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Contents.

„Five years of the Russian Revolution, and the Perspectives of the World Revolution“.

Speakers: Lenin, Zetkin.

Lenin: Comrades, I was put down as principal speaker on the list, but you will understand that after my prolonged illness I am not in a position to make a lengthy report. I can only give the introduction to some of the more important questions. My remarks will have to be quite brief. The theme of „Five Years of the Russian Revolution, and the Perspectives of World Revolution“ is altogether too comprehensive and too big for one speaker to exhaust in one speech. I therefore will pick out only a small part of the subject, namely, the question of the New Economic Policy. I choose solely this small part advisably, in order to introduce this matter, which is—at least to me—the most important of all, because I am engaged on it just now. I will therefore speak on the subject of how we started the New Economic Policy and what results we have achieved by it, by confining myself to this question I hope to be in a position to give you a general survey and a general conception of the subject.

To begin the story of how we started the New Economic Policy, I must recall to you an article written by me in 1918. In that year, in discussing the subject, I touched upon the question of how we should have to tackle the problem of State Capitalism. I wrote then:

“Compared with the present economic policy of the Soviet Republic—i. e. the economic situation of that time, State Capitalism represents a step forward. If we could, for instance, introduce State Capitalism here in the course of half a year, it would be a tremendous success and the best guarantee that within a year socialism will be strong and invincible in this country.”

This was said at a time, of course, when we were much more foolish than now, but not so foolish as to be unable to tackle such problems.

In a word, in 1918 I was of the opinion that State Capitalism represented a step forward in comparison with the economic situation of the Soviet Republic at the time. This sounds rather strange, and perhaps contradictory, for at that time our Republic was a Socialist Republic; at that time we carried out day by day, in rapid succession—perhaps in far too rapid succession—all kinds of new economic measures which we could not term otherwise than socialistic. And yet I declared at that time that State Capitalism would be a step forward compared with the then prevailing situation of the Soviet Republic. I therefore found it necessary to illustrate my point by enumerating the elements of the economic structure

of Russia. These elements I represented then as follows: 1) A patriarchal, that is an exceedingly primitive system of land tenure. 2) Petty production of commodities. To this group belonged the majority of the peasants who deal in grain. 3) Private capitalism. 4) State Capitalism. 5) Socialism. All these economic elements were represented in Russia at that time. I took the trouble of explaining the correlation between these elements, suggesting that we might perhaps put a higher value on the non-socialist element, namely on State Capitalism, than on socialism. I repeat that it sounds rather strange to declare a non-socialist element of greater value than socialism in a Republic which had declared itself socialist. But it becomes quite conceivable, if we bear in mind that the economic situation in Russia at that time could by no means be considered as uniform and of high standing. On the contrary we were quite aware of the fact that in Russia we had a patriarchal system of agriculture, i. e. the most primitive form and parallel with it a socialist form of agriculture. What part was State capitalism to play under those circumstances? I asked myself again, which of these elements predominates. It is clear that in a petty bourgeois environment the petty bourgeois element would be on top. The question as I put it then—it was in connection with special discussion that has nothing to do with the present question—was this: What is our attitude towards State capitalism? And I promptly replied: State capitalism, although not a socialist form, would be more favourable for us and for Russia than the present form. What does it mean? It means that we do not overestimate the basis and structure of socialist economy, although we have already accomplished the social revolution. Already at that time we had, to a certain degree, come to the conclusion that it would be better for us to establish first State capitalism and through it to march on to socialism.

I must lay particular stress on this part, for I believe that it explains in the first place the essence of the present economic policy, and in the second place, it demonstrates the very important as well as practical consequences which the Communist International might draw

from it. By this I do not mean to say that we at that time already had a fully conceived plan of retreat. Far from it. At any rate these few lines of polemic by no means represent a plan of retreat. For instance, not a word is mentioned here about the freedom of commerce which was an important point, and of fundamental significance to State Capitalism.

At all events there was already a general and vague idea of the retreat. And I believe that also we, as a Communist International, and not only as a country that was and has remained backward by its economic structure, must take that into consideration, particularly the comrades in the advanced countries of Western Europe. Just now for instance, we are busy with the construction of a programme. I for one believe that it would be the wisest action on our part if we discuss all these programs in a general way, if we take something like a first reading of them and have them all printed, but not in order to have the programme finally established this year. Why? First of all, because I think that we have hardly examined them all. Secondly, because we have as yet given almost no consideration to the idea of the retreat and making the retreat secure. Yet this is a question which merits our utmost attention in dealing with so great a change of the world as the overthrow of capitalism and the building up of the socialist system. It is not enough for us to be merely conscious of how we are to assume the offensive in order to be victorious. In revolutionary times this is not all difficult. In the course of the revolution there will always be moments when the enemy loses his head. If we attack him at such moments, we may score an easy victory. But such a victory would not be decisive, because the enemy after careful consideration, after due concentration of his forces etc. may very easily prove us into a premature attack in order to throw us back for many years to come. I therefore think the idea of the necessity of preparing for the emergence of a retreat to be of supreme importance, and that not only from a theoretical standpoint. From a practical standpoint also all the parties that

contemplating an offensive against capitalism in the near future, should right now think of how to make the retreat secure. I believe that this lesson, in conjunction with all the other lessons of our revolution, will surely do us no harm and most probably a vast amount of good in many instances.

Having thus emphasised that already in 1918 we considered State Capitalism as a possible way of retreat, I will pass to a review the results of our New Economic Policy. I repeat: at that time it was still a very vague idea. Yet in 1921, after having emerged victoriously from the most important stages of the civil war, Soviet Russia came face to face with a great—I believe the greatest—internal political crisis which caused disaffection not only of the huge masses of the peasantry, but also of large numbers of workers. It was the first, and I hope the last, time in the history of Soviet Russia that we had the great masses of the peasantry arrayed against us, not consciously, but instinctively, as a sort of political mood. What was the cause of this unique, and for us, naturally disagreeable situation? It was caused by the fact that we had gone too far with our economic measures, that we had not made our base secure, that the masses were already sensing what we had not yet properly formulated although we had to acknowledge it a few weeks afterwards: namely that the direct transition to pure socialist economy, to pure socialist distribution of wealth, was far beyond our resources; and that if we could not make a successful and timely retreat, if we could not confine ourselves to easier tasks, we would go under. I believe that the crisis set in February, 1921. Already in the spring of that year we unanimously resolved—we had no considerable differences on that score,—to pass to the New Economic Policy. Today, after a lapse of a year and a half, at the end of 1922, we are in a position to draw comparisons. What are the results. Has the retreat benefited and really saved us, or has it failed, and the results indefinite. This is the principal question I put to myself, and I believe that this question is also of supreme importance to all the Communist Parties, because if the answer should be in the negative, then we shall

all go under. I believe that we can in good conscience give the answer to the question in the affirmative, namely in the sense that in the course of eighteen months that have elapsed we have positively and absolutely demonstrated that we have successfully passed the examination.

This I am now going to prove. To this end I must review briefly all the component parts of Russian economy. First of all let me take up the system of finances and the famous Russian rouble. I believe the Russian rouble may justly be called famous, if only for the fact that its number has already gone beyond the quadrillion (laughter). This is something to start with. This is quite an astronomical figure (laughter). I am sure, you do not even realise what that figure means. But really from the standpoint of economic science these figures of the rouble are not important, for one can always strike off the noughts (laughter). We have already done something towards the solution of this economic puzzle, and I am convinced that as we go along we will achieve even more in this peculiar art. The really important thing is the question of stabilising the exchange rate of the rouble. For this we are working and applying our utmost efforts, and to this task we attach decisive importance. If we succeed in stabilising the rouble for any length of time, and subsequently finally stabilising it, then we have won. These astronomical figures, these trillions and quadrillions will then be of no consequence. We can then put our economy upon a firm foundation and go on with its further development. In regard to this question I believe that I am in a position to submit to you some fairly important and decisive facts. In the year 1921 the period of stabilisation of the paper rouble lasted less than three months; in 1922, i. e. in the present year, although it has not yet closed, the same period has already lasted over five months. I believe this to be sufficient for the moment. Of course, it is not enough if you wish to determine beforehand the ultimate solution of the task in all its details. But this in my opinion is well nigh impossible. The fact just mentioned goes to show that we have made progress since last year, when we started with our new economic policy.

If we assimilated this lesson, and if, as I hope, we will not commit the folly of ignoring future lessons, then we are bound to make further progress along this way. The essential thing is commerce, our greatest need is the circulation of commodities. The fact that in the course of two years time, although we are still in a state of war—Vladivostok has been retaken but a week or so ago—although we are just beginning our systematic and prudent economic activity, we nevertheless succeeded in lengthening the period of the stabilisation of the paper rouble from three months to five, in my opinion gives us sufficient reason to be gratified. We stand alone. We did not and do not get any loans, we get no assistance whatever from the mighty capitalist states which have been carrying on their capitalistic economy so "well" that even now they do not know whether they are going. In consequence of the Peace of Versailles they have created a financial system of which they themselves cannot make head or tail. If the great capitalistic states are managing things in such a manner, then I do believe that we, the backward, the uneducated may already congratulate ourselves on having conceived the all-important question of the stabilisation of the rouble. This is not demonstrated by any theoretical analysis, but by actual practice, and I think this is more important than all the theoretic discussions in the world. Practice has shown that we have achieved something decisive, namely by moving our economy in the direction of the stabilisation of the rouble, and this is of the highest importance for our committee, for the free circulation of commodities, for the peasantry, and for the great mass of petty producers.

I now turn to our social aims. The most important, of course, are the peasantry. In 1921 we were confronted with the discontent of a large mass of the peasants. Next we had the famine, which meant the severest trials for the peasantry. All the bourgeoisie abroad were naturally jubilant: "This is the outcome of socialistic economy" they said. Of course, they kept quiet about the fact that the famine was the terrible result of the civil war. All the landowners and the bourgeoisie who had attacked us in 1918, tried to misrepresent the situation

as though the famine was the result of socialistic economy. It was certainly a grave and a great calamity, a calamity which almost destroyed all our work of revolution and organisation.

What is the situation now, after this unusual and unexpected calamity, after we have introduced the new economic policy, after we have given to the peasants the freedom of trade? The answer stands out clearly to all who wish to see, namely that the peasants have managed, in the course of one year, not only to do away with the famine, but also to pay their taxes in kind so well that already we have hundreds of millions of poods, and that almost without the application of force. The peasants are content with their present position. This we can claim with satisfaction, we believe such proof to be far more important than any statistical data. Nobody questions the fact that the peasants are the decisive factor in this country; and it is the peasants that are now in such a condition that we need fear no hostile movement from those quarters. We say this without the slightest fear of exaggeration. This has already been achieved. The peasantry may be dissatisfied with us in one respect or another, it may complain—that is natural and inevitable—of the inefficiency of our State machinery and management, but any serious discontent on the part of the entire peasantry is absolutely out of the question. This we have achieved in one year, and I believe it to be a great deal indeed.

I now come to the light industries. We should distinguish between the light industries and the heavy industries, because these two kinds of industry are not in one and the same condition. With regard to the light industries, I can safely declare: here we have an all-round revival of production.

I am not going into details. It is not my business today to quote statistics. But the general impression is based upon actual facts, and I can vouch that there is no untruth and no inexactitude behind it. We have to record a general revival of the light industries and the consequent improvement of the lot of the workers in Petrograd as well as in Moscow. It is less the case in other districts, where heavy industries predominate, so that

this fact should not be generalised. Nevertheless I repeat: The light industries which, show an absolute revival and an improvement of the lot of the worker in Petrograd and Moscow is the result of it. In both these cities the workers were discontented in the spring of 1921. All that discontent has completely vanished now. We who watch the position and the mood of the workers day by day can make no mistake on that score.

Now as to the heavy industries. Here I must say that the situation is still difficult. Nevertheless some small improvement has taken place between 1921 and 1922. This entitles us to the hope of improvement in the near future. The means to that end we partly possess already. In a capitalist country the improvement of the situation of the heavy industries would absolutely necessitate the borrowing of hundreds of millions, without which no improvement could be thought of. The economic history of capitalist countries tells us that the upbuilding of heavy industries in a backward country can be accomplished only by means of long-term loans of hundreds of millions of dollars or gold roubles. So far we have received no loans of this kind. All that has been written so far about concessions and such like remains almost entirely on paper. Much has been written about these things lately, particularly about the Urquhart concession. Nevertheless it seems to me that our concession policy is an excellent one. At the same time it ought to be taken into consideration that we have not yet arranged for any real big concession. Hence the situation of the heavy industries is for our backward country a really very difficult question, since we cannot count on any loans from the wealthy states. In spite of all this, we see perceptible improvement. We also find that our trading activity has already brought us some capital. This also is of rather modest dimensions amounting to no more than twenty million gold roubles, but a start has been made. Our trading yields us the means which we can apply to the upbuilding of the heavy industries.

At the present moment, however, our heavy industries are still in a very difficult position. But I believe that we can

already afford to spare something for this purpose, and this we will continue to do even if we have to do it frequently at the expense of the population. We must be thrifty now. We are endeavouring to cut down State expenditure by curtailing the machinery of the State. As to that I will say a few words later on. At all events we must diminish State expenditure, and affect economy as far as possible. Thus we are saving on every thing, even on schools. This has to be done, because we know that without the saving and reconstruction of the heavy industries we cannot hope to upbuild any industry, and without them we cannot hope to exist as a self-sustaining country. This we know quite well. The salvation of Russia lies not only in a good harvest for her peasantry, nor in the good condition of light industries which cater for the requirements of the peasantry, but we need also the heavy industries. But the reconstruction of the heavy industries will require the work of many years.

Heavy industry requires subsidies from the State. Unless we have them, then, merely as a civilised country (to say nothing of a socialist country) we are doomed to perish. In this matter we have now taken the decisive step. We have obtained the means requisite for putting heavy industry upon its own feet. The sum that we have hitherto obtained, is, indeed, less than 20 million gold roubles—but we have it; it will be definitely applied to raising the level of our heavy industry.

I think that I have now presented to you, in general terms and cursorily, as I announced, the most important elements of our economic system. I believe that enough has been said to enable us to draw the conclusion that the new economic policy has already shown something to the credit side of the account. We have proof now that as a State we are able to trade, to safeguard the strongholds of agriculture and industry, and to advance steadily forward. Our practice has proved this. I think that is enough to get along with. We still have a lot to learn—and we know that we have a lot to learn. We have retained power for five years, and for the whole of these five years we have been at

war. Thus we have made a success of things.

This is comprehensible, because the peasants have been on our side. It would have been hard for us to find more zealous supporters than the peasants. Behind the figure of the guard they saw that of the landowner looming, and they hate the landowners more than anything in the world. That is why they were so enthusiastic as supporters: that is why they were so faithful to our cause. It was not difficult to secure that the peasants should defend us against the Whites. The peasants, who had hated war, were now in favour of the war against the Whites, did everything conceivable to support the civil war against the landowners. Nor was this all, for this merely involved the question whether the power was to be in the hands of the landowners or of the peasants. That was not enough for us. The peasants realise that we have seized power on behalf of the workers, and that our aim is to upbuild the socialist order with the aid of this power.

Herein consisted the most important question for us, the economic preparation of the socialist economy. We could not prepare this in direct fashion, but we had to do it indirectly. The State capitalism we have established is a peculiar form of State capitalism. It does not correspond to the ordinary conception of State Capitalism. We have all authority in our hands; we have the land, which belongs to the State. This is of immense importance, although our opponents are apt to declare, falsely, that it is of no importance at all. From the economic outlook, the ownership of the land by the State is of great importance; it has immense practical significance from the economic point of view. We have achieved this, and I must emphasise that our further activities must lie within this framework. We have already ensured that the peasants are satisfied with us, and that industry and commerce are on the upgrade.

I have already pointed out that our State capitalism is distinguished from State capitalism in the literal sense of the term, inasmuch as we not only have all the land in the hands of the Proletariat State, but also the important depart-

ments of industry. Above all: while we have farmed out a certain amount of small-scale and medium-scale industry, the rest of the industry remains in our hands. Regarding commerce, I should like to insist upon the point that we are endeavouring to establish, and indeed have already established, mixed companies, that is to say, companies in which part of the capital belongs to private (foreign) capitalists, while the rest belongs to us. In the first place we learn in this way how to carry on commerce and retain the possibility of dissolving the company whenever we think it necessary, so that we may be said to incur practically no risk. But from the private capitalists we are learning, and we are seeing how we are to work our way upward and what mistakes we are making. I think I have said enough anent these matters.

I should like to allude to a few minor points. It is beyond question that we have made an enormous number of foolish mistakes, and shall make plenty more. No one can possibly be a better judge of this than myself; no one can see it more clearly than I do: (Laughter).

Why did we commit these follies. The reasons are plain. First because Russia is a backward country; secondly, because it is almost uncultured; thirdly, because it has no helpers. Not one of the civilised countries gives us any assistance. On the contrary, they are all working against us. A fourth reason is the nature of our State apparatus. One of our misfortunes was that we had to take over the old State apparatus. The State apparatus often works against us. It is a matter of history that in the year 1917, when we had seized power, the State apparatus practiced sabotage against us. We were greatly alarmed, and said: "Please come back to us"—and they came back. That was our misfortune. We have now an enormous mass of officials, but we still lack a sufficient quantity of trained energies to keep them under proper control. In actual practice we often find that here at the top, where we exercise the powers of State, the apparatus works all right, whereas lower down the officials do as they please, and what they please to do is to work against our measures. At the top we have a few.—I do not know the exact number,

but I am sure it is only a few thousand, or at a maximum a few ten thousands—of our people; in the lower grades we have hundreds of thousands of officials we have bequeathed to us from Czarist days or taken over by us from capitalist society. To some extent deliberately, and to some extent unconsciously, they work against us. It is perfectly clear that we can do nothing to remedy this in any brief period. We shall have to work for years in order to modify and perfect the apparatus, and in order to attract new energies. We are doing this at a fairly rapid pace, perhaps too rapidly. We have founded Soviet schools; workers' faculties have been established in the universities; several hundred thousand young persons are learning, perhaps too quickly. But anyhow the work has been begun, and I think it will bear fruit. If we do not try to go too fast, then in a few years we shall have a mass of people who will be in a position to modify the whole apparatus fundamentally.

I have said that we have committed a large number of follies. But I must in this connection say something concerning our opponents. When these read a lecture, saying: "Lenin himself, recognises that the Bolsheviks have committed an enormous number of follies", I should like to answer them thus: "But you ought to know that our follies are of an essentially different kind from yours. We have just begun to learn, and we are learning systematically that we are satisfied with our progress. When our opponents, I mean the capitalists and the heroes of the 2nd International, insist that we have committed follies, I should like to make a comparison, modifying slightly the words of a celebrated Russian writer, so as to give them the following aspect: When the Bolsheviks commit follies, this amounts to saying that the Bolsheviks say $2+2$ equals 5; but when our opponents, i.e. the capitalists and the heroes of the Second International, commit follies, this amounts to saying that they declare $2+2$ equals 3, or wax candle. That is not difficult to prove.

Take, for example, the Treaty with Koltchak, the Treaty between America, England, France and Japan. Are there

more highly cultured and more powerful States in the world. What was the upshot. They had promised Koltchak to help him, without calculating, without thinking, without watching. This was a fiasco which hardly seems to be humanly credible.

Here is another example, an even more telling one, that of the Versailles Treaty. What have the victorious powers done? How can they find any issue for the present confusion I do not think that I exaggerate when I repeat that our follies are as nothing in comparison with the follies committed by the capitalist States, the capitalist world, and the Second International in conjunction. That is why I think that the prospects of the world revolution (this is a theme upon which I propose to touch briefly) are good, and in certain conditions are likely to become even better. It is upon these conditions that I propose to say a few words.

At the Third Congress of 1921, we adopted a resolution concerning the organisatory upbuilding of the Communist Parties, and concerning the method and the substance of their work. It was a good resolution. But the resolution is almost exclusively Russian: it was wholly derived for a study of Russian developments. That is the good side of the resolution, but it is also the bad side. It is the bad side of the resolution because hardly any foreigner (I have read the resolution over again before expressing my conviction) is able to read it. In the first place it is too long, for it contains 50 or more paragraphs. Foreigners are apt to find it impossible to read anything of this sort. In the next place, even if a foreigner should manage to read it through, it is too Russian. I do not mean because it was written in the Russian language, for there are excellent translations into the various languages, but because it is permeated with the Russian spirit. Thirdly, if by a rare chance, a foreigner could understand it, he could not possibly carry it out. That is the third defect.

I have talked matters over with some of the delegates and I hope that in the later course of the Congress I shall find it possible (not at the Congress itself, for in that I am unfortunately not able to participate) to talk matters over in full

detail with a larger number of delegates from various lands. My impression is that we made a great mistake in the matter of this resolution, thereby blocking our own advance.

Let me repeat, it is an excellent resolution. I myself endorse every one of its 50 or more paragraphs. But we did not really know what we were about when we turned to foreigners with our Russian experience. Everything in the resolution has remained a dead letter. If we fail to understand why, we shall make no progress.

I think the most important for us all, Russians and foreigners alike is that after 5 years of the Russian Revolution, we should set ourselves to school. Now for the first time we have the possibility of learning. I do not know how long this possibility will last. I do not know how long the capitalist powers will give us the opportunity of learning in peace and quietude. But we must utilise every moment in which we are free from war, that we may learn, and learn from the bottom up.

The whole Party, and Russian at large, show by their hunger for culture, that they are aware of this. The aspiration for culture proves that our most important task consists in this, to learn and to go on learning. But foreigners too, must learn, though not in the sense in which we have to learn namely, to read, to write, and to understand what is read. This is our lack. There is much dispute as to whether such things belong to proletarian culture or to bourgeois culture. I leave the question open. This much is certain that our first task must be to learn reading and writing and understanding what is read. In foreign lands this is no longer necessary.

Foreigners need something different. They need something higher. First of all they have to learn how to understand all that we have written about the organisational upbuilding of the Communist Parties, which they have subscribed without reading it, or without understanding it. You foreign comrades must make this your first duty. This resolution must be carried into effect: these things cannot be done between one day and the next, it is absolutely impossible. The resolution is too Russian; it is a reflection of Rus-

sian experience; that is why it cannot be understood by foreigners, and why foreigners are not content to treat this resolution as a miraculous picture which they are to hang on the wall and pray to. That sort of attitude will not help us forward. You will have to make a portion of Russian experience your own. How can it be done. I do not know. Perhaps the Fascists in Italy will do a good turn by showing the Italian how, after all, they are not so highly cultured that the development of Black Hundreds in Italy has become impossible. This may have a good effect. We Russians must also look for means of explaining to foreigners the elements of this reason. Otherwise it will be absolutely impossible for them to carry it out.

I am confident that in this sense we have to say, not only for the Russians but for foreigners as well, that the most important thing for us all in the period now opening, is to learn. We Russians have to learn in the general sense. You have to learn in the special sense that you may gain a genuine understanding of the organisation, structure, method and substance of revolutionary work. If you do this, I am confident that the prospects for the world revolution are not merely favourable, but splendid.

(Loud and long-continued applause, a general acclamation, "Long Live Comrade Lenin").

Zetkin. Germany. Comrades: five years ago, so today the Russian revolution stands before us as the most formidable historic event of the present period. Scarcely had this giant stretched its mighty limbs, and had plunged into the stubborn and passionate struggle for his existence and further development, than cleavages occurred within the working class of all countries, which were more acute than they had ever been before. "Long live Reform," "Long live the revolution!" Such was from all sides the reply to the call of the Russian revolution. This situation gives to the Russian revolution a quite definite and far reaching significance. About the middle of the 90's of the last century, a definite political orientation had arisen within the working class which was so to speak the ideological sediment of the imperialist capitalism and of its repercussion on

conditions of the working class. Theoretically, we called this orientation — revisionism, and in practice it was opportunism. What was its nature? Its opinion was that the revolution had become superfluous and avoidable. The revisionists, the reformists of today, asserted that capitalism produces within itself the organisational forms which overcome or at least palliate the imminent economic and social conflicts, thus neutralising the theories of impoverishment, crises, and catastrophes. According to their conception, capitalism itself no longer created the objective factors of an indispensable and inevitable revolution. Owing to the same concertion, another social factor of the revolution — the workers' will for revolution — was eliminated. It was asserted that democracy and social reform gradually undermine capitalism, that society would merge from capitalism into socialism. This conception was repudiated in theory at the party conferences of the social-democrats, the leading party of the II International. It was rejected in 1903 and 1906 at the International Congresses in Paris and Amsterdam. Nevertheless, it became more and more the practice within the parties of the II International. This was already apparent in the attitude of the Stuttgart, Copenhagen, and Basle Congresses on the question of imperialism, militarism and the impending world war.

The world war broke out. The bourgeoisie of the belligerent countries philosophised with machine-guns, tanks, submarines and with aircraft from which death and destruction was spread broadcast. During the course of the war it became quite evident that it was nothing less than a supreme crisis, that it would end in a terrible catastrophe of world capitalism. It is the bitter irony of history that during the process of the development of affairs, the majority of the organised working class of the highly developed capitalist countries clung to the anti-revolutionary theory, the theory of reformism. This, on the outbreak of war, led to the ignominious failure of the II International. The proletariat did not respond to the lesson of the world war by an International alliance for world revolution and for a general settlement of accounts with capitalism. On the con-

rary, it responded by the alliance of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie of their respective so-called Fatherlands. When at the conclusion of the world war, capitalism proved itself incapable of overcoming the catastrophe, when the bourgeoisie showed that it was incapable and unwilling to reconstruct the world out of the chaos which had been created, the opportunist leaders of the working class clung all the more tenaciously to their theory of reformism. They gave it a new interpretation. They said that socialism and communism will arise not out of the collapse of capitalism, but out of its reconstruction and its revival. They said that the evils and the sufferings of the war will be overcome and society will be again restored, not through revolutionary class struggle, but only through co-operation, through harmonious collaboration of the classes, in fact through the bourgeois and proletarian coalition. Their slogan is not revolution for the establishment of society on a communist basis, but an alliance with the bourgeoisie for the reconstruction of capitalism.

Comrades! in this stifling atmosphere the Russian revolution acted like a thunderstorm. The Russian proletariat was the first, and unfortunately is hitherto the only one (apart from that in the small soviet republics which sprung up within the former Russian Empire) which drew logical and practical conclusions from the imperialist war and from the collapse of capitalism. The Russian revolution commenced the actual liquidation of revisionism, of reformism, the liquidation which will be finally accomplished by the world revolution. The Russian revolution has expressed quite clearly the will and determination of the proletarian masses to put an end to capitalism once and for all. It is the first mighty action of the world revolution which is the supreme judgment over capitalism.

Comrades! the mensheviks, the social-revolutionaries and their brothers outside Russia have certainly assured the world that they represent the theory that the Russian revolution is nothing but a small national affair, and must be kept within the limits of a purely bourgeois revolution. The aim must be reversion to the February (March) revolution. There is no doubt whatever that the Russian revolu-

tion gave expression to the historic conditions which, on Russian territory, made for the destruction of Tsarism and for the establishment of new political forms of government. At the same time, from the first day of its existence, the Russian revolution proved itself to be not a small national affair, but rather the big affair of the world proletariat. It has shown that it cannot be forced into the narrow limits of a mere political bourgeois revolution, because it is part of the powerful proletarian world revolution. The Russian revolution does not only give expression to revolutionary social factors, the objective and subjective tendencies of which sprung up on Russian territory. It also gives expression to the social and revolutionary tendencies and forces of international capitalism and of the world bourgeois society. This is evident from the fact that the world revolution was an outcome of the world war which was not a casual event, but the inevitable consequence of the economic and political world conditions under the domination of finance capital and of imperialist capitalism. The Russian revolution gives expression to all the economic, political and social conditions which were created by the imperialist world capitalism in Russia itself, as well as in other countries. Moreover, the Russian revolution is the embodiment and the crystallisation of the proletariat of all countries. International revolutionary socialism, the spiritual and moral forces, were aroused by and are active in the Russian revolution.

Thus the Russian revolution is to the world proletarian masses the supreme expression of the life, the strength and the firmness of the social factors of historic development, of the conscience, the will, the action and the struggle of the proletarian masses for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of communism. It has been asserted that the fact of the Proletarian Revolution having begun is due to the weakness of the Russian bourgeoisie. It is said that it is only owing to the weakness of the bourgeoisie in Russia that the revolution has taken the formidable and menacing form it has. This is true comrades, but only to a certain extent. I venture to say that the strength of the revolutionary will and of the revolutionary actions of the Russian

proletariat, which, imbued with the revolutionary spirit, and having received the ideological training from the Bolshevik Party, became the arbiters of the world destiny, were more important factors in making Russia the birth-place of the Revolution than the weakness of the bourgeoisie. My conception is borne out by the fact that the Russian proletariat was certainly able, at the outbreak of the revolution, to overpower and overthrow the comparatively weak Russian bourgeoisie. The further triumph of the revolution, its continuance during five years, every day of which was a day of struggle against the powerful world bourgeoisie, is a proof that there was something stronger and more decisive operating in the Russian revolution than the weakness of the Russian bourgeoisie. It was the strength, the passionate determination, the perseverance, in fact the determined will for revolution which inspired the proletarian masses under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party.

Comrades, it was clear from the beginning that the revolution in Russia could not be a bourgeois revolution in view of the character of its most important social factor the proletariat and of the nature of the revolution itself. Louder and louder was the demand: peace through revolution! the land for the peasants! workers' control of production and above all the watchword: all power to the Soviets! Such demands are incompatible with a bourgeois revolution. It is true that these demands were kept in the background in the first and did not attain their full significance during the February (March) revolution. But they gained ground, became more influential, and from being mere propagandist watchwords they became objects for struggle.

The bourgeoisie was prepared for this revolution. It was strongly organised in the zemstvos, the dumas of the large towns, and in many industrial unions and leagues which sprang up during the world war. The Russian proletariat, on the other hand, had no revolutionary fighting organisation. It created them in the course of the revolution in the shape of Soviets. It is significant that the Soviets did not at first initiate the struggle on a revolutionary basis, for revolutionary aims and with revolutionary deter-

mination. In the beginning the mensheviks and the social revolutionaries played the most important role in them. They fostered within the Russian proletariat the spirit which makes for reformism and the voluntary relinquishing of power to the bourgeoisie, viz., the fear of responsibility and lack of confidence in its own strength. It is significant that the conference of 82 delegates of workers' and soldiers' soviets, which met in Petrograd in 1917, brought forward a resolution which said that the struggle between capital and labour must take account of the conditions created by the war situation and by the still incomplete revolution. The form of the struggle must be determined according to the conditions. The faint-heartedness of the Russian proletariat and even of its best elements, those who are organised in the trade unions, was expressed in the Third Conference of the All-Russian Trade Unions which took place on the 20th of June of that year. This conference revealed the growing influence of the Bolshevik Party as the revolutionary party of the proletariat. Among other radical demands was that for working class control of production. But, they added, the proletariat cannot alone accept the responsibility for the control of national economy. This task is so difficult, so complicated, that all productive elements, all sections of the population must be drawn into its workings. This position of the organised workers is a sign of the coalition policy between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, which has been carried on by the petty bourgeois, reformist, socialist and social revolutionary parties since the March revolution. This was, in truth and in deed, bourgeois politics, the democratic expression of capitalist class rule. Instead of peace they had the June offensive, instead of satisfying the land hunger of the peasants they were shooting down the rioting mujiks, instead of control of production for the restoration of national economy, they had the renouncing of all social reforms, and the exploitation and sabotage of industry through the capitalists and their opposition to the demand for All Power to the Soviets. The democracy in its struggle against the revolutionary working class

soon showed what value it placed upon its principles. It revealed itself more and more as the undisguised class rule of the bourgeoisie, merging into a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The coalitionist, socialistic, petty bourgeois and intellectual clearly united to the bourgeoisie, did not wish to go beyond the limits of a bourgeois political revolution; this brought us to the verge of a dictatorship even in the month of September. And behind the dictatorship whether it be a militarist one or one of Kerensky—it matters not, there loomed the restoration of Tsarism. In this moment the proletariat, under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, sprang into the arena. They chased the beautiful government of "pure democracy" to the devil, and centred all the State power in the Councils of Workers' Soldiers' and Peasants' through whose representatives a Provisional Government was established. In this decisive historical moment, the proletariat proved that it had lost its mistrust in its own power and gained courage with which to assume the responsibilities of carrying out the tasks of destroying an old world and building up a new one. The Russian proletariat was the first, and until now, the only working class which has ceased being the object of history and has assumed a subjective historical position; it no longer suffers history to mould it, but it creates history.

The seizure of power by the proletariat, under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, taught us one great lesson. It is the necessity and the significance of armed revolution, even by a minority. But this lesson of the Russian Revolution draws a very sharp distinction. It shows how wrong historically are our little book-keeper politicians, those who want to reduce the revolution to a sum in addition and subtraction, those glib talkers who believe that the struggle for the seizure of power by the working class should only be undertaken when conditions "allow"; namely, those who wish to secure such a majority for the revolutionary struggle that its result is a foregone conclusion. This conception reduces the idea of revolution to that of an insurance company in good standing which pays promptly, and in gold at

that. These misconceptions were shattered by the Russian revolution.

But the revolutionary action of the proletariat of Petrograd and Moscow also exclude all romantic Putsch adventures. It was not the act of an intrepid little party which, without any close connection with the proletarian masses, launched revolutionary slogans and formulae into the void. No, the revolutionary acts of the Bolsheviks was the heroic deed of an organised minority party which had already assured itself on contact with the masses on an extensive scale and which was deeply rooted in the masses.

In history the seizure of power by the Soviets under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, appears as a brilliant isolated deed, as though it were accomplished at one stroke. But such was not the case. This intrepid deed was preceded by months of the most zealous and tenacious propaganda and organisation work by the Bolsheviks among the masses. Not only was the support of the broad masses assured them through this struggle, but the Bolshevik war-cries were understood by the masses and they made them their aims of struggle. So the act of revolution was not a revolutionary acrobatic feat of a daring little party, but a revolutionary deed of the great revolutionary masses. The most decisive factor was the daring: whether it would be victory or defeat could in no way be foretold. But they neither could nor would forego the attempt. He who wishes to postpone a revolutionary act until the victory is certain, postpones victory to the days of St. Never, since he thus not only declines the revolutionary struggle, but actually renounces the revolution. The revolutionary work of a party can be ever so skilful and its propaganda ever so diligently spread among the proletarian masses, yet victory is never assured. One must dare in order to win. The Bolsheviks, the revolutionary proletariat, won the fight in the Russian revolution in their first daring uprising, only because they had the courage to dare. That is the lesson of the Russian Revolution, which the workers of all countries must take to heart. It is well to look before you leap, but don't be so occupied in looking that you forget to leap. The preliminary period of preparation before the revolution is

only for the strengthening of our forces so that we may advance.

Comrades, as soon as the Russian workers supported by the Russian peasants had seized political power and were proceeding to build up their dictatorship through the Soviet system, another historical truth came to light. It was the truth which Engels expressed in a letter to Bebel of December 11th 1884: a complete refutation of the babblings of the reformist of all countries, that democracy is the only road by which the emancipation of the proletariat may be attained. It does not reach the harmonious coalition with the bourgeoisie. Engels knew that on the day of the revolutionary crisis and after the revolution, the proletariat could have no more furious and bitter enemies than the "pure democrats." But let me read this quotation to you:

"Pure democracy, in the period of revolution may assume new importance as the last safety anchor. That is why the so called feudal bureaucratic forces in the period from March to September 1848) supported the liberals in order to keep the revolutionary masses down. In any case, our only enemy in the day of crisis and afterwards, will be the reactionary forces grouped around the pure democracy; and this I believe should not be lost sight of."

Comrades, it is remarkable that the reformist gentlemen—those gentlemen who are so busy in using Marx and Engels to oppose the Russian Revolution and the conception of the proletarian revolution, those gentlemen who are so busy singing in many tongues the praises of democracy—these gentlemen seem to have forgotten completely this particular view of Engels. The Russian revolution has plainly shown how correct Engel was. Even on the very day of the revolution and in the time immediately succeeding the establishment of Soviet Power, the democrats came forward as the bitterest enemies of proletarian class rule. This "pure democracy" was regarded by the Russian proletariat since the revolution as the class rule of capital, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The solution advocated by the democrats in their struggle against Soviet rule, was the Constituent Assembly opposed to the Soviets. The democrats

opposed to the Soviet power which was the creation of the revolution, demanded the Constituent Assembly. The democrats had had about eight months in which to elect and assemble the Constituent Assembly. But they did not do this: neglecting to carry into life what they had characterised as the purest expression of the will of the people. Why? The Constituent Assembly could have assembled without raising the menacing spectre of the proletarian and peasant revolution. There was the spectre of the agrarian revolution in the form of the peasants for land and peace. There was the danger of the proletarian revolution in the control of production. Therefore, the democrats continually postponed, first the election of the Constituent Assembly, and then its convocation. Then suddenly, the demand for the Constituent Assembly was made the battle cry of the pure democrats, in order to overthrow the Soviet power. The Constituent Assembly was declared to be something sacred, the only way by which a proper system of government could be created. The petty bourgeois socialists, the reformists, in alliance with the bourgeois parties in all countries, were not the only ones to demand the Constituent Assembly. This demand found an echo even in our own revolutionary rank. I wish to remind you that no less a person than the great theoretician of communism Rosa Luxemburg, at one time put forward the same demand, namely: the Constituent Assembly and the Soviets as backbone of the proletarian state. The significance of this demand may be seen from the fact that it made its appearance again a short time ago. During the Kronstadt uprising a section of the social revolutionaries, and even the leader of the Cadets Milukov, raised the cry for Constituent Assembly and the Soviets; but naturally Soviets without communists, in other words, the body without a soul, words without action. But, aside from this, what was the situation after the conquest of power by the proletariat? Is there any justification for the opposition to the revolutionary government which still exists in certain circles of the working class on account of its having disbanded the Constituent Assembly when it first met in council

on January 5th? Let us examine the circumstances carefully. The Constituent Assembly declared from the very start that it did not intend to co-operate with the Soviets, but to oppose them. It denied the right of the Soviets as a State power, thereby denying the revolution itself. The Socialist Revolutionists, the Menshevik and the bourgeois majority, refused to recognise the Soviet power and provisional government. They even refused to discuss the question. The Bolsheviks in the Constituent Assembly, and with them the Left Wing of the Socialist Revolutionists, answered this arrogant declaration of war as it should have been answered. They left the Constituent Assembly, and the Soviets declared the Assembly dissolved and had it dispersed. Many critics of the Russian Revolution among the European and American proletariat acknowledged the correctness of this policy of the Bolsheviks, which was really the policy of the Revolution. The Soviet power was justified in dispersing the Constituent Assembly, the Assembly had been elected under different conditions and no longer represented the views and the will of the large masses of the working class. The following elections to the Soviets proved this definitely. But, said these critics, the Soviet Government should at once have proceeded with new elections. New elections, however, were not to be thought of, not only for technical reasons which were then advanced, such as the bad state of the means of transportation, the disconnection between the centres of political life, and the far-off districts of the country, and the resulting impossibility to elect an Assembly which would really represent the will of the people. There were other reasons of deeper historical and political significance against it. To call a Constituent Assembly, and to place the decision as to the form of Government in its hands would have been nothing less than to deny the right of the Soviet power and of the Revolution itself. What could possibly be the role of the Constituent Assembly acting beside the Soviets? Should the Constituent Assembly be merely a deliberating body and the decisions left in the hands of the Soviets? This would not have agreed at all with the demands

for a "pure democracy". The "pure democracy" would not be content with an advisory capacity, it wanted to rule. But the Soviet power could not allow itself to become reduced to an advisory body. The Russian proletariat could not have shared its power with the bourgeoisie after the revolution had placed it entirely in its hands. Such a dual government could not long exist; this dualism would have led inevitably and very soon to a struggle for power between the Constituent Assembly and the Soviets. The work of the revolution would have been endangered. The existence of the Constituent Assembly beside the Soviets would have given the counter-revolution a legal rallying point to carry on its illegal and legal work against the revolution. Therefore, down with the Constituent Assembly, all power to the Soviets! This was the only possible slogan if the political power were to remain in the hands of the proletariat.

Another measure of the Russian Revolution aroused the indignation of the critics of the Russian Revolution, namely the Soviet Electoral law. This electoral law, as is well known, limited the right of suffrage in so far as it denies it to all exploiters. Employers of labour can neither vote nor be elected to office. Outside of these, all workers above 18 enjoy the suffrage right. This limitation of the suffrage right was necessary for the political expropriation of the bourgeoisie. The Soviet regime places the State power in the hands of the working masses. In shops and in all villages, they elect representatives to the Soviet. Since the bourgeoisie can neither vote nor be elected to office, there was no danger that they might regain any portion of the political power.

Some people have said that the refusal of the suffrage right was a petty measure which deterred many creative talents from working for the reconstruction of the new order. Of course, the number of bourgeois who lost their suffrage right was very small; but its social and economic power was still considerable. The proletariat fighting for power could not give to the bourgeoisie even the smallest particle of its political power and political rights.

Furthermore, the denial of the suffrage

right was a brand mark of social contempt. He who did not work, be it with brain or with hand, he who existed as the exploiter and parasite in society had no right to decide upon the political and social construction of the new regime. There is another consideration why the Soviet power deprived the exploiting class of the right to vote. The suffrage right is a political and legal expression of the character of a society. The right to vote shows the economic basis of the society, the right and power of its various classes. The spread of suffrage in the bourgeois order after their evolution meant only that political rights and political power passed from the old feudal land owners to the capitalist exploiters. It suffered property, income and tax limitations. The introduction of universal suffrage meant that a new class was arising besides the owning class, that of the producers. Universal suffrage meant that in addition to property, human labour and the social services of the individual are also rewarded by political power and political rights. The Soviet regime however, does not base its social order on the division of power between bourgeois and proletariat, between the owning and labouring class, but upon the working class alone. In accordance with this character of the Soviet government as a workers' government, the suffrage right could be granted only to the workers, but not to the employers.

It was not sufficient, comrades, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the Soviet Republic, be created on paper and so many paragraphs. It had to become an actual fact. This could be achieved only in the fight against the bourgeoisie, and the counter-revolution. The Soviet State had to defend itself from the very first day of its existence not only against the Russian bourgeoisie but also against the bourgeoisie of the whole world, which was in complete solidarity with it from the start. It had to fight the counter-revolution at home on all fronts. The young proletarian power had to be defended against both internal and external enemies.

The first word of the Soviets was the word of peace. But not peace in a pacifist sense, as I will show later. Since Russia demobilised, retired from the war.

But what was the answer it received to its word of peace? The armies of the German Imperialists in whose ranks were the social-democrats with the Erfurt program in their knapsacks hurled themselves on Petrograd and invaded the Ukraine and other territories. The Entente launched an attack upon the Soviet power and rendered political, financial, and military assistance to the counter-revolution. A Red Army had to be created if the Soviet power was to be saved. It meant the organisation and use of force against force. Besides the Red Army, which was one of the forms of the force called for the defence of the existence and independence of the Workers' Government on the battlefield, there was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the Terror. Both these forms of force were an unavoidable historical necessity, as harsh weapons of self-defence if the Soviet State was to survive and develop. Because of the influence of reformist leaders there are still large masses of the working class who do not understand the historical necessity and the real nature of terror. They abuse the Red Army as an expression of Soviet Imperialism; they were especially indignant over the "barbarism" of the Terror. But let us look at things as they really are: The red terror was the answer of the Russian Revolution to the White Terror of the more powerful bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie not only attempted to destroy the political power of the workers by plots and insurrections, it also used its whole influence to prevent the reconstruction of the social and economic life of the country. The Soviet Terror was nothing but an unavoidable policy of self-defence. The tasks of the Russian Revolution was that which Karl Marx had designated in his treatise "The Class War in France" as the first duty of any revolution; it had to destroy its enemy. Besides destroying the enemy, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Terror had still another task; to discourage the counter-revolution, to rob it of its last hope of ever re-establishing the rule of the exploiters. A revolution is not a young maiden wandering in white robes with a green palm in her hand. It

could only come armed with shield and sword to oppose its enemies. The acts of terror of the proletarian dictatorship are not arbitrary acts of the revolution. They had a big purpose. It was an evil to prevent a worse evil. The Terror was a necessary act of self defence. Some weep over the hundreds, the thousands who have fallen in the civil war as victims of the Terror. Some tear their hair in despair over the strangulation of democracy, and bourgeois liberties by the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, by the Terror. But no one speaks of the tens of thousands who have fallen as victims of the counter-revolution. No one speaks of the tens of thousands more who would have met the same fate had it not been that the counter revolution was defeated by force. None of the reformists mention the facts that were it not for the severe measure of the revolution, millions and millions would still be suffering from the barbarian capitalist oppression and exploitation, the prey of misery and death.

(Comrades, will you permit me a short rest).

Chairman: Comrade Zetkin asks to be allowed a pause (loud applause). I see no opposition. The Delegation may retreat to the back of the hall where the translations of the first part of Comrade Zetkin's speech will be made.

The presidium proposes to postpone the continuation of today's agenda to tomorrow morning at 11 o'clock.

The following commissions will meet today: At 7 o'clock: the small commission with the Communist Party of Italy.

At 8 o'clock: the small commission with the Italian Maximalists.

At 9—30 o'clock: the Norwegian Commission in the small hall of the Kremlin.

At 9—30 o'clock: the Spanish Delegation in the Hotel Luxe, Room 3.

At 9—30: the Negro Commission in the Grand Paris.

The French Commission cannot meet today, since the Comrades appointed to it must take part in the meeting of the Italian Commission.

The session is adjourned.

Adjournment at 4.8 in the afternoon.