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# The Third International and Its Place in History.

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The imperialists of the Entente countries are blockading Russia in an effort to cut off the Soviet Republic, as a seat of infection, from the capitalist world. These people, who boast about their “democratic” institutions, are so blinded by their hatred of the Soviet Republic that they do not see how ridiculous they are making themselves. Just think of it, the advanced, most civilized and “democratic” countries, armed to the teeth and enjoying undivided military sway over the whole world, are mortally afraid of the *ideological* infection coming from a ruined, starving, backward, and even, they assert, semi-savage country!

This contradiction alone is opening the eyes of the working masses in all countries and helping to expose the hypocrisy of the imperialists Clemenceau, Lloyd George, Wilson and their governments.

We are being helped, however, not only by the capitalists’ blind hatred of the Soviets, but also by their bickering among themselves, which induces them to put spokes in each other’s wheels. They have entered into a veritable conspiracy of silence, for they are desperately afraid of the spread of true information about the Soviet Republic in general, and of its official documents in particular. Yet, *Le Temps*, the principal organ of the French bourgeoisie, has published a report on the foundation in Moscow of the Third, Communist International.

For this we express our most respectful thanks to the principal organ of the French bourgeoisie, to this leader of French chauvinism and imperialism. We are prepared to send an illuminated address to *Le Temps* in token of our appreciation of the effective and able

assistance it is giving us.

The manner in which *Le Temps* compiled its report on the basis of our wireless messages clearly and fully reveals the motive that prompted this organ of the moneybags. It wanted to have a dig at Wilson, as if to say, “Look at the people with whom you negotiate!” The wisecracks who write to the order of the moneybags do not see that their attempt to frighten Wilson with the Bolshevik bogey is becoming, in the eyes of the working people, an advertisement for the Bolsheviks. Once more, our most respectful thanks to the organ of the French millionaires!

The Third International has been founded in a world situation that does not allow prohibitions, petty and miserable devices of the Entente imperialists or of capitalist lackeys like the Scheidemanns in Germany and the Renners in Austria to prevent news of this International and sympathy for it spreading among the working class of the world. This situation has been brought about by the growth of the proletarian revolution, which is manifestly developing everywhere by leaps and bounds. It has been brought about by the *Soviet* movement among the working people, which has already achieved such strength as to become really international.

The First International (1864-1872) laid the foundation of an international organization of the workers for the preparation of their revolutionary attack on capital. The Second International (1889-1914) was an international organization of the proletarian movement whose growth proceeded in *breadth*, at the cost of a temporary drop in the revolutionary level, a

temporary strengthening of opportunism, which in the end led to the disgraceful collapse of this International.

The Third International actually emerged in 1918, when the long years of struggle against opportunism and social-chauvinism, especially during the war, led to the formation of Communist Parties in a number of countries. Officially, the Third International was founded at its First Congress, in March 1919, in Moscow. And the most characteristic feature of this International, its mission of fulfilling, of implementing the precepts of Marxism, and of achieving the age-old ideals of socialism and the working class movement — this most characteristic feature of the Third International has manifested itself immediately in the fact that the new, third, “International Working Men’s Association” *has already begun to develop*, to a certain extent, into a *Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*.

The First International laid the foundation of the proletarian, international struggle for socialism.

The Second International marked a period in which the soil was prepared for the broad, mass spread of the movement in a number of countries.

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

The international alliance of the parties which are leading the most revolutionary movement in the world, the movement of the proletariat for the overthrow of the yoke of capital, now rests on an unprecedentedly firm base, in the shape of several *Soviet republics*, which are implementing the dictatorship of the proletariat and are the embodiment of victory over capitalism on an international scale.

The epoch-making significance of the Third, Communist International lies in its having begun to give effect to Marx’s cardinal slogan, the slogan which sums up the centuries-old development of socialism and the working class movement, the slogan which is expressed in the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This prevision and this theory — the prevision and theory of a genius — are becoming a reality.

The Latin words have now been translated into the languages of all the peoples of contemporary Europe — more, into all the languages of the world.

A new era in world history has begun.

Mankind is throwing off the last form of slavery: capitalist, or wage, slavery.

By emancipating himself from slavery, man is for the first time advancing to real freedom.

How is it that one of the most backward countries of Europe was the first country to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, and to organize a Soviet republic? We shall hardly be wrong if we say that it is this contradiction between the backwardness of Russia and the “leap” she has made over bourgeois democracy to the highest form of democracy, to Soviet, or proletarian, democracy — it is this contradiction that has been one of the reasons (apart from the dead weight of opportunist habits and philistine prejudices that burdened the majority of the socialist leaders) why people in the West have had particular difficulty or have been slow in understanding the role of the Soviets.

The working people all over the world have instinctively grasped the significance of the Soviets as an instrument in the proletarian struggle and as a form of the proletarian state. But the “leaders,” corrupted by opportunism, still continue to worship bourgeois democracy, which they call “democracy” in general.

Is it surprising that the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat has brought out primarily the “contradiction” between the backwardness of Russia and her “leap” over bourgeois democracy? It would have been surprising had history granted us the establishment of a *new* form of democracy *without* a number of contradictions.

If any Marxist, or any person, indeed, who has a general knowledge of modern science, were asked whether it is likely that the transition of the different capitalist countries to the dictatorship of the proletariat will take place in an identical or harmoniously proportionate way, his answer would undoubtedly be in the negative. There never has been and never could be even, harmonious, or proportionate development in the capitalist world. Each country has developed more strongly first one, then another aspect or feature or group of features of capitalism and of the working class movement. The process of development has been uneven.

When France was carrying out her great bourgeois revolution and rousing the whole European con-

tinent to a historically new life, Britain proved to be at the head of the counterrevolutionary coalition, although at the same time she was much more developed capitalistically than France. The British working class movement of that period, however, brilliantly anticipated much that was contained in the future Marxism.

When Britain gave the world Chartism, the first broad, truly mass and politically organized proletarian revolutionary movement, bourgeois revolutions, most of them weak, were taking place on the European continent, and the first great civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie had broken out in France. The bourgeoisie defeated the various national contingents of the proletariat one by one, in different ways in different countries.

Britain was the model of a country in which, as Engels put it, the bourgeoisie had produced, alongside a bourgeois aristocracy, a very bourgeois upper stratum of the proletariat. For several decades this advanced capitalist country lagged behind in the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. France seemed to have exhausted the strength of the proletariat in two heroic working class revolts of 1848 and 1871 against the bourgeoisie that made very considerable contributions to world-historical development. Leadership in the International of the working class movement then passed to Germany; that was in the '70s, of the 19th Century, when she lagged economically behind Britain and France. But when Germany had outstripped these two countries economically, i.e., by the second decade of the 20th Century, the Marxist workers' party of Germany, that model for the whole world, found itself headed by a handful of utter scoundrels, the most filthy blackguards — from Scheidemann and Noske to David and Legien — loathsome hangmen drawn from the workers' ranks who had sold themselves to the capitalists, who were in the service of the monarchy and the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie.

World history is leading unswervingly towards the dictatorship of the proletariat, but is doing so by paths that are anything but smooth, simple and straight.

When Karl Kautsky was still a Marxist and not the renegade from Marxism he became when he began to champion unity with the Scheidemanns and to support bourgeois democracy against Soviet, or prole-

tarian, democracy, he wrote an article — this was at the turn of the century — entitled “The Slavs and Revolution.” In this article he traced the historical conditions that pointed to the possibility of leadership in the world revolutionary movement passing to the Slavs.

And so it has. Leadership in the revolutionary proletarian International has passed for a time — for a short time, it goes without saying — to the Russians, just as at various periods of the 19th Century it was in the hands of the British, then of the French, then of the Germans.

I have had occasion more than once to say that it was easier for the Russians than for the advanced countries *to begin* the great proletarian revolution, but that it will be more difficult for them *to continue* it and carry it to final victory, in the sense of the complete organization of a socialist society.

It was easier for us to begin, firstly, because the unusual — for 20th Century Europe — political backwardness of the Tsarist monarchy gave unusual strength to the revolutionary onslaught of the masses. Secondly, Russia's backwardness merged in a peculiar way the proletarian revolution against the bourgeoisie with the peasant revolution against the landowners. That is what we started from in October 1917, and we would not have achieved victory so easily then if we had not. As long ago as 1856, Marx spoke, in reference to Prussia; of the possibility of a peculiar combination of proletarian revolution and peasant war. From the beginning of 1905 the Bolsheviks advocated the idea of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. Thirdly, the 1905 revolution contributed enormously to the political education of the worker and peasant masses, because it familiarized their vanguard with “the last word” of socialism in the West and also because of the revolutionary *action* of the masses. Without such a “dress rehearsal” as we had in 1905, the revolutions of 1917 — both the bourgeois, February revolution, and the proletarian, October revolution — would have been impossible. Fourthly, Russia's geographical conditions permitted her to hold out longer than other countries could have done against the superior military strength of the capitalist, advanced countries. Fifthly, the specific attitude of the proletariat towards the peasantry facilitated the transition from the bourgeois revolution to the socialist revolution, made it easier for the urban proletarians to influ-

ence the semi-proletarian, poorer sections of the rural working people. Sixthly, long schooling in strike action and the experience of the European mass working class movement facilitated the emergence — in a profound and rapidly intensifying revolutionary situation — of such a unique form of proletarian revolutionary organization as the *Soviets*.

This list, of course, is incomplete; but it will suffice for the time being.

Soviet, or proletarian, democracy was born in Russia. Following the Paris Commune a second epoch-making step was taken. The proletarian and peasant Soviet Republic has proved to be the first stable socialist republic in the world. As a *new type of state* it cannot die. It no longer stands alone.

For the continuance and completion of the work of building socialism, much, very much is still required. Soviet republics in more developed countries, where the proletariat has greater weight and influence, have every chance of surpassing Russia once they take the path of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The bankrupt Second International is now dying and rotting alive. Actually, it is playing the role of lackey to the world bourgeoisie. It is a truly yellow International. Its foremost ideological leaders, such as Kautsky, laud *bourgeois* democracy and call it “democracy” in general, or — what is still more stupid and still more crude — “pure democracy.”

Bourgeois democracy has outlived its day, just as the Second International has, though the International performed historically necessary and useful work when the task of the moment was to train the working class masses within the framework of this bourgeois democracy.

No bourgeois republic, however democratic, ever was or could have been anything but a machine for the suppression of the working people by capital, an instrument of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, the political rule of capital. The democratic bourgeois republic promised and proclaimed majority rule, but it could never put this into effect as long as private ownership of the land and other means of production existed.

“Freedom” in the bourgeois-democratic republic was actually freedom *for the rich*. The proletarians and working peasants could and should have utilized it for the purpose of preparing their forces to over-

throw capital, to overcome bourgeois democracy, but *in fact* the working masses were, as a general rule, unable to enjoy democracy under capitalism.

Soviet, or proletarian, democracy has for the first time in the world created *democracy* for the masses, for the working people, for the factory workers and small peasants.

Never yet has the world seen political power wielded by the *majority* of the population, power *actually* wielded by this majority, as it is in the case of Soviet rule.

It suppresses the “freedom” of the exploiters and their accomplices; it deprives them of “freedom” to exploit, “freedom” to batten on starvation, “freedom” to fight for the restoration of the rule of capital, “freedom” to compact with the foreign bourgeoisie against the workers and peasants of their own country.

Let the Kautskys champion such freedom. Only a renegade from Marxism, a renegade from socialism can do so.

In nothing is the bankruptcy of the ideological leaders of the Second International, people like Hilferding and Kautsky, so strikingly expressed as in their utter inability to understand the significance of Soviet, or proletarian, democracy, its relation to the Paris Commune, its place in history, its necessity as a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The newspaper *Die Freiheit*, organ of the “Independent” (alias middle-class, philistine, petty-bourgeois) German Social-Democratic Party, in its issue no. 74 of February 11, 1919, published a manifesto “To the Revolutionary Proletariat of Germany.”

This manifesto is signed by the Party executive and by all its members in the National Assembly, the German variety of our Constituent Assembly.

This manifesto accuses the Scheidemanns of wanting to abolish the *Workers’ Councils*, and proposes — don’t laugh! — that the Councils be *combined* with the Assembly, that the Councils be granted certain political rights, a certain place in the Constitution.

To reconcile, to unite the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat! How simple! What a brilliantly philistine idea!

The only pity is that it was tried in Russia, under Kerensky, by the united Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, those petty-bourgeois democrats who imagine themselves socialists.

Anyone who has read Marx and failed to understand that in capitalist society, at every acute moment, in every serious class conflict, the alternative is either the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat, has understood nothing of either the economic or the political doctrines of Marx.

But the brilliantly philistine idea of Hilferding, Kautsky and Co. of peacefully combining the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat requires special examination, if exhaustive treatment is to be given to the economic and political absurdities with which this most remarkable and comical manifesto of February 11 is packed. That will have to be put off for another article.

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