Party programme, the Congress decided to "adopt the draft Party programme as a whole" and submit it to the programme commission for final editing. The final text of the programme was endorsed on March 22.

One of the main questions discussed at the Congress was that of the attitude to be adopted towards the middle peasants.

In all his speeches, and particularly in his report on work in the countryside, Lenin substantiated the new Party policy towards the middle peasants, which meant a transition from the policy of neutralising the middle peasants to establishing a stable alliance between the working class and the middle peasants, with reliance placed on the poor peasants in the struggle against the kulaks, and with the proletariat retaining the leading role in this alliance. Lenin had advanced this slogan as far back as at the end of November 1918. The Congress adopted the "Resolution on the Attitude to the Middle Peasants" drafted by Lenin. Lenin's policy helped to strengthen the military and political alliance between the working class and the peasants and played a decisive role in the victory over the interventionists and whiteguards.

Other major issues discussed at the Congress concerned the military situation, the Party policy on military questions and the strengthening of the Red Army. The main propositions of the Party military policy were elaborated by Lenin. The Central Committee theses were opposed by the so-called "Military Opposition" which defended the survivals of partisan methods, denied the necessity of employing experts from the old Russian army and was against the

introduction of iron discipline in the Army. In his speech in defence of the C.C. theses delivered at the closed plenary session of the Congress on March 21, Lenin substantiated the necessity of creating a regular, strictly disciplined Army, of utilising the achievements of bourgeois military science and enlisting military experts whose activity would be controlled by commissars and Party cells. In their speeches the majority of the delegates condemned the "Military Opposition" and at the same time sharply criticised the mistakes and shortcomings in the work of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic and in particular the policy pursued by Trotsky who depreciated the role of Party cadres in the Army and bowed and scraped before the old military experts.

In the resolution on the question of organisation the Congress gave a rebuff to the opportunist group headed by Sapronov and Osinsky who denied the leading role of the Party in proletarian dictatorship.

The Congress rejected the federative principle of Party building and confirmed the need for a single centralised Communist Party with a single Central Committee.

The Congress elected the Central Committee with Lenin at the head. It hailed the founding of the Third, Communist International and declared its unqualified adherence to its platform. p. 5

<sup>2</sup> The *First Congress of the Communist International* was held in Moscow from March 2 to March 6, 1919. p. 7

<sup>3</sup> The *Brest Peace*—a peace treaty between Soviet Russia and the powers of the Quadruple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey) signed in Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918, and ratified by the Extraordinary Fourth All-Russia Congress of Soviets on March 15. The peace terms were extremely onerous for Soviet Russia: Poland, almost the whole of the Baltic region and part of Byelorussia were to be placed under the control of Germany and Austria-Hungary; the Ukraine was to be separated from Soviet Russia and become a state dependent on Germany; the cities of Kars, Batum and Ardahan were to become Turkey's possession. In August 1918 Germany imposed an additional treaty and financial agreement on Soviet Russia, in which it made new exorbitant demands.

The All-Russia Central Executive Committee annulled the Brest Peace Treaty on November 13, 1918, after the November revolution in Germany which overthrew the monarchy. p. 8

<sup>4</sup> The *conference on the Princes Islands* (the Sea of Marmora) was planned by Lloyd George and President Wilson, and was to be attended by representatives of all the governments that existed on the Russian territory allegedly to adopt measures to stop the Civil War. Although the Soviet Government was not invited, it agreed on February 4, 1919, to participate in the conference. In its radiotelegram, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the R.S.F.S.R. stated the concessions which the Soviet Government was prepared to make for the sake of peace. The Soviet Government declared its readiness "to begin negotiations immediately either on the Princes Islands or in any other place" and asked to be informed as soon as possible

where, when and in what way it could send its envoys. However, the Entente imperialists did not reply to the Soviet radiotelegram. Hoping to strangle the Soviet Republic by force of arms, Denikin, Kolchak and other counter-revolutionary governments refused to participate in the conference and it did not take place. p. 8

<sup>5</sup> On July 3-4 (16-17), 1917, there were mass spontaneous actions of workers, soldiers and sailors in Petrograd. A peaceful demonstration in protest against the Provisional Government's policy of continuing the imperialist war took place on July 4 (17) in which about 500,000 participated. The Provisional Government shot it down and then carried on a campaign of reprisals, striking the most powerful blow at the Bolshevik Party which was forced to go underground.

The *Kornilov revolt*—a counter-revolutionary revolt raised by General Kornilov on August 25, 1917. Striving to re-establish the monarchy overthrown in February Kornilov moved his troops against revolutionary Petrograd. The revolt was defeated by the workers and peasants led by the Bolsheviks. p. 9

<sup>6</sup> The *Entente*—a bloc of imperialist powers (Great Britain, France and Russia) formed in the early 20th century. It derived its name from "Entente cordiale", an Anglo-French agreement signed in 1904. During the First World War (1914-18) the Entente was joined by the U.S.A., Japan and other countries. After the Great October Socialist Revolution, the principal members of this bloc—Great Britain, France, the U.S.A. and Japan—were the instigators of and participants in the armed intervention against Soviet Russia. p. 11

<sup>7</sup> The *Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany*—a Centrist party formed in April 1917. The "Independents" advocated a "unity" with the social-chauvinists and were renouncing class struggle.

At the Halle Congress of the party in October 1920 a split took place, and in December 1920, a considerable number of its members joined the Communist Party of Germany. Right-wing elements formed a separate party which took the old name of Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany and lasted till 1922. p. 12

<sup>8</sup> The *Left Socialist-Revolutionaries*—members of a party of Left Socialist-Revolutionaries formally established at its First All-Russia Congress, November 19-28 (December 2-11), 1917. Prior to this, the Left S.R.s had made up the Left wing of the petty-bourgeois Socialist-Revolutionary Party, which took shape during the First World War.

After the October Socialist Revolution, striving to preserve their influence among the peasants, the Left S.R.s came into agreement with the Bolsheviks, and entered a number of collegiums of the People's Commissariats. Although they collaborated with the Bolsheviks the Left S.R.s differed with them on basic questions of socialist construction and opposed the dictatorship of the proletariat. In January and February 1918, the C.C. of the Left S.R.s came out against the conclusion of the Brest Peace Treaty and after its signing and ratification in March 1918 they resigned from the Council of People's

Commissars but stayed on in the collegiums of the People's Commissariats and in the local organs of power.

As the socialist revolution gained in scope in the countryside, anti-Soviet moods spread among the Left S.R.s. In July 1918 their C.C. organised the assassination of the German Ambassador Mirbach in Moscow, hoping in this way to provoke a war between Soviet Russia and Germany, and raised a revolt against the Soviet government. After the revolt was suppressed the Fifth All-Russia Congress of Soviets adopted a decision to expel the Left S.R.s, who shared the views of their leaders, from the Soviets.

The *Mensheviks*—an opportunist trend in Russian Social-Democracy formed at the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. in 1903. During the elections to the central Party bodies at the Congress, Lenin's followers received a majority of votes and were called the *Bolsheviks* (from the Russian word *bolshinstvo*—majority) while the opportunists remained in the minority and came to be called the *Mensheviks* (from the Russian *menshinstvo*—minority).

The *Mensheviks* opposed the revolutionary programme of the Party, the hegemony of the proletariat in the revolution, and the alliance of the working class with the peasantry, advocating a union with the liberal bourgeoisie.

In January 1912, the Sixth All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. expelled from the Party the *Menshevik liquidators*, i.e., those *Mensheviks* who demanded liquidation of the illegal revolutionary party. In 1917, *Menshevik* representatives were in the bourgeois Provisional Government, and after the victory of the October Socialist Revolution the *Mensheviks* and other counter-revolutionary parties fought against the Soviet government. p. 13

<sup>9</sup> *Blanquists*—representatives of a trend in the French socialist movement headed by Louis Auguste Blanqui, an outstanding revolutionary and a prominent figure in the French utopian communism.

*Blanquists*, as Lenin wrote, expected "that mankind will be emancipated from wage slavery, not by the proletarian class struggle, but through a conspiracy hatched by a small minority of intellectuals".

Substituting the actions of a secret conspirators' group for revolutionary party activities they did not take into account the concrete situation necessary for an uprising to prove victorious.

*Proudhonists*—representatives of unscientific petty-bourgeois socialism hostile to Marxism, so called after its ideologist, the French anarchist Proudhon. While criticising big capitalist property from the petty-bourgeois positions Proudhon dreamed of perpetuating petty private property, and proposed setting up the "people's" and "exchange" banks with the aid of which the workers could allegedly purchase their own instruments of labour, become handicraftsmen and ensure the just marketing of their products. He opposed class struggle, proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and denied the necessity of the state from anarchist positions. p. 14

<sup>10</sup> At this conference of socialist parties, held in Berne in February 1919, the Second International was reconvened only to play into the hands of the international bourgeoisie. p. 15

<sup>11</sup> The Soviet Government—the Council of People's Commissars—had its seat in the building of the former Smolny Institute in Petrograd from November 1917 to March 11, 1918, when it moved to Moscow. p. 16

<sup>12</sup> This is a reference to Rosa Luxemburg's speech at the Inaugural Congress of the Communist Party of Germany held in Berlin from December 30, 1918, to January 1, 1919. Because of the treacherous policy of the Right trade union leaders, she spoke in support of some of the delegates who erroneously favoured the abolition of the trade unions. She was of the opinion that the functions of the trade unions should be transferred to the Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and to the factory committees. p. 17

<sup>13</sup> *Poor Peasants' Committees* were instituted on June 11, 1918, by a decree of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on the "Organisation and Supply of the Rural Poor". The decree charged the committees to take stock of the food supplies in the peasant farms, ascertain the kulaks' food resources and assist the Soviet bodies responsible for food supply in requisitioning their surpluses. They were also to provide food for the poor peasants at the expense of the kulak farms, distribute farm implements and manufactured goods, and so on. The practical work of the *Poor Peasants' Committees*, however, embraced all aspects of village life. They formed the mainstay of the proletarian dictatorship in the countryside. Their establishment marked the further development of the socialist revolution in the villages. At the end of 1918, after they had fulfilled the tasks entrusted to them, the *Poor Peasants' Committees* were merged with the *volost* and village Soviets. p. 18

<sup>14</sup> Lenin is referring here to his report on the attitude of the proletariat towards petty-bourgeois parties, delivered at a meeting of Party workers in Moscow on November 27, 1918. p. 21

<sup>15</sup> *Kulaks*—rich peasants in tsarist Russia who exploited farm-hands and poor peasants. p. 21

<sup>16</sup> The *Federation of Foreign Groups* under the C.C., R.C.P. (B.) was organised in May 1918 as the guiding body of foreign Communists for work among former prisoners of war in Russia. It included nine communist groups: Czechoslovak, British, French, Rumanian, German, Hungarian, Yugoslav, Polish and Bulgarian. Their main task was to carry on propaganda and agitation among the prisoners of war and the interventionist troops in Russia. The Federation was abolished at the beginning of 1920. p. 22

<sup>17</sup> *Bednota* (*Poor Peasants*)—a daily newspaper for the peasants, which was published in Moscow from March 27, 1918, to January 31, 1931. p. 24

- 18 The first Party programme was adopted by the Second Party Congress in 1903. p. 28
- 19 *Spartacists*—members of a revolutionary organisation of German Left Social-Democrats formed at the beginning of the First World War by Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring and Clara Zetkin. They carried on revolutionary propaganda among the people, organised mass anti-war demonstrations, led strikes, and exposed the imperialist character of the world war and the treachery of the opportunist leaders of Social-Democracy. In April 1917, the Spartacists joined the Centrist Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany in which they retained their organisational independence. In November 1918, during the revolution in Germany, they formed the Spartacus League, published their own programme on December 14, and broke with the Independents. At the Inaugural Congress, held from December 30, 1918, to January 1, 1919, the Spartacists founded the Communist Party of Germany. p. 31
- 20 The Party programme adopted by the Second R.S.D.L.P. Congress in 1903 consisted of two parts—the maximum and minimum programmes. The maximum programme formulated the ultimate goal—the victory of the socialist revolution, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the building of socialism. The minimum programme contained demands that could be effected within the framework of the capitalist system—the overthrow of tsarism, the establishment of a democratic republic, the introduction of the eight-hour working day and the elimination of all vestiges of serfdom in rural areas. p. 31
- 21 On December 18 (31), 1917, Lenin handed to P. Svinhufvud, head of the Finnish bourgeois government, and K. Enkel, Secretary of State, the decision of the Council of People's Commissars to recognise the independence of Finland. The decision was confirmed by a Session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on December 22, 1917 (January 4, 1918). p. 32
- 22 Lenin is referring here to the negotiations in Moscow in March 1919 with a Bashkirian delegation on the question of forming an autonomous Bashkirian Soviet Republic. They ended on March 20 with the signing of the "Agreement Between Central Soviet Power and the Bashkirian Government on the Formation of Autonomous Soviet Bashkiriya". The agreement was confirmed by Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars Lenin and the Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee. It set up an Autonomous Bashkirian Soviet Republic on the basis of the Soviet Constitution and defined the Republic's frontiers and its administrative divisions. p. 32
- 23 The *Warsaw Soviet of Workers' Deputies* was established on November 11, 1918. Among its first decisions were the introduction of the eight-hour day in factories, the establishment of factory committees and the struggle against the sabotage of the factory owners.

Under the influence of the October Socialist Revolution, Soviets of Workers' Deputies were set up in many Polish towns at the time of the retreat of the Austro-German occupationist troops. Soviets of Peasants' Deputies were also formed in a number of areas.

Worried by the revolutionary activity and the growing prestige of the Warsaw Soviet of Workers' Deputies, the leaders of the conciliatory parties set up their own Soviets to counterbalance it. These parallel Soviets weakened the struggle of the Warsaw proletariat, so that from the moment of their very inception the Warsaw Soviet led the struggle of the Warsaw workers to form a single Soviet.

Elections to this Soviet began on December 12, 1918, and on January 5, 1919, it held its first session. Due to the petty-bourgeois nationalist sentiment common among a section of the Warsaw proletariat, social-conciliators found themselves in a majority in the Soviet. A sharp struggle developed between the Communists and the conciliators' leaders. The conciliators tried to split the Soviets, to weaken their struggle and to diminish their importance. The Soviets were abolished in the summer of 1919 by the united forces of bourgeois reaction and the leaders of the conciliatory parties. p. 35

- 24 The decree on consumers' communes was passed by the Council of People's Commissars on March 16, 1919. On March 20, 1919, it was published in *Izvestia VTsIK*. It ordered that all the co-operatives in a given town or village be merged into a single consumers' commune with all the local population taking part in it. All the consumers' communes of a given gubernia were united into gubernia unions. The main body of all the consumers' communes was Tsentrosoyuz (the Central Union). p. 38
- 25 The *Novaya Zhizn* people—Menshevik internationalists grouped round *Novaya Zhizn*, a daily newspaper which appeared in Petrograd from April 18 (May 1), 1917, to July 1918. Lenin said that "intellectual scepticism, which conceals and expresses lack of principle, is the dominant mood" of this group. The newspaper was hostile to the October Socialist Revolution. p. 42
- 26 The *Erfurt Programme* of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany was adopted in October 1891 at a Congress in Erfurt. It was based on the Marxist postulate of the inevitable collapse of the capitalist mode of production and its replacement by the socialist mode of production. It stressed the need for the working class to conduct a political struggle, pointed to the leading role of the party in this struggle, etc. There were, however, serious concessions to opportunism in the programme—it made no mention of the dictatorship of the proletariat. p. 51
- 27 *Shop Stewards' Committees*—elective labour organisations in various industries, which were particularly widespread during the First World War. In conditions of the rise of the workers' movement and the mounting dissatisfaction with the reformist policy of the trade union leaders, the shop stewards, united in district and city committees and in a National Committee, led strikes calling for the improvement of the workers' living conditions and organised workers'

demonstrations against the imperialist war. After the October Revolution, during the foreign armed intervention in the Soviet Republic, the Shop Stewards' Committees actively supported Soviet Russia. A number of their leaders (William Gallacher and Harry Pollitt among them) joined the Communist Party of Great Britain.

p. 54

<sup>28</sup> This reference is to the Treaty of Friendship and Brotherhood between the R.S.F.S.R. and the Finnish Socialist Workers' Republic signed in Petrograd on March 1, 1918.

p. 55

<sup>29</sup> The *Committee for Work in the Countryside* was set up at the first sitting of the Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.) on March 18, 1919. It held three sessions (March 20, 21 and 22), which heard reports on the land policy and work in the countryside, and elected a commission to examine theses.

p. 58

<sup>30</sup> See Frederick Engels, "The Peasant Question in France and Germany" (Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* in three volumes, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1969. pp. 472-74).

p. 65

<sup>31</sup> The delegates from the Nizhni-Novgorod (now Gorky) Party organisation handed in a statement to the Presidium of the Eighth Party Congress in which they pointed out that the extract quoted contained an unfortunate misprint. Instead of "the middle element of the peasants generally", it should have read: "a section of the middle element of the peasants".

p. 67

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В. И. ЛЕНИН  
РЕЧИ НА VIII СЪЕЗДЕ ПАРТИИ  
*на английском языке*