

16. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND CONSOLIDATION OF THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL ON THE BASIS OF THE SURGING REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

THE HEROIC, RESOLUTE STRUGGLE OF THE PROLETARIAT AND THE SHAMELESS BETRAYAL BY THE OPPORTUNISTS

The imperialist First World War sharpened the contradictions inherent in capitalism to an extent never known before. The war piled up fabulous riches for the monopoly capitalists while throwing tens of millions of toilers into the abyss of hunger and death. The anger that prevailed among the proletariat and working people towards the ruling classes became uncontrollable and revolutionary feeling reached new heights. At the same time, the October Revolution set an example of action, showing that socialist revolution was the only way to get rid of the imperialist war. Thus a situation of imminent revolution emerged in many European countries.

In January 1918, a general strike broke out in Vienna. This was followed by another in Berlin, involving half a million workers, and massive demonstrations took place in many parts of Germany. In October 1918, Czechoslovakia and Hungary declared their independence, bringing about the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In November, Poland declared its independence. From the end of October, Germany witnessed frequent uprisings in which workers and soldiers seized power in many

areas and formed Soviets. On November 9, workers and soldiers in Berlin took up arms and forced the Kaiser to abdicate. From the balcony of the palace building, Liebknecht addressed the armed workers and soldiers on parade, declaring the founding of the free German Socialist Republic. In March 1919, the Hungarian Communist Party and Social-Democratic Party jointly formed a government and proclaimed the dictatorship of the proletariat. In Britain, France and Italy, too, great strikes broke out. As Lenin put it, "We see the dawn of the international socialist revolution of the proletariat breaking in a number of countries."¹

Lenin lauded and supported the revolutionary action of the German and Hungarian proletariat, and he offered them timely advice. In his "Letter to the Workers of Europe and America" of January 1919, Lenin pointed out:

The whole course of development of the German revolution, and especially the struggle of the "Spartacists" — that is, of the genuine and only representatives of the proletariat — against the alliance of the traitorous swine, the Scheidemanns and Südekums, with the bourgeoisie, has clearly shown how the question in relation to Germany has been *put* by history: either "Soviet government" or a bourgeois parliament, whatever labels (such as a "National" or "Constituent" Assembly) it may bear.²

As soon as the Hungarian Soviet Republic was founded Lenin told the Hungarian Communists to watch out and

¹"Memorial to Marx and Engels", *Collected Works*, New York, Vol. XXIII, p. 291.

²*Collected Works*, New York, Vol. XXIII, p. 521.

see if the Social-Democrats really accepted the dictatorship of the proletariat. In May 1919, in his "Greetings to the Hungarian Workers", Lenin gave a systematic account of the experience of the Russian proletariat in consolidating its own dictatorship. He said that the proletariat should persist in the class struggle against the resistance of the bourgeoisie and oppose the irresolution and vacillation of the petty bourgeoisie. He stressed that if vacillation should manifest itself among the Socialists, who had only now proclaimed their adherence to the dictatorship of the proletariat, a ruthless struggle would have to be waged against them.

In the surging tide of revolution, the revolutionary Left in a number of countries proved heroic and resolute in leading the masses in struggle. However, with their lack of experience and small forces, they failed to make a thorough exposure of the opportunists and break with them in time, as Lenin indicated they had to do, and thus they made it easier for the opportunists to carry on traitorous activity. The opportunists, who had never had any inclination for revolution, had been afraid of it and regarded it with hostility, now openly sided with the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie and became "labour-lieutenants of the capitalist class". They helped the bourgeoisie to strangle the mass revolutionary movement, and rescued it at moments of crisis.

In Germany, during the general strike of the Berlin workers in January 1918, the opportunists seized the leadership of the strike and helped the German government to suppress the movement. Not in the least ashamed of what they had done, Scheidemann boasted, "It was not to the credit of the 'rulers' at the time that the January revolution had not caused disaster. . . . We had

prevented the Russian order." After the November 1918 revolution, Ebert, Scheidemann, Hasse and other leaders of the Right and "Centre" groups of the German Social-Democratic Party formed a provisional government. Ebert declared, "I hate the revolution as I hate sin," and stated that he would rule Germany in accordance with the constitution of the imperial state. On the other hand, Scheidemann called for a transition to a republic, that is, the establishment of a bourgeois republic. On December 16, the First National Congress of the Soviets was convened in Berlin, and the Rights and "Centrists" had the majority. While the congress was in session, 250,000 Berlin workers demonstrated and demanded the overthrow of the Ebert government, "All power to the Soviets", and the proclamation of Germany as a socialist republic. Dominated by the opportunists, the congress rejected the demands of the masses, decided to turn over all power to the Ebert government, and agreed to convene a Constituent Assembly. In January 1919, Noske, the Social-Democratic minister of defence, ordered the suppression of the armed uprising of the Berlin workers. On January 15, the revolutionary leaders of the German proletariat, Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, were assassinated on the orders of Ebert and Noske. Thus the opportunists assumed the role of butchers and murderers of the proletarian leaders. After bloody suppression of the revolution of the workers, the Constituent Assembly was held and a bourgeois constitution was adopted. The revolution in Germany ended in failure.

In Hungary, under the pressure of the revolutionary masses the Right-wing Social-Democratic leaders accepted the programme of dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist revolution which the Communist Party put for-

ward. But following the armed intervention by the Allied imperialist powers, the Social-Democratic leaders did their utmost to cancel Soviet power, and they took an active part in the counter-revolutionary riots. Under the enemy attacks from within and from without, the Hungarian Soviet Republic was overthrown on August 1, 1919.

Lenin angrily denounced the criminal actions of the opportunists in betraying the revolution. He declared that their betrayal was one of the basic reasons why the revolution failed in Germany and Hungary and why the bourgeoisie was able to maintain power, or stage a comeback. In Germany the proletarian revolution was betrayed by the Scheidemanns and Kautskys, and a principal reason for the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic was betrayal by the Social-Democrats. Lenin urged every Communist never to forget the bitter lessons of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. He said, "The Hungarian proletariat had to pay dearly for the amalgamation of the Hungarian Communists with the reformists."¹

THE NEW, REVOLUTIONARY INTERNATIONAL AND
THE ROTTEN, YELLOW INTERNATIONAL

Earlier, on the eve of the revolutions in Germany and Hungary, Lenin had pointed out:

Europe's greatest misfortune and danger is that it has *no* revolutionary party. . . . Of course, the mighty revolutionary movement of the masses may rectify this

¹"The Conditions of Affiliation to the Communist International", *Selected Works*, London, Vol. 10, p. 201.

deficiency; but it is nevertheless a serious misfortune and a grave danger.¹

Lenin's prescience proved completely true. The betrayal of the revolution in various European countries by the renegades to the proletariat — this great disaster was an education for the proletariat everywhere. Marxist parties were organized in many countries on the foundations of the surging revolutionary movement. By the beginning of 1919, there were thirty-nine Communist Parties and Left-wing socialist organizations.

From the time of the outbreak of World War I, Lenin undertook a whole range of work aimed at uniting the revolutionary Left, organizing the Third International, and restoring and strengthening the solidarity of the proletariat on internationalist lines. His unrelenting struggle against the opportunism of the Second International, the victory of the October Revolution, the development of the revolutionary movement in various countries and the founding of the Communist Parties, all combined to lay the foundations for the birth of the Third, or Communist, International.

The First Congress of the Communist International took place in March 1919 in Moscow, with delegates from thirty countries attending. Lenin personally guided this meeting and made a report on bourgeois democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat, which was a major item on the agenda of the congress. In this report he showed how the opportunists of the Second International defended bourgeois democracy. He said:

¹"Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky", *Collected Works*, New York, Vol. XXIII, p. 238.

... the present defence of bourgeois democracy cloaked in speeches about "democracy in general" and the present howling and shouting against the dictatorship of the proletariat cloaked by cries about "dictatorship in general" are a downright betrayal of socialism, the practical desertion to the side of the bourgeoisie, the denial of the right of the proletariat to make its own, proletarian revolution. . . .¹

He expounded the law of class struggle and said:

History teaches that not a single oppressed class has ever come into power, or could come into power, without passing through the period of dictatorship, i.e., the conquest of political power and the violent suppression of the desperate, furious and unscrupulous resistance which the exploiters always put up.²

Hence, he went on:

... the dictatorship of the proletariat is not only a fully legitimate means of overthrowing the exploiters and suppressing their resistance, but it is also absolutely necessary for the whole mass of toilers as the sole means of protection against the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. . . .³

Lenin's thesis was accepted by the congress, which adopted a manifesto, and also a programme on the activities of the Communist International, calling on the proletariat of all countries to strive for proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

¹ "Theses and Report on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", *Selected Works*, London, Vol. 7, p. 224.

² *Ibid.*, p. 223.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

The founding of the Third International, this international proletarian revolutionary organization of a new type, was of great historical significance. In his article, "The Third International and Its Place in History", Lenin said:

The First International (1864-72) laid the foundation of an international organization of the workers for the preparation of their revolutionary onslaught on capital. The Second International (1889-1914) was an international organization of the proletarian movement whose growth was in *breadth*, at the cost of a temporary fall in the revolutionary level, a temporary increase in the strength of opportunism, which in the end led to the disgraceful collapse of this International.

.....
The Third International gathered the fruits of the work of the Second International, discarded its opportunist, social-chauvinist, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois, dross and *has begun to realize* the dictatorship of the proletariat.

.....
The epoch-making significance of the Third, Communist International lies in the fact that it has begun to put into practice Marx's cardinal slogan, the slogan which sums up the centuries of development of Socialism and the working-class movement, the slogan which is expressed in the concept: dictatorship of the proletariat.¹

While the revolutionaries closed their ranks, the traitors flocked together. In February 1919, the social-chauvinists, "Centrists" and social-pacifists held a con-

¹ *Selected Works*, Moscow, Vol. II, Part 2, pp. 199-200.

ference in Berne in the attempt to revive the Second International which had collapsed during World War I. Attended by delegates from the twenty-six member parties of the Second International, the conference passed one resolution opposing the dictatorship of the proletariat in favour of bourgeois democracy, and another recognizing and supporting the League of Nations which was under the control of the imperialists. The majority of those present also favoured censuring the Bolshevik Party, and it was only out of fear of the masses of the workers that they did not put forward a formal resolution on this point.

In the book "*Left-Wing*" *Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, Lenin said:

. . . the defence of the robber "League of Nations," the defence of direct or indirect alliances with the bourgeoisie of one's own country against the revolutionary proletariat and the "Soviet" movement, and the defence of bourgeois democracy and bourgeois parliamentarism against "Soviet power" became the principal manifestations of those impermissible and treacherous compromises, the sum total of which constituted the opportunism that is fatal to the revolutionary proletariat and its cause.¹

Those who attended the Berne International represented precisely this kind of opportunism. Lenin described the Berne International as "yellow, treacherous and perfidious", and "*an organisation of the agents of international imperialism*".²

¹*Selected Works*, Moscow, Vol. II, Part 2, p. 395.

²"The Tasks of the Third International", *Selected Works*, London, Vol. 10, pp. 41, 43.

ONLY PARTIES WHICH HAD BROKEN WITH
THE OPPORTUNISTS COULD AFFILIATE TO
THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL

Led by Lenin, the Third International waged resolute struggle against the Second International. In various countries, the advanced sections of the proletariat one after the other broke with the Second International and gravitated towards the Third International. Within a year of its establishment, it had already become attractive to the careerist politicians and "fashionable". During 1919-20, the most influential parties of the Second International, such as the Socialist Party of France, the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, the Independent Labour Party of Great Britain and the Socialist Party of America, hypocritically announced their withdrawal from the Second International and applied for affiliation to the Third International while in fact maintaining their old Second International positions and opposing the principles of the Third International. Lenin said that this demonstrated the fact that the opportunist Second International, that gang of renegades to the proletariat, had become utterly hopeless and had been routed, and the genuine proletarian, communist Third International had won decisive victory.

At the same time, Lenin stressed that opportunism was a protracted disease. He said:

The disease is a protracted one; the cure is even more protracted than optimists hoped it would be. Opportunism is our principal enemy. Opportunism in the upper ranks of the working class movement is not proletarian Socialism, but bourgeois Socialism. Practice has shown that the active people in the working class

movement who adhere to the opportunist trend are better defenders of the bourgeoisie, than the bourgeoisie itself. Without their leadership of the workers, the bourgeoisie could not have remained in power.¹

Lenin also pointed out that some of the old leaders of the old parties of the Second International had applied for affiliation to the Third International in order to retain their role of agents and lieutenants of the bourgeoisie within the working-class movement, and this, he said, presented "a very serious, immediate danger to the success of the cause of emancipation of the proletariat".²

To overcome this major danger and carry through the struggle against opportunism to the end, Lenin drafted his well-known statement, "The Conditions of Affiliation to the Communist International", which stipulated that parties desiring to affiliate to the Third International must fulfil, among others, the following conditions. They must:

Explain clearly to the masses the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat and recognize the dictatorship of the proletariat in deeds as well as in words;

Ruthlessly denounce the reformists, social-chauvinists, social-pacifists and "Centrists" of all kinds, and break with them completely and absolutely;

Combine legal with illegal work and conduct persistent propaganda and agitation among the armed forces and the masses of the workers and peasants;

¹"The International Situation and the Fundamental Tasks of the Communist International", *Selected Works*, London, Vol. 10, p. 196.

²"Theses on the Fundamental Tasks of the Second Congress of the Communist International", *Selected Works*, London, Vol. 10, p. 162.

Support every liberation movement in the colonies; Give the most vigorous support to all Soviet republics in their struggle against the forces of counter-revolution; and

Build the Party on the principle of democratic centralism and have iron discipline within the Party.

This document was adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International in July 1920.

The conditions for affiliation to the Communist International formulated by Lenin gave rise to widespread discussion in the Socialist Parties. Around this discussion a sharp inner-Party struggle developed between the Left-wing on the one hand and the "Centre" and Right-wing on the other. The Left-wing of the German Independent Social-Democratic Party accepted the conditions, and in December 1920 it amalgamated with the German Communist Party. At the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921, the Left-wing of the Socialist Parties in France, Switzerland and Italy broke with the "Centre" and Right-wing and organized Communist Parties.

The "Centrists" rejected the conditions of affiliation and, in February 1921, various "Centrist" groups including the Independent Labour Party of Great Britain and the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany held a conference in Vienna, and founded the "Vienna International". In words, this "International" criticized the Second International, but in fact it followed an opportunist line identical with that of the latter. It was therefore called the Two-and-a-Half International. In May 1923, it amalgamated with the Second International.

The birth of the Third International and the victory it won in the struggle against the Second and the Two-and-

a-Half International represented the victory of Marxism-Leninism over revisionism and opportunism. Lenin created the Third International, protected it from adulteration and safeguarded the genuine international solidarity of the Communist Parties on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. Under the leadership of Lenin, the Third International raised high the red flag of revolution, united the foremost proletarians of all countries and became the centre of leadership in the international communist movement.