

Trotsky Leon

**Dictatorship vs. Democracy
(Terrorism and Communism):
a reply to...**



Leon Trotsky
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Trotsky Leon

Dictatorship vs. Democracy

(Terrorism and Communism):

a reply to Karl Kantsky

Foreword

By Max Bedact

In a land where "democracy" is so deeply entrenched as in our United States of America it may seem futile to try to make friends for a dictatorship, by a close comparison of the principles of the two – Dictatorship versus Democracy. But then, confiding in the inviting gesture of the Goddess of Liberty many of our friends and fellow citizens have tested that sacred principle of democracy, freedom of speech, a little too freely – and landed in the penitentiary for it. Others again, relying on the not less sacred principle of democracy, freedom of assembly, have come in unpleasant contact with a substantial stick of hardwood, wielded by an unwieldily guardian of the law, and awoke from the immediate effects of this collision in some jail.

Again others, leaning a little too heavily against the democratic principle of freedom of press broke down that pasteboard pillar of democracy, and incidentally into prison.

Looking at this side of the bright shining medal of our beloved democracy it seems that there is not the slightest bit of difference between the democracy of capitalist America and the dictatorship of Soviet Russia. But there is a great difference. The dictatorship in Russia is bold and upright class rule, which has as its ultimate object the abolition of all class rule and all dictatorships. Our democracy, on the other hand, is a Pecksniffian Dictatorship, is hypocrisy incarnate, promising all liberty in phrases, but in reality even penalizing free thinking, consistently working only for one object: to perpetuate the rule of the capitalist class, the capitalist dictatorship.

"Dictatorship versus Democracy" is, therefore, enough of an open question even in our own country to deserve some consideration. To give food for thought on this subject is the object of the publication of Trotsky's book.

This book is an answer to a book by Karl Kautsky, "Terrorism and Communism." It is polemical in character. Polemical writings are, as a rule, only thoroughly understood if one reads both sides of the question. But even if we could not take for granted that the proletarian reader is fully familiar with the question at issue we could not conscientiously advise a worker to get Kautsky's book. It is really asking our readers to undertake the superhuman task of reading a book which in the guise of a

scientific treatise is foully hitting him below the belt, and then expect him to pay two dollars for it in the bargain.

Anyhow, to read Kautsky's book is an ordeal for any revolutionist. Kautsky, in his book, tries to prove that the humanitarian instincts of the masses must defeat any attempt to overpower and suppress the bourgeoisie by terrorist means. But to read his book must kill in the proletarian reader the last remnants of those instincts on which Kautsky's hope for the safety of the bourgeoisie is based. There would even not be enough of those instincts left to save Kautsky from the utter contempt of the proletarian masses, a fate he so richly deserves.

Mr. Kautsky was once the foremost exponent of Marxism. Many of those fighting to-day in the front ranks of the proletarian army revered Kautsky as their teacher. But even in his most glorious days as a Marxist his was the musty pedantry of the German professor, which was hardly ever penetrated by a live spark of revolutionary spirit. Still, the Russian revolution of 1905 found a friend in him. That revolution did not commit the unpardonable sin of being successful. But when the tornado of the first victorious proletarian revolution swept over Russia and destroyed in its fury some of the tormentors and exploiters of the working class – then Kautsky's "humanitarianism" killed the last remnant of revolutionary spirit and instinct in him and left only a pitiful wreck of an apologist for capitalism, that was once Kautsky, the Marxist.

July, 1914. The echoes of the shots fired in Sarajewo threaten

to set the world in flames. Will it come, the seeming inevitable? No! – A thousand times no! Had not the forces of a future order, had not the International of Labor – the Second International – solemnly declared in 1907 in Stuttgart, in 1911 in Copenhagen and in 1912 in Basel: "We will fight war by all means at our disposal. Let the exploiters start a war. It will begin as a war of capitalist governments against each other; it will end – it must end – as a war of the working class of the world against world capitalism; it must end in the proletarian revolution." We, the socialists of the world, comrades from England and Russia, from America and Germany, from France and Austria; we comrades from all over the world, had solemnly promised ourselves: "War against war!" We had promised ourselves and our cause to answer the call of capitalism for a world war with a call on the proletariat for a world revolution.

Days passed. July disappeared in the ocean of time. The first days of August brought the booming of the cannon to our ears, messengers of the grim reality of war. And then the news of the collapse of the Second International; reports of betrayal by the socialists; betrayal in London and Vienna; betrayal in Berlin and Brussels; betrayal in Paris; betrayal everywhere. What would Kautsky say to this rank betrayal, Kautsky, the foremost disciple of Marx, Kautsky, the foremost theoretician of the Second International? Will he at least speak up? He did not speak up. Commenting on the betrayal he wrote in "Die Neue Zeit": "Die Kritik der Waffen hat eingesetzt; jetzt hat die Waffe der

Kritik zu schweigen."¹ With this one sentence Kautsky replaced Marxism as the basis of his science with rank and undisguised hypocrisy. From then on although trying to retain the toga of a Marxist scholar on his shoulders, with thousands of "if's" and "when's" and "but's" he became the apologist for the betrayal of the German Social-Democracy, and the betrayal of the Second International.

It is true that his "if's" and "when's" and "but's" did not satisfy the Executive Committee of the Social-Democratic Party. They hoped for a victory of the imperial army and wanted to secure a full and unmitigated share of the glory of "His Majesty's" victory. That is why they did not appreciate Kautsky's excellent service. So they helped the renegade to a cheap martyrdom by removing him from the editorship of "Die Neue Zeit." After 1918 it may have dawned upon Scheidemann and Ebert how much better Kautsky served the capitalist cause by couching his betrayal in words that did not lose him outright all the confidence of the proletariat. And Kautsky himself is now exhausting every effort to prove to Noske and Scheidemann how cruelly he was mistreated and how well he deserves to be taken back to their bosom.

Kautsky's book "Terrorism and Communism" is dictated by hatred of the Russian revolution. It is influenced by fear of a like revolution in Germany. It is written with tears for the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie and its pseudo-"socialist"

¹ The arbitrament of arms is on; now the weapon of criticism must rest.

henchmen who have been sacrificed on the altar of revolution by the proletarian dictatorship in Russia. Kautsky prefers to sacrifice the revolution and the revolutionists on the altar of "humanitarianism." The author of "Ethics and the Materialist Conception of History" knows – must know – that humanitarianism under capitalism is capitalist humanitarianism. This humanitarianism mints gold out of the bones, the blood, the health and the suffering of the whole working class while it sheds tears about an individual case of cruelty to one human being. This humanitarianism punishes murder with death and beats to death the pacifist who protests against war as an act of mass murder. Under the cloak of "humanitarian instincts" Kautsky only hides the enemy of the proletarian revolution. The question at issue is not *terrorism*. It is the *dictatorship*; it is *revolution* itself. If the Russian proletariat was justified in taking over power it was in duty bound to use *all* means necessary to keep it. If it is a crime for them to use terrorist means then it was a crime to take a power which they could maintain only by terrorist means. And that is really Kautsky's point. The crime of the Bolsheviki is that they took power. If Kautsky were a mere sentimentalist and yet a revolutionist he could shed tears over the unwillingness of the bourgeoisie to give up power without a struggle. But not being a revolutionist he condemns the proletariat for having taken and maintained power by the only means possible, by *force*. Kautsky would much prefer to shed crocodile tears over tens of thousands of proletarian revolutionists slaughtered by a successful counter-

revolution. He scorns the Russian Communists because they robbed him of the opportunity to parade his petit bourgeois and consequently pro-capitalist "humanitarian" sentiments in a pro-revolutionary cloak. But he must parade them at any cost. So he parades them without disguise as a mourner for the suppressed bourgeoisie in Russia.

Trotsky's answer to Kautsky is not only one side of a controversy. It is one of the literary fruits of the revolution itself. It breathes the breath of revolution. It conquers the gray scholastic theory of the renegade with the irresistible weapon of the revolutionary experience of the Russian proletariat. It refuses to shed tears over the victims of Gallifet and shows what alone saved the Russian revolution from the Russian Gallifets, the Kolchaks, Wrangels, etc.

Trotsky's book is not only an answer to Karl Kautsky; it is an answer to the thousands of Kautskys in the socialist movement the world over who want the proletariat to drown the memory of seas of proletarian blood shed by their treachery in an ocean of tears shed for the suppressed bourgeoisie of Russia.

Trotsky's book is one of the most effective weapons in the literary arsenal of the revolutionary proletariat in its fight against the social traitors for leadership of the proletarian masses.

PREFACE

By H. N. Brailsford

It has been said of the Bolsheviki that they are more interesting than Bolshevism. To those who hold to the economic interpretation of history that may seem a heresy. None the less, I believe that the personality not merely of the leaders but also of their party goes far to explain the making and survival of the Russian Revolution. To us in the West they seem a wholly foreign type. With Socialist leaders and organizations we and our fathers have been familiar for three-quarters of a century. There has been no lack of talent and even of genius among them. The movement has produced its great theorist in Marx, its orator in Jaurès, its powerful tacticians like Bebel, and it has influenced literature in Morris, Anatole France and Shaw. It bred, however, no considerable man of action, and it was left for the Russians to do what generations of Western Socialists had spent their lives in discussing. There was in this Russian achievement an almost barbaric simplicity and directness. Here were men who really believed the formulæ of our theorists and the resolutions of our Congresses. What had become for us a sterilized and almost respectable orthodoxy rang to their ears as a trumpet call to

action. The older generation has found it difficult to pardon their sincerity. The rest of us want to understand the miracle.

The real audacity of the Bolsheviks lay in this, that they made a proletarian revolution precisely in that country which, of all portions of the civilized world, seemed the least prepared for it by its economic development. For an agrarian revolt, for the subdivision of the soil, even for the overthrow of the old governing class, Russia was certainly ready. But any spontaneous revolution, with its foundations laid in the masses of the peasantry, would have been individualistic and not communistic. The daring of the Bolsheviks lay in their belief that the minute minority of the urban working class could, by its concentration, its greater intelligence and its relative capacity for organization, dominate the inert peasant mass, and give to their outbreak of land-hunger the character and form of a constructive proletarian revolution. The bitter struggle among Russian parties which lasted from March, 1917, down to the defeat of Wrangel in November, 1920, was really an internecine competition among them for the leadership of the peasants. Which of these several groups could enlist their confidence, to the extent of inducing them not merely to fight, but to accept the discipline, military and civilian, necessary for victory? At the start the Bolsheviks had everything against them. They are nearly all townsmen. They talked in terms of a foreign and very German doctrine. Few of them, save Lenin, grasped the problems of rural life at all. The landed class should at least have known the peasant

better. Their chief rivals were the Social Revolutionaries, a party which from its first beginnings had made a cult of the Russian peasant, studied him, idealized him and courted him, which even seemed in 1917 to have won him. Many circumstances explain the success of the Bolsheviks, who proved once again in history the capacity of the town, even when its population is relatively minute, for swift and concentrated action. They also had the luck to deal with opponents who committed the supreme mistake of invoking foreign aid. But none of these advantages would have availed without an immense superiority of character. The Slav temperament, dreamy, emotional, undisciplined, showed itself at its worst in the incorrigible self-indulgence of the more aristocratic "Whites," while the "intellectuals" of the moderate Socialist and Liberal groups have been ruined for action by their exclusively literary and æsthetic education. The Bolsheviks may be a less cultivated group, but, in their underground life of conspiracy, they had learned sobriety, discipline, obedience, and mutual confidence. Their rigid dogmatic Marxist faith gives to them the power of action which belongs only to those who believe without criticism or question. Their ability to lead depends much less than most Englishmen suppose, on their ruthlessness and their readiness to practise the arts of intimidation and suppression. Their chief asset is their self-confidence. In every emergency they are always sure that they have the only workable plan. They stand before the rest of Russia as one man. They never doubt or despair, and even when they compromise, they do it

with an air of truculence. Their survival amid invasion, famine, blockade, and economic collapse has been from first to last a triumph of the unflinching will and the fanatical faith. They have spurred a lazy and demoralized people to notable feats of arms and to still more astonishing feats of endurance. To hypnotize a nation in this fashion is, perhaps, the most remarkable feat of the human will in modern times.

This book is, so far, by far the most typical expression of the Bolshevik temperament which the revolution has produced. Characteristically it is a polemic, and not a constructive essay. Its self-confidence, its dash, even its insolence, are a true expression of the movement. Its author bears a world-famous name. Everyone can visualize the powerful head, the singularly handsome features, the athletic figure of the man. He makes in private talk an impression of decision and definiteness. He is not rapid or expansive in speech, for everything that he says is calculated and clear cut. One has the sense that one is in the presence of abounding yet disciplined vitality. The background is an office which by its military order and punctuality rebukes the habitual slovenliness of Russia. On the platform his manner was much quieter than I expected. He spoke rather slowly, in a pleasant tenor voice, walking to and fro across the stage and choosing his words, obviously anxious to express his thoughts forcibly but also exactly. A flash of wit and a striking phrase came frequently, but the manner was emphatically not that of a demagogue. The man, indeed, is a natural aristocrat, and

his tendency, which Lenin, the aristocrat by birth, corrects, is towards military discipline and authoritative regimentation.

There is nothing surprising to-day in the note of authority which one hears in Trotsky's voice and detects in his writing, for he is the chief of a considerable army, which owes everything to his talent for organization. It was at Brest-Litovsk that he displayed the audacity which is genius. Up to that moment there was little in his career to distinguish him from his comrades of the revolutionary under-world – a university course cut short by prison, an apprenticeship to agitation in Russia, some years of exile spent in Vienna, Paris, and New York, the distinction which he shares with Tchitcherin of "sitting" in a British prison, a ready wit, a gift of trenchant speech, but as yet neither the solid achievement nor the legend which gives confidence. Yet this obscure agitator, handicapped in such a task by his Jewish birth, faced the diplomatist and soldiers of the Central Empires, flushed as they were with victory and the insolence of their kind, forced them into public debate, staggered them by talking of first principles as though the defeat and impotence of Russia counted for nothing, and actually used the negotiations to shout across their heads his summons to their own subjects to revolt. He showed in this astonishing performance the grace and audacity of a "matador." This unique bit of drama revealed the persistent belief of the Bolsheviki in the power of the defiant challenge, the magnetic effect of sheer will. Since this episode his services to the revolution have been more solid but not less brilliant.

He had no military knowledge or experience, yet he took in hand the almost desperate task of creating an army. He has often been compared to Carnot. But, save that both had lost officers, there was little in common between the French and the Russian armies in the early stages of the two revolutions. The French army had not been demoralized by defeat, or wearied by long inaction, or sapped by destructive propaganda. Trotsky had to create his Red Army from the foundations. He imposed firm discipline, and yet contrived to preserve the élan of the revolutionary spirit. Hampered by the inconceivable difficulties that arose from ruined railways and decayed industries, he none the less contrived to make a military machine which overthrew the armies of Kolchak, Denikin and Wrangel, with the flower of the old professional officers at their head. As a feat of organization under inordinate difficulties, his work ranks as the most remarkable performance of the revolution.

It is not the business of a preface to anticipate the argument of a book, still less to obtrude personal opinions. Kautsky's labored essay, to which this book is the brilliant reply, has been translated into English, and is widely known. The case against the possibility of political democracy in a capitalist society could hardly be better put than in these pages, and the polemic against purely evolutionary methods is formidable. The English reader of to-day is aware, however, that the Russian revolution has not stood still since Trotsky wrote. We have to realize that, even in the view of the Bolsheviks themselves, the evolution

towards Communism is in Russia only in its early stages. The recent compromises imply, at the best, a very long period of transition, through controlled capitalist production, to Socialism. Experience has proved that catastrophic revolution and the seizure of political power do not in themselves avail to make a Socialist society. The economic development in that direction has actually been retarded, and Russia, under the stress of civil war, has retrograded into a primitive village system of production and exchange. To every reader's mind the question will be present whether the peculiar temperament of the Bolsheviks has led them to over-estimate the importance of political power, to underestimate the inert resistance of the majority, and to risk too much for the illusion of dictating. To that question history has not yet given the decisive answer. The dæmonic will that made the revolution and defended it by achieving the impossible, may yet vindicate itself against the dull trend of impersonal forces.

Introduction

The origin of this book was the learned brochure by Kautsky with the same name. My work was begun at the most intense period of the struggle with Denikin and Yudenich, and more than once was interrupted by events at the front. In the most difficult days, when the first chapters were being written, all the attention of Soviet Russia was concentrated on purely military problems. We were obliged to defend first of all the very possibility of Socialist economic reconstruction. We could busy ourselves little with industry, further than was necessary to maintain the front. We were obliged to expose Kautsky's economic slanders mainly by analogy with his political slanders. The monstrous assertions of Kautsky – to the effect that the Russian workers were incapable of labor discipline and economic self-control – could, at the beginning of this work, nearly a year ago, be combatted chiefly by pointing to the high state of discipline and heroism in battle of the Russian workers at the front created by the civil war. That experience was more than enough to explode these bourgeois slanders. But now a few months have gone by, and we can turn to facts and conclusions drawn directly from the economic life of Soviet Russia.

As soon as the military pressure relaxed after the defeat of Kolchak and Yudenich and the infliction of decisive blows on Denikin, after the conclusion of peace with Esthonia and

the beginning of negotiations with Lithuania and Poland, the whole country turned its mind to things economic. And this one fact, of a swift and concentrated transference of attention and energy from one set of problems to another – very different, but requiring not less sacrifice – is incontrovertible evidence of the mighty vigor of the Soviet order. In spite of political tortures, physical sufferings and horrors, the laboring masses are infinitely distant from political decomposition, from moral collapse, or from apathy. Thanks to a regime which, though it has inflicted great hardships upon them, has given their life a purpose and a high goal, they preserve an extraordinary moral stubbornness and ability unexampled in history, and concentrate their attention and will on collective problems. To-day, in all branches of industry, there is going on an energetic struggle for the establishment of strict labor discipline, and for the increase of the productivity of labor. The party organizations, the trade unions, the factory and workshop administrative committees, rival one another in this respect, with the undivided support of the public opinion of the working class as a whole. Factory after factory willingly, by resolution at its general meeting, increases its working day. Petrograd and Moscow set the example, and the provinces emulate Petrograd. Communist Saturdays and Sundays – that is to say, voluntary and unpaid work in hours appointed for rest – spread ever wider and wider, drawing into their reach many, many hundreds of thousands of working men and women. The industry and productivity of labor at the Communist Saturdays

and Sundays, according to the report of experts and the evidence of figures, is of a remarkably high standard.

Voluntary mobilizations for labor problems in the party and in the Young Communist League are carried out with just as much enthusiasm as hitherto for military tasks. Voluntarism supplements and gives life to universal labor service. The Committees for universal labor service recently set up have spread all over the country. The attraction of the population to work on a mass scale (clearing snow from the roads, repairing railway lines, cutting timber, chopping and bringing up of wood to the towns, the simplest building operations, the cutting of slate and of peat) become more and more widespread and organized every day. The ever-increasing employment of military formations on the labor front would be quite impossible in the absence of elevated enthusiasm for labor.

True, we live in the midst of a very difficult period of economic depression – exhausted, poverty-stricken, and hungry. But this is no argument against the Soviet regime. All periods of transition have been characterized by just such tragic features. Every class society (serf, feudal, capitalist), having exhausted its vitality, does not simply leave the arena, but is violently swept off by an intense struggle, which immediately brings to its participants even greater privations and sufferings than those against which they rose.

The transition from feudal economy to bourgeois society – a step of gigantic importance from the point of view of progress

– gave us a terrifying list of martyrs. However the masses of serfs suffered under feudalism, however difficult it has been, and is, for the proletariat to live under capitalism, never have the sufferings of the workers reached such a pitch as at the epochs when the old feudal order was being violently shattered, and was yielding place to the new. The French Revolution of the eighteenth century, which attained its titanic dimensions under the pressure of the masses exhausted with suffering, itself deepened and rendered more acute their misfortunes for a prolonged period and to an extraordinary extent. Can it be otherwise?

Palace revolutions, which end merely by personal reshufflings at the top, can take place in a short space of time, having practically no effect on the economic life of the country. Quite another matter are revolutions which drag into their whirlpool millions of workers. Whatever be the form of society, it rests on the foundation of labor. Dragging the mass of the people away from labor, drawing them for a prolonged period into the struggle, thereby destroying their connection with production, the revolution in all these ways strikes deadly blows at economic life, and inevitably lowers the standard which it found at its birth. The more perfect the revolution, the greater are the masses it draws in; and the longer it is prolonged, the greater is the destruction it achieves in the apparatus of production, and the more terrible inroads does it make upon public resources. From this there follows merely the conclusion which did not require

proof – that a civil war is harmful to economic life. But to lay this at the door of the Soviet economic system is like accusing a new-born human being of the birth-pangs of the mother who brought him into the world. The problem is to make a civil war a short one; and this is attained only by resoluteness in action. But it is just against revolutionary resoluteness that Kautsky's whole book is directed.

Since the time that the book under examination appeared, not only in Russia, but throughout the world – and first of all in Europe – the greatest events have taken place, or processes of great importance have developed, undermining the last buttresses of Kautskianism.

In Germany, the civil war has been adopting an ever fiercer character. The external strength in organization of the old party and trade union democracy of the working class has not only not created conditions for a more peaceful and "humane" transition to Socialism – as follows from the present theory of Kautsky – but, on the contrary, has served as one of the principal reasons for the long-drawn-out character of the struggle, and its constantly growing ferocity. The more German Social-Democracy became a conservative, retarding force, the more energy, lives, and blood have had to be spent by the German proletariat, devoted to it, in a series of systematic attacks on the foundation of bourgeois society, in order, in the process of the struggle itself, to create an actually revolutionary organization, capable of guiding the proletariat to final victory. The conspiracy of the German

generals, their fleeting seizure of power, and the bloody events which followed, have again shown what a worthless and wretched masquerade is so-called democracy, during the collapse of imperialism and a civil war. This democracy that has outlived itself has not decided one question, has not reconciled one contradiction, has not healed one wound, has not warded off risings either of the Right or of the Left; it is helpless, worthless, fraudulent, and serves only to confuse the backward sections of the people, especially the lower middle-classes.

The hope expressed by Kautsky, in the conclusion of his book, that the Western countries, the "old democracies" of France and England – crowned as they are with victory – will afford us a picture of a healthy, normal, peaceful, truly Kautskian development of Socialism, is one of the most puerile illusions possible. The so-called Republican democracy of victorious France, at the present moment, is nothing but the most reactionary, grasping government that has ever existed in the world. Its internal policy is built upon fear, greed, and violence, in just as great a measure as its external policy. On the other hand, the French proletariat, misled more than any other class has ever been misled, is more and more entering on the path of direct action. The repressions which the government of the Republic has hurled upon the General Confederation of Labor show that even syndicalist Kautskianism —*i. e.*, hypocritical compromise – has no legal place within the framework of bourgeois democracy. The revolutionizing of the masses, the growing ferocity of the

propertied classes, and the disintegration of intermediate groups – three parallel processes which determine the character and herald the coming of a cruel civil war – have been going on before our eyes in full blast during the last few months in France.

In Great Britain, events, different in form, are moving along the self-same fundamental road. In that country, the ruling class of which is oppressing and plundering the whole world more than ever before, the formulæ of democracy have lost their meaning even as weapons of parliamentary swindling. The specialist best qualified in this sphere, Lloyd George, appeals now not to democracy, but to a union of Conservative and Liberal property holders against the working class. In his arguments there remains not a trace of the vague democracy of the "Marxist" Kautsky. Lloyd George stands on the ground of class realities, and for this very reason speaks in the language of civil war. The British working class, with that ponderous learning by experience which is its distinguishing feature, is approaching that stage of its struggle before which the most heroic pages of Chartism will fade, just as the Paris Commune will grow pale before the coming victorious revolt of the French proletariat.

Precisely because historical events have, with stern energy, been developing in these last months their revolutionary logic, the author of this present work asks himself: Does it still require to be published? Is it still necessary to confute Kautsky theoretically? Is there still theoretical necessity to justify revolutionary terrorism?

Unfortunately, yes. Ideology, by its very essence, plays in the Socialist movement an enormous part. Even for practical England the period has arrived when the working class must exhibit an ever-increasing demand for a theoretical statement of its experiences and its problems. On the other hand, even the proletarian psychology includes in itself a terrible inertia of conservatism – the more that, in the present case, there is a question of nothing less than the traditional ideology of the parties of the Second International which first roused the proletariat, and recently were so powerful. After the collapse of official social-patriotism (Scheidemann, Victor Adler, Renaudel, Vandervelde, Henderson, Plekhanov, etc.), international Kautskianism (the staff of the German Independents, Friedrich Adler, Longuet, a considerable section of the Italians, the British Independent Labor Party, the Martov group, etc.) has become the chief political factor on which the unstable equilibrium of capitalist society depends. It may be said that the will of the working masses of the whole of the civilized world, directly influenced by the course of events, is at the present moment incomparably more revolutionary than their consciousness, which is still dominated by the prejudices of parliamentarism and compromise. The struggle for the dictatorship of the working class means, at the present moment, an embittered struggle with Kautskianism within the working class. The lies and prejudices of the policy of compromise, still poisoning the atmosphere even in parties tending towards the

Third International, must be thrown aside. This book must serve the ends of an irreconcilable struggle against the cowardice, half-measures, and hypocrisy of Kautskianism in all countries.

P.S. — To-day (May, 1920) the clouds have again gathered over Soviet Russia. Bourgeois Poland, by its attack on the Ukraine, has opened the new offensive of world imperialism against the Soviet Republic. The gigantic perils again growing up before the revolution, and the great sacrifices again imposed on the laboring masses by the war, are once again pushing Russian Kautskianism on to the path of open opposition to the Soviet Government —*i. e.*, in reality, on to the path of assistance to the world murderers of Soviet Russia. It is the fate of Kautskianism to try to help the proletarian revolution when it is in satisfactory circumstances, and to raise all kinds of obstacles in its way when it is particularly in need of help. Kautsky has more than once foretold our destruction, which must serve as the best proof of his, Kautsky's, theoretical rectitude. In his fall, this "successor of Marx" has reached a stage at which his sole serious political programme consists in speculations on the collapse of the proletarian dictatorship.

He will be once again mistaken. The destruction of bourgeois Poland by the Red Army, guided by Communist working men, will appear as a new manifestation of the power of the proletarian dictatorship, and will thereby inflict a crushing blow on bourgeois scepticism (Kautskianism) in the working class movement. In spite of mad confusion of external forms,

watchwords, and appearances, history has extremely simplified the fundamental meaning of its own process, reducing it to a struggle of imperialism against Communism. Pilsudsky is fighting, not only for the lands of the Polish magnates in the Ukraine and in White Russia, not only for capitalist property and for the Catholic Church, but also for parliamentary democracy and for evolutionary Socialism, for the Second International, and for the right of Kautsky to remain a critical hanger-on of the bourgeoisie. We are fighting for the Communist International, and for the international proletarian revolution. The stakes are great on either side. The struggle will be obstinate and painful. We hope for the victory, for we have every historical right to it.

L. Trotsky.

Moscow, May 29, 1920.

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The Balance of Power

The argument which is repeated again and again in criticisms of the Soviet system in Russia, and particularly in criticisms of revolutionary attempts to set up a similar structure in other countries, is the argument based on the balance of power. The Soviet regime in Russia is utopian – "because it does not correspond to the balance of power." Backward Russia cannot put objects before itself which would be appropriate to advanced Germany. And for the proletariat of Germany it would be madness to take political power into its own hands, as this "at the present moment" would disturb the balance of power. The League of Nations is imperfect, but still corresponds to the balance of power. The struggle for the overthrow of imperialist supremacy is utopian – the balance of power only requires a revision of the Versailles Treaty. When Longuet hobbled after Wilson this took place, not because of the political decomposition of Longuet, but in honor of the law of the balance of power. The Austrian president, Seitz, and the chancellor, Renner, must, in the opinion of Friedrich Adler, exercise their bourgeois impotence at the central posts of the bourgeois republic, for otherwise the balance of power would be infringed. Two years before the world war, Karl Renner,

then not a chancellor, but a "Marxist" advocate of opportunism, explained to me that the regime of June 3 – that is, the union of landlords and capitalists crowned by the monarchy – must inevitably maintain itself in Russia during a whole historical period, as it answered to the balance of power.

What is this balance of power after all – that sacramental formula which is to define, direct, and explain the whole course of history, wholesale and retail? Why exactly is it that the formula of the balance of power, in the mouth of Kautsky and his present school, inevitably appears as a justification of indecision, stagnation, cowardice and treachery?

By the balance of power they understand everything you please: the level of production attained, the degree of differentiation of classes, the number of organized workers, the total funds at the disposal of the trade unions, sometimes the results of the last parliamentary elections, frequently the degree of readiness for compromise on the part of the ministry, or the degree of effrontery of the financial oligarchy. Most frequently, it means that summary political impression which exists in the mind of a half-blind pedant, or a so-called realist politician, who, though he has absorbed the phraseology of Marxism, in reality is guided by the most shallow manœuvres, bourgeois prejudices, and parliamentary "tactics." After a whispered conversation with the director of the police department, an Austrian Social-Democratic politician in the good, and not so far off, old times always knew exactly whether the balance of power permitted

a peaceful street demonstration in Vienna on May Day. In the case of the Eberts, Scheidemanns and Davids, the balance of power was, not so very long ago, calculated exactly by the number of fingers which were extended to them at their meeting in the Reichstag with Bethmann-Hollweg, or with Ludendorff himself.

According to Friedrich Adler, the establishment of a Soviet dictatorship in Austria would be a fatal infraction of the balance of power; the Entente would condemn Austria to starvation. In proof of this, Friedrich Adler, at the July congress of Soviets, pointed to Hungary, where at that time the Hungarian Renners had not yet, with the help of the Hungarian Adlers, overthrown the dictatorship of the Soviets. At the first glance, it might really seem that Friedrich Adler was right in the case of Hungary. The proletarian dictatorship was overthrown there soon afterwards, and its place was filled by the ministry of the reactionary Friedrich. But it is quite justifiable to ask: Did the latter correspond to the balance of power? At all events, Friedrich and his Huszar might not even temporarily have seized power had it not been for the Roumanian army. Hence, it is clear that, when discussing the fate of the Soviet Government in Hungary, it is necessary to take account of the "balance of power," at all events in two countries – in Hungary itself, and in its neighbor, Roumania. But it is not difficult to grasp that we cannot stop at this. If the dictatorship of the Soviets had been set up in Austria before the maturing of the Hungarian crisis, the overthrow of the Soviet regime in Budapest would have been an infinitely more

difficult task. Consequently, we have to include Austria also, together with the treacherous policy of Friedrich Adler, in that balance of power which determined the temporary fall of the Soviet Government in Hungary.

Friedrich Adler himself, however, seeks the key to the balance of power, not in Russia and Hungary, but in the West, in the countries of Clemenceau and Lloyd George. They have in their hands bread and coal – and really bread and coal, especially in our time, are just as foremost factors in the mechanism of the balance of power as cannon in the constitution of Lassalle. Brought down from the heights, Adler's idea consists, consequently, in this: that the Austrian proletariat must not seize power until such time, as it is permitted to do so by Clemenceau (or Millerand —*i. e.*, a Clemenceau of the second order).

However, even here it is permissible to ask: Does the policy of Clemenceau himself really correspond to the balance of power? At the first glance it may appear that it corresponds well enough, and, if it cannot be proved, it is, at least, guaranteed by Clemenceau's gendarmes, who break up working-class meetings, and arrest and shoot Communists. But here we cannot but remember that the terrorist measures of the Soviet Government – that is, the same searches, arrests, and executions, only directed against the counter-revolutionaries – are considered by some people as a proof that the Soviet Government does *not* correspond to the balance of power. In vain would we, however, begin to seek in our time, anywhere in the world, a regime which,

to preserve itself, did not have recourse to measures of stern mass repression. This means that hostile class forces, having broken through the framework of every kind of law – including that of "democracy" – are striving to find their new balance by means of a merciless struggle.

When the Soviet system was being instituted in Russia, not only the capitalist politicians, but also the Socialist opportunists of all countries proclaimed it an insolent challenge to the balance of forces. On this score, there was no quarrel between Kautsky, the Austrian Count Czernin, and the Bulgarian Premier, Radoslavov. Since that time, the Austro-Hungarian and German monarchies have collapsed, and the most powerful militarism in the world has fallen into dust. The Soviet regime has held out. The victorious countries of the Entente have mobilized and hurled against it all they could. The Soviet Government has stood firm. Had Kautsky, Friedrich Adler, and Otto Bauer been told that the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat would hold out in Russia – first against the attack of German militarism, and then in a ceaseless war with the militarism of the Entente countries – the sages of the Second International would have considered such a prophecy a laughable misunderstanding of the "balance of power."

The balance of political power at any given moment is determined under the influence of fundamental and secondary factors of differing degrees of effectiveness, and only in its most fundamental quality is it determined by the stage of the

development of production. The social structure of a people is extraordinarily behind the development of its productive forces. The lower middle-classes, and particularly the peasantry, retain their existence long after their economic methods have been made obsolete, and have been condemned, by the technical development of the productive powers of society. The consciousness of the masses, in its turn, is extraordinarily behind the development of their social relations, the consciousness of the old Socialist parties is a whole epoch behind the state of mind of the masses, and the consciousness of the old parliamentary and trade union leaders, more reactionary than the consciousness of their party, represents a petrified mass which history has been unable hitherto either to digest or reject. In the parliamentary epoch, during the period of stability of social relations, the psychological factor – without great error – was the foundation upon which all current calculations were based. It was considered that parliamentary elections reflected the balance of power with sufficient exactness. The imperialist war, which upset all bourgeois society, displayed the complete uselessness of the old criteria. The latter completely ignored those profound historical factors which had gradually been accumulating in the preceding period, and have now, all at once, appeared on the surface, and have begun to determine the course of history.

The political worshippers of routine, incapable of surveying the historical process in its complexity, in its internal clashes and contradictions, imagined to themselves that history was

preparing the way for the Socialist order simultaneously and systematically on all sides, so that concentration of production and the development of a Communist morality in the producer and the consumer mature simultaneously with the electric plough and a parliamentary majority. Hence the purely mechanical attitude towards parliamentarism, which, in the eyes of the majority of the statesmen of the Second International, indicated the degree to which society was prepared for Socialism as accurately as the manometer indicates the pressure of steam. Yet there is nothing more senseless than this mechanized representation of the development of social relations.

If, beginning with the productive bases of society, we ascend the stages of the superstructure – classes, the State, laws, parties, and so on – it may be established that the weight of each additional part of the superstructure is not simply to be added to, but in many cases to be multiplied by, the weight of all the preceding stages. As a result, the political consciousness of groups which long imagined themselves to be among the most advanced, displays itself, at a moment of change, as a colossal obstacle in the path of historical development. To-day it is quite beyond doubt that the parties of the Second International, standing at the head of the proletariat, which dared not, could not, and would not take power into their hands at the most critical moment of human history, and which led the proletariat along the road of mutual destruction in the interests of imperialism, proved a *decisive factor* of the counter-revolution.

The great forces of production – that shock factor in historical development – were choked in those obsolete institutions of the superstructure (private property and the national State) in which they found themselves locked by all preceding development. Engendered by capitalism, the forces of production were knocking at all the walls of the bourgeois national State, demanding their emancipation by means of the Socialist organization of economic life on a world scale. The stagnation of social groupings, the stagnation of political forces, which proved themselves incapable of destroying the old class groupings, the stagnation, stupidity and treachery of the directing Socialist parties, which had assumed to themselves in reality the defense of bourgeois society – all these factors led to an elemental revolt of the forces of production, in the shape of the imperialist war. Human technical skill, the most revolutionary factor in history, arose with the might accumulated during scores of years against the disgusting conservatism and criminal stupidity of the Scheidemanns, Kautskies, Renaudels, Vanderveldes and Longuets, and, by means of its howitzers, machine-guns, dreadnoughts and aeroplanes, it began a furious pogrom of human culture.

In this way the cause of the misfortunes at present experienced by humanity is precisely that the development of the technical command of men over nature has *long ago* grown ripe for the socialization of economic life. The proletariat has occupied a place in production which completely guarantees its dictatorship,

while the most intelligent forces in history – the parties and their leaders – have been discovered to be still wholly under the yoke of the old prejudices, and only fostered a lack of faith among the masses in their own power. In quite recent years Kautsky used to understand this. "The proletariat at the present time has grown so strong," wrote Kautsky in his pamphlet, *The Path to Power*, "that it can calmly await the coming war. There can be no more talk of a *premature revolution*, now that the proletariat has drawn from the present structure of the State such strength as could be drawn therefrom, and now that its reconstruction has become a condition of the proletariat's further progress." From the moment that the development of productive forces, outgrowing the framework of the bourgeois national State, drew mankind into an epoch of crises and convulsions, the consciousness of the masses was shaken by dread shocks out of the comparative equilibrium of the preceding epoch. The routine and stagnation of its mode of living, the hypnotic suggestion of peaceful legality, had already ceased to dominate the proletariat. But it had not yet stepped, consciously and courageously, on to the path of open revolutionary struggle. It wavered, passing through the last moment of unstable equilibrium. At such a moment of psychological change, the part played by the summit – the State, on the one hand, and the revolutionary Party on the other – acquires a colossal importance. A determined push from left or right is sufficient to move the proletariat, for a certain period, to one or the other side. We saw this in 1914, when, under

the united pressure of imperialist governments and Socialist patriotic parties, the working class was all at once thrown out of its equilibrium and hurled on to the path of imperialism. We have since seen how the experience of the war, the contrasts between its results and its first objects, is shaking the masses in a revolutionary sense, making them more and more capable of an open revolt against capitalism. In such conditions, the presence of a revolutionary party, which renders to itself a clear account of the motive forces of the present epoch, and understands the exceptional role amongst them of a revolutionary class; which knows its inexhaustible, but unrevealed, powers; which believes in that class and believes in itself; which knows the power of revolutionary method in an epoch of instability of all social relations; which is ready to employ that method and carry it through to the end – the presence of such a party represents a factor of incalculable historical importance.

And, on the other hand, the Socialist party, enjoying traditional influence, which does *not* render itself an account of what is going on around it, which does *not* understand the revolutionary situation, and, therefore, finds no key to it, which does *not* believe in either the proletariat or itself – such a party in our time is the most mischievous stumbling block in history, and a source of confusion and inevitable chaos.

Such is now the role of Kautsky and his sympathizers. They teach the proletariat not to believe in itself, but to believe its reflection in the crooked mirror of democracy which has

been shattered by the jack-boot of militarism into a thousand fragments. The decisive factor in the revolutionary policy of the working class must be, in their view, not the international situation, not the actual collapse of capitalism, not that social collapse which is generated thereby, not that concrete necessity of the supremacy of the working class for which the cry arises from the smoking ruins of capitalist civilization – not all this must determine the policy of the revolutionary party of the proletariat – but that counting of votes which is carried out by the capitalist tellers of parliamentarism. Only a few years ago, we repeat, Kautsky seemed to understand the real inner meaning of the problem of revolution. "Yes, the proletariat represents the sole revolutionary class of the nation," wrote Kautsky in his pamphlet, *The Path to Power*. It follows that every collapse of the capitalist order, whether it be of a moral, financial, or military character, implies the bankruptcy of all the bourgeois parties responsible for it, and signifies that the sole way out of the blind alley is the establishment of the power of the *proletariat*. And to-day the party of prostration and cowardice, the party of Kautsky, says to the working class: "The question is not whether you to-day are the sole creative force in history; whether you are capable of throwing aside that ruling band of robbers into which the propertied classes have developed; the question is not whether anyone else can accomplish this task on your behalf; the question is not whether history allows you any postponement (for the present condition of bloody chaos threatens to bury you

yourself, in the near future, under the last ruins of capitalism). The problem is for the ruling imperialist bandits to succeed – yesterday or to-day – to deceive, violate, and swindle public opinion, by collecting 51 per cent. of the votes against your 49. Perish the world, but long live the parliamentary majority!"

2

The Dictatorship of the Proletariat

"Marx and Engels hammered out the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which Engels stubbornly defended in 1891, shortly before his death – the idea that the political autocracy of the proletariat is the sole form in which it can realize its control of the state."

That is what Kautsky wrote about ten years ago. The sole form of power for the proletariat he considered to be not a Socialist majority in a democratic parliament, but the political autocracy of the proletariat, its dictatorship. And it is quite clear that, if our problem is the abolition of private property in the means of production, the only road to its solution lies through the concentration of State power in its entirety in the hands of the proletariat, and the setting up for the transitional period of an exceptional regime – a regime in which the ruling class is guided, not by general principles calculated for a prolonged period, but by considerations of revolutionary policy.

The dictatorship is necessary because it is a case, not of partial changes, but of the very existence of the bourgeoisie. No agreement is possible on this ground. Only force can be the deciding factor. The dictatorship of the proletariat does not exclude, of course, either separate agreements, or considerable

concessions, especially in connection with the lower middle-class and the peasantry. But the proletariat can only conclude these agreements after having gained possession of the apparatus of power, and having guaranteed to itself the possibility of independently deciding on which points to yield and on which to stand firm, in the interests of the general Socialist task.

Kautsky now repudiates the dictatorship of the proletariat at the very outset, as the "tyranny of the minority over the majority." That is, he discerns in the revolutionary regime of the proletariat those very features by which the honest Socialists of all countries invariably describe the dictatorship of the exploiters, albeit masked by the forms of democracy.

Abandoning the idea of a revolutionary dictatorship, Kautsky transforms the question of the conquest of power by the proletariat into a question of the conquest of a majority of votes by the Social-Democratic Party in one of the electoral campaigns of the future. Universal suffrage, according to the legal fiction of parliamentarism, expresses the will of the citizens of all classes in the nation, and, consequently, gives a possibility of attracting a majority to the side of Socialism. While the theoretical possibility has not been realized, the Socialist minority must submit to the bourgeois majority. This fetishism of the parliamentary majority represents a brutal repudiation, not only of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but of Marxism and of the revolution altogether. If, in principle, we are to subordinate Socialist policy to the parliamentary

mystery of majority and minority, it follows that, in countries where formal democracy prevails, there is no place at all for the revolutionary struggle. If the majority elected on the basis of universal suffrage in Switzerland pass draconian legislation against strikers, or if the executive elected by the will of a formal majority in Northern America shoots workers, have the Swiss and American workers the "right" of protest by organizing a general strike? Obviously, no. The political strike is a form of extra-parliamentary pressure on the "national will," as it has expressed itself through universal suffrage. True, Kautsky himself, apparently, is ashamed to go as far as the logic of his new position demands. Bound by some sort of remnant of the past, he is obliged to acknowledge the possibility of correcting universal suffrage by action. Parliamentary elections, at all events in principle, never took the place, in the eyes of the Social-Democrats, of the real class struggle, of its conflicts, repulses, attacks, revolts; they were considered merely as a contributory fact in this struggle, playing a greater part at one period, a smaller at another, and no part at all in the period of dictatorship.

In 1891, that is, not long before his death, Engels, as we just heard, obstinately defended the dictatorship of the proletariat as the only possible form of its control of the State. Kautsky himself more than once repeated this definition. Hence, by the way, we can see what an unworthy forgery is Kautsky's present attempt to throw back the dictatorship of the proletariat at us as a purely Russian invention.

Who aims at the end cannot reject the means. The struggle must be carried on with such intensity as actually to guarantee the supremacy of the proletariat. If the Socialist revolution requires a dictatorship – "the sole form in which the proletariat can achieve control of the State" – it follows that the dictatorship must be guaranteed at all cost.

To write a pamphlet about dictatorship one needs an ink-pot and a pile of paper, and possibly, in addition, a certain number of ideas in one's head. But in order to establish and consolidate the dictatorship, one has to prevent the bourgeoisie from undermining the State power of the proletariat. Kautsky apparently thinks that this can be achieved by tearful pamphlets. But his own experience ought to have shown him that it is not sufficient to have lost all influence with the proletariat, to acquire influence with the bourgeoisie.

It is only possible to safeguard the supremacy of the working class by forcing the bourgeoisie accustomed to rule, to realize that it is too dangerous an undertaking for it to revolt against the dictatorship of the proletariat, to undermine it by conspiracies, sabotage, insurrections, or the calling in of foreign troops. The bourgeoisie, hurled from power, must be forced to obey. In what way? The priests used to terrify the people with future penalties. We have no such resources at our disposal. But even the priests' hell never stood alone, but was always bracketed with the material fire of the Holy Inquisition, and with the scorpions of the democratic State. Is it possible that Kautsky is leaning to the

idea that the bourgeoisie can be held down with the help of the categorical imperative, which in his last writings plays the part of the Holy Ghost? We, on our part, can only promise him our material assistance if he decides to equip a Kantian-humanitarian mission to the realms of Denikin and Kolchak. At all events, there he would have the possibility of convincing himself that the counter-revolutionaries are not naturally devoid of character, and that, thanks to their six years' existence in the fire and smoke of war, their character has managed to become thoroughly hardened. Every White Guard has long ago acquired the simple truth that it is easier to hang a Communist to the branch of a tree than to convert him with a book of Kautsky's. These gentlemen have no superstitious fear, either of the principles of democracy or of the flames of hell – the more so because the priests of the church and of official learning act in collusion with them, and pour their combined thunders exclusively on the heads of the Bolsheviks. The Russian White Guards resemble the German and all other White Guards in this respect – that they cannot be convinced or shamed, but only terrorized or crushed.

The man who repudiates terrorism in principle —*i. e.*, repudiates measures of suppression and intimidation towards determined and armed counter-revolution, must reject all idea of the political supremacy of the working class and its revolutionary dictatorship. The man who repudiates the dictatorship of the proletariat repudiates the Socialist revolution, and digs the grave of Socialism.

At the present time, Kautsky has no theory of the social revolution. Every time he tries to generalize his slanders against the revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, he produces merely a réchauffé of the prejudices of Jaurèsism and Bernsteinism.

"The revolution of 1789," writes Kautsky, "itself put an end to the most important causes which gave it its harsh and violent character, and prepared the way for milder forms of the future revolution." (Page 140.)² Let us admit this, though to do so we have to forget the June days of 1848 and the horrors of the suppression of the Commune. Let us admit that the great revolution of the eighteenth century, which by measures of merciless terror destroyed the rule of absolutism, of feudalism, and of clericalism, really prepared the way for more peaceful and milder solutions of social problems. But, even if we admit this purely liberal standpoint, even here our accuser will prove to be completely in the wrong; for the Russian Revolution, which culminated in the dictatorship of the proletariat, began with just that work which was done in France at the end of the eighteenth century. Our forefathers, in centuries gone by, did not take the trouble to prepare the democratic way – by means of revolutionary terrorism – for milder manners in our revolution. The ethical mandarin, Kautsky, ought to take these

² Translator's Note-For convenience sake, the references throughout have been altered to fall in the English translation of Kautsky's book. Mr. Kerridge's translation, however, has not been adhered to.

circumstances into account, and accuse our forefathers, not us.

Kautsky, however, seems to make a little concession in this direction. "True," he says, "no man of insight could doubt that a military monarchy like the German, the Austrian, or the Russian could be overthrown only by violent methods. But in this connection there was always less thought" (amongst whom?), "of the bloody use of arms, and more of the working class weapon peculiar to the proletariat – the mass strike. And that a considerable portion of the proletariat, after seizing power, would again – as at the end of the eighteenth century – give vent to its rage and revenge in bloodshed could not be expected. This would have meant a complete negation of all progress." (Page 147.)

As we see, the war and a series of revolutions were required to enable us to get a proper view of what was going on in reality in the heads of some of our most learned theoreticians. It turns out that Kautsky did not think that a Romanoff or a Hohenzollern could be put away by means of conversations; but at the same time he seriously imagined that a military monarchy could be overthrown by a general strike —*i. e.*, by a peaceful demonstration of folded arms. In spite of the Russian revolution, and the world discussion of this question, Kautsky, it turns out, retains the anarcho-reformist view of the general strike. We might point out to him that, in the pages of its own journal, the *Neue Zeit*, it was explained twelve years ago that the general strike is only a mobilization of the proletariat and its setting up against

its enemy, the State; but that the strike in itself cannot produce the solution of the problem, because it exhausts the forces of the proletariat sooner than those of its enemies, and this, sooner or later, forces the workers to return to the factories. The general strike acquires a decisive importance only as a preliminary to a conflict between the proletariat and the armed forces of the opposition — *i. e.*, to the open revolutionary rising of the workers. Only by breaking the will of the armies thrown against it can the revolutionary class solve the problem of power — the root problem of every revolution. The general strike produces the mobilization of both sides, and gives the first serious estimate of the powers of resistance of the counter-revolution. But only in the further stages of the struggle, after the transition to the path of armed insurrection, can that bloody price be fixed which the revolutionary class has to pay for power. But that it will have to pay with blood, that, in the struggle for the conquest of power and for its consolidation, the proletariat will have not only to be killed, but also to kill — of this no serious revolutionary ever had any doubt. To announce that the existence of a determined life-and-death struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie "is a complete negation of all progress," means simply that the heads of some of our most reverend theoreticians take the form of a camera-obscura, in which objects are represented upside down.

But, even when applied to more advanced and cultured countries with established democratic traditions, there is absolutely no proof of the justice of Kautsky's historical

argument. As a matter of fact, the argument itself is not new. Once upon a time the Revisionists gave it a character more based on principle. They strove to prove that the growth of proletarian organizations under democratic conditions guaranteed the gradual and imperceptible – reformist and evolutionary – transition to Socialist society – without general strikes and risings, without the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Kautsky, at that culminating period of his activity, showed that, in spite of the forms of democracy, the class contradictions of capitalist society grew deeper, and that this process must inevitably lead to a revolution and the conquest of power by the proletariat.

No one, of course, attempted to reckon up beforehand the number of victims that will be called for by the revolutionary insurrection of the proletariat, and by the regime of its dictatorship. But it was clear to all that the number of victims will vary with the strength of resistance of the propertied classes. If Kautsky desires to say in his book that a democratic upbringing has not weakened the class egoism of the bourgeoisie, this can be admitted without further parley.

If he wishes to add that the imperialist war, which broke out and continued for four years, *in spite of* democracy, brought about a degradation of morals and accustomed men to violent methods and action, and completely stripped the bourgeoisie of the last vestige of awkwardness in ordering the destruction of masses of humanity – here also he will be right.

All this is true on the face of it. But one has to struggle in real conditions. The contending forces are not proletarian and bourgeois manikins produced in the retort of Wagner-Kautsky, but a real proletariat against a real bourgeoisie, as they have emerged from the last imperialist slaughter.

In this fact of merciless civil war that is spreading over the whole world, Kautsky sees only the result of a fatal lapse from the "experienced tactics" of the Second International.

"In reality, since the time," he writes, "that Marxism has dominated the Socialist movement, the latter, up to the world war, was, in spite of its great activities, preserved from great defeats. And the idea of insuring victory by means of terrorist domination had completely disappeared from its ranks.

"Much was contributed in this connection by the fact that, at the time when Marxism was the dominating Socialist teaching, democracy threw out firm roots in Western Europe, and began there to change from an end of the struggle to a trustworthy basis of political life." (Page 145.)

In this "formula of progress" there is not one atom of Marxism. The real process of the struggle of classes and their material conflicts has been lost in Marxist propaganda, which, thanks to the conditions of democracy, guarantees, forsooth, a painless transition to a new and "wiser" order. This is the most vulgar liberalism, a belated piece of rationalism in the spirit of the eighteenth century – with the difference that the ideas of Condorcet are replaced by a vulgarisation of the Communist

Manifesto. All history resolves itself into an endless sheet of printed paper, and the centre of this "humane" process proves to be the well-worn writing table of Kautsky.

We are given as an example the working-class movement in the period of the Second International, which, going forward under the banner of Marxism, never sustained great defeats whenever it deliberately challenged them. But did not the whole working-class movement, the proletariat of the whole world, and with it the whole of human culture, sustain an incalculable defeat in August, 1914, when history cast up the accounts of all the forces and possibilities of the Socialist parties, amongst whom, we are told, the guiding role belonged to Marxism, "on the firm footing of democracy"? *Those parties proved bankrupt.* Those features of their previous work which Kautsky now wishes to render permanent – self-adaptation, repudiation of "illegal" activity, repudiation of the open fight, hopes placed in democracy as the road to a painless revolution – all these fell into dust. In their fear of defeat, holding back the masses from open conflict, dissolving the general strike discussions, the parties of the Second International were preparing their own terrifying defeat; for they were not able to move one finger to avert the greatest catastrophe in world history, the four years' imperialist slaughter, which foreshadowed the violent character of the civil war. Truly, one has to put a wadded night-cap not only over one's eyes, but over one's nose and ears, to be able to-day, after the inglorious collapse of the Second International, after the

disgraceful bankruptcy of its leading party – the German Social-Democracy – after the bloody lunacy of the world slaughter and the gigantic sweep of the civil war, to set up in contrast to us, the profundity, the loyalty, the peacefulness and the sobriety of the Second International, the heritage of which we are still liquidating.

3

Democracy

"EITHER DEMOCRACY, OR CIVIL WAR"

Kautsky has a clear and solitary path to salvation: *democracy*. All that is necessary is that every one should acknowledge it and bind himself to support it. The Right Socialists must renounce the sanguinary slaughter with which they have been carrying out the will of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie itself must abandon the idea of using its Noskes and Lieutenant Vogels to defend its privileges to the last breath. Finally, the proletariat must once and for all reject the idea of overthrowing the bourgeoisie by means other than those laid down in the Constitution. If the conditions enumerated are observed, the social revolution will painlessly melt into democracy. In order to succeed it is sufficient, as we see, for our stormy history to draw a nightcap over its head, and take a pinch of wisdom out of Kautsky's snuffbox.

"There exist only two possibilities," says our sage, "either democracy, or civil war." (Page 220.) Yet, in Germany, where the formal elements of "democracy" are present before our eyes, the civil war does not cease for a moment. "Unquestionably," agrees Kautsky, "under the present National Assembly Germany

cannot arrive at a healthy condition. But that process of recovery will not be assisted, but hindered, if we transform the struggle against the present Assembly into a struggle against the democratic franchise." (Page 230.) As if the question in Germany really did reduce itself to one of electoral forms and not to one of the real possession of power!

The present National Assembly, as Kautsky admits, cannot "bring the country to a healthy condition." Therefore let us begin the game again at the beginning. But will the partners agree? It is doubtful. If the rubber is not favorable to us, obviously it is so to them. The National Assembly which "is incapable of bringing the country to a healthy condition," is quite capable, through the mediocre dictatorship of Noske, of preparing the way for the dictatorship of Ludendorff. So it was with the Constituent Assembly which prepared the way for Kolchak. The historical mission of Kautsky consists precisely in having waited for the revolution to write his (n + 1th) book, which should explain the collapse of the revolution by all the previous course of history, from the ape to Noske, and from Noske to Ludendorff. The problem before the revolutionary party is a difficult one: its problem is to foresee the peril in good time, and to forestall it by *action*. And for this there is no other way at present than to tear the power out of the hands of its real possessors, the agrarian and capitalist magnates, who are only temporarily hiding behind Messrs. Ebert and Noske. Thus, from the present National Assembly, the path divides into two: either the dictatorship of

the imperialist clique, or the dictatorship of the proletariat. On neither side does the path lead to "democracy." Kautsky does not see this. He explains at great length that democracy is of great importance for its political development and its education in organization of the masses, and that through it the proletariat can come to complete emancipation. One might imagine that, since the day on which the Erfurt Programme was written, nothing worthy of notice had ever happened in the world!

Yet meanwhile, for decades, the proletariat of France, Germany, and the other most important countries has been struggling and developing, making the widest possible use of the institutions of democracy, and building up on that basis powerful political organizations. This path of the education of the proletariat through democracy to Socialism proved, however, to be interrupted by an event of no inconsiderable importance – the world imperialist war. The class state at the moment when, thanks to its machinations, the war broke out succeeded in enlisting the assistance of the guiding organizations of Social-Democracy to deceive the proletariat and draw it into the whirlpool. So that, taken as they stand, the methods of democracy, in spite of the incontestable benefits which they afford at a certain period, displayed an extremely limited power of action; with the result that two generations of the proletariat, educated under conditions of democracy, by no means guaranteed the necessary political preparation for judging accurately an event like the world imperialist war. That

experience gives us no reasons for affirming that, if the war had broken out ten or fifteen years later, the proletariat would have been more prepared for it. The bourgeois democratic state not only creates more favorable conditions for the political education of the workers, as compared with absolutism, but also sets a limit to that development in the shape of bourgeois legality, which skilfully accumulates and builds on the upper strata of the proletariat opportunist habits and law-abiding prejudices. The school of democracy proved quite insufficient to rouse the German proletariat to revolution when the catastrophe of the war was at hand. The barbarous school of the war, social-imperialist ambitions, colossal military victories, and unparalleled defeats were required. After these events, which made a certain amount of difference in the universe, and even in the Erfurt Programme, to come out with common-places as to meaning of democratic parliamentarism for the education of the proletariat signifies a fall into political childhood. This is just the misfortune which has overtaken Kautsky.

"Profound disbelief in the political struggle of the proletariat," he writes, "and in its participation in politics, was the characteristic of Proudhonism. To-day there arises a similar (!!) view, and it is recommended to us as the new gospel of Socialist thought, as the result of an experience which Marx did not, and could not, know. In reality, it is only a variation of an idea which half a century ago Marx was fighting, and which he in the end defeated." (Page 79.)

Bolshevism proves to be warmed-up Proudhonism! From a purely theoretical point of view, this is one of the most brazen remarks in the pamphlet.

The Proudhonists repudiated democracy for the same reason that they repudiated the political struggle generally. They stood for the economic organization of the workers without the interference of the State, without revolutionary outbreaks – for self-help of the workers on the basis of production for profit. As far as they were driven by the course of events on to the path of the political struggle, they, as lower middle-class theoreticians, preferred democracy, not only to plutocracy, but to revolutionary dictatorship. What thoughts have they in common with us? While we repudiate democracy in the name of the concentrated power of the proletariat, the Proudhonists, on the other hand, were prepared to make their peace with democracy, diluted by a federal basis, in order to avoid the revolutionary monopoly of power by the proletariat. With more foundation Kautsky might have compared us with the opponents of the Proudhonists, the *Blanquists*, who understood the meaning of a revolutionary government, but did not superstitiously make the question of seizing it depend on the formal signs of democracy. But in order to put the comparison of the Communists with the Blanquists on a reasonable footing, it would have to be added that, in the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, we had at our disposal such an organization for revolution as the Blanquists could not even dream of; in our party we had, and have, an invaluable

organization of political leadership with a perfected programme of the social revolution. Finally, we had, and have, a powerful apparatus of economic transformation in our trade unions, which stand as a whole under the banner of Communism, and support the Soviet Government. Under such conditions, to talk of the renaissance of Proudhonist prejudices in the shape of Bolshevism can only take place when one has lost all traces of theoretical honesty and historical understanding.

THE IMPERIALIST TRANSFORMATION OF DEMOCRACY

It is not for nothing that the word "democracy" has a double meaning in the political vocabulary. On the one hand, it means a state system founded on universal suffrage and the other attributes of formal "popular government." On the other hand, by the word "democracy" is understood the mass of the people itself, in so far as it leads a political existence. In the second sense, as in the first, the meaning of democracy rises above class distinctions. This peculiarity of terminology has its profound political significance. Democracy as a political system is the more perfect and unshakable the greater is the part played in the life of the country by the intermediate and less differentiated mass of the population – the lower middle-class of the town and the country. Democracy achieved its highest expression in the nineteenth century in Switzerland and the United States of

North America. On the other side of the ocean the democratic organization of power in a federal republic was based on the agrarian democracy of the farmers. In the small Helvetian Republic, the lower middle-classes of the towns and the rich peasantry constituted the basis of the conservative democracy of the united cantons.

Born of the struggle of the Third Estate against the powers of feudalism, the democratic State very soon becomes the weapon of defence against the class antagonisms generated within bourgeois society. Bourgeois society succeeds in this the more, the wider beneath it is the layer of the lower middle-class, the greater is the importance of the latter in the economic life of the country, and the less advanced, consequently, is the development of class antagonism. However, the intermediate classes become ever more and more helplessly behind historical development, and, thereby, become ever more and more incapable of speaking in the name of the nation. True, the lower middle-class doctrinaires (Bernstein and Company) used to demonstrate with satisfaction that the disappearance of the middle-classes was not taking place with that swiftness that was expected by the Marxian school. And, in reality, one might agree that, numerically, the middle-class elements in the town, and especially in the country, still maintain an extremely prominent position. But the chief meaning of evolution has shown itself in the decline in importance on the part of the middle-classes from the point of view of production: the amount of values

which this class brings to the general income of the nation has fallen incomparably more rapidly than the numerical strength of the middle-classes. Correspondingly, falls their social, political, and cultural importance. Historical development has been relying more and more, not on these conservative elements inherited from the past, but on the polar classes of society —*i. e.*, the capitalist bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

The more the middle-classes lost their social importance, the less they proved capable of playing the part of an authoritative arbitral judge in the historical conflict between capital and labor. Yet the very considerable numerical proportion of the town middle-classes, and still more of the peasantry, continues to find direct expression in the electoral statistics of parliamentarism. The formal equality of all citizens as electors thereby only gives more open indication of the incapacity of democratic parliamentarism to settle the root questions of historical evolution. An "equal" vote for the proletariat, the peasant, and the manager of a trust formally placed the peasant in the position of a mediator between the two antagonists; but, in reality, the peasantry, socially and culturally backward and politically helpless, has in all countries always provided support for the most reactionary, filibustering, and mercenary parties which, in the long run, always supported capital against labor.

Absolutely contrary to all the prophecies of Bernstein, Sombart, Tugan-Baranovsky, and others, the continued existence of the middle classes has not softened, but has rendered

to the last degree acute, the revolutionary crisis of bourgeois society. If the proletarianization of the lower middle-classes and the peasantry had been proceeding in a chemically purified form, the peaceful conquest of power by the proletariat through the democratic parliamentary apparatus would have been much more probable than we can imagine at present. Just the fact that was seized upon by the partisans of the lower middle-class – its longevity – has proved fatal even for the external forms of political democracy, now that capitalism has undermined its essential foundations. Occupying in parliamentary politics a place which it has lost in production, the middle-class has finally compromised parliamentarism, and has transformed it into an institution of confused chatter and legislative obstruction. From this fact alone, there grew up before the proletariat the problem of seizing the apparatus of state power as such, independently of the middle-class, and even against it – not against its interests, but against its stupidity and its policy, impossible to follow in its helpless contortions.

"Imperialism," wrote Marx of the Empire of Napoleon III, "is the most prostituted, and, at the same time, perfected form of the state which the bourgeoisie, having attained its fullest development, transforms into a weapon for the enslavement of labor by capital." This definition has a wider significance than for the French Empire alone, and includes the latest form of imperialism, born of the world conflict between the national capitalisms of the great powers. In the economic

sphere, imperialism pre-supposed the final collapse of the rule of the middle-class; in the political sphere, it signified the complete destruction of democracy by means of an internal molecular transformation, and a universal subordination of all democracy's resources to its own ends. Seizing upon all countries, independently of their previous political history, imperialism showed that all political prejudices were foreign to it, and that it was equally ready and capable of making use, after their transformation and subjection, of the monarchy of Nicholas Romanoff or Wilhelm Hohenzollern, of the presidential autocracy of the United States of North America, and of the helplessness of a few hundred chocolate legislators in the French parliament. The last great slaughter – the bloody font in which the bourgeois world attempted to be re-baptised – presented to us a picture, unparalleled in history, of the mobilization of all state forms, systems of government, political tendencies, religious, and schools of philosophy, in the service of imperialism. Even many of those pedants who slept through the preparatory period of imperialist development during the last decades, and continued to maintain a traditional attitude towards ideas of democracy and universal suffrage, began to feel during the war that their accustomed ideas had become fraught with some new meaning. Absolutism, parliamentary monarchy, democracy – in the presence of imperialism (and, consequently, in the presence of the revolution rising to take its place), all the state forms of bourgeois supremacy, from Russian Tsarism to

North American quasi-democratic federalism, have been given equal rights, bound up in such combinations as to supplement one another in an indivisible whole. Imperialism succeeded by means of all the resources it had at its disposal, including parliamentarism, irrespective of the electoral arithmetic of voting, to subordinate for its own purposes at the critical moment the lower middle-classes of the towns and country and even the upper layers of the proletariat. The national idea, under the watchword of which the Third Estate rose to power, found in the imperialist war its rebirth in the watchword of national defence. With unexpected clearness, national ideology flamed up for the last time at the expense of class ideology. The collapse of imperialist illusions, not only amongst the vanquished, but – after a certain delay – amongst the victorious also, finally laid low what was once national democracy, and, with it, its main weapon, the democratic parliament. The flabbiness, rottenness, and helplessness of the middle-classes and their parties everywhere became evident with terrifying clearness. In all countries the question of the control of the State assumed first-class importance as a question of an open measuring of forces between the capitalist clique, openly or secretly supreme and disposing of hundreds of thousands of mobilized and hardened officers, devoid of all scruple, and the revolting, revolutionary proletariat; while the intermediate classes were living in a state of terror, confusion, and prostration. Under such conditions, what pitiful nonsense are speeches about the peaceful

conquest of power by the proletariat by means of democratic parliamentarism!

The scheme of the political situation on a world scale is quite clear. The bourgeoisie, which has brought the nations, exhausted and bleeding to death, to the brink of destruction – particularly the victorious bourgeoisie – has displayed its complete inability to bring them out of their terrible situation, and, thereby, its incompatibility with the future development of humanity. All the intermediate political groups, including here first and foremost the social-patriotic parties, are rotting alive. The proletariat they have deceived is turning against them more and more every day, and is becoming strengthened in its revolutionary convictions as the only power that can save the peoples from savagery and destruction. However, history has not at all secured, just at this moment, a formal parliamentary majority on the side of the party of the social revolution. In other words, history has not transformed the nation into a debating society solemnly voting the transition to the social revolution by a majority of votes. On the contrary, the violent revolution has become a necessity precisely because the imminent requirements of history are helpless to find a road through the apparatus of parliamentary democracy. The capitalist bourgeois calculates: "while I have in my hands lands, factories, workshops, banks; while I possess newspapers, universities, schools; while – and this most important of all – I retain control of the army: the apparatus of democracy, however you reconstruct it, will remain

obedient to my will. I subordinate to my interests spiritually the stupid, conservative, characterless lower middle-class, just as it is subjected to me materially. I oppress, and will oppress, its imagination by the gigantic scale of my buildings, my transactions, my plans, and my crimes. For moments when it is dissatisfied and murmurs, I have created scores of safety-valves and lightning-conductors. At the right moment I will bring into existence opposition parties, which will disappear to-morrow, but which to-day accomplish their mission by affording the possibility of the lower middle-class expressing their indignation without hurt therefrom for capitalism. I shall hold the masses of the people, under cover of compulsory general education, on the verge of complete ignorance, giving them no opportunity of rising above the level which my experts in spiritual slavery consider safe. I will corrupt, deceive, and terrorize the more privileged or the more backward of the proletariat itself. By means of these measures, I shall not allow the vanguard of the working class to gain the ear of the majority of the working class, while the necessary weapons of mastery and terrorism remain in my hands."

To this the revolutionary proletariat replies: "Consequently, the first condition of salvation is to tear the weapons of domination out of the hands of the bourgeoisie. It is hopeless to think of a peaceful arrival to power while the bourgeoisie retains in its hands all the apparatus of power. Three times over hopeless is the idea of coming to power by the path which the bourgeoisie

itself indicates and, at the same time, barricades – the path of parliamentary democracy. There is only one way: to seize power, taking away from the bourgeoisie the material apparatus of government. Independently of the superficial balance of forces in parliament, I shall take over for social administration the chief forces and resources of production. I shall free the mind of the lower middle-class from their capitalist hypnosis. I shall show them in practice what is the meaning of Socialist production. Then even the most backward, the most ignorant, or most terrorized sections of the nation will support me, and willingly and intelligently will join in the work of social construction."

When the Russian Soviet Government dissolved the Constituent Assembly, that fact seemed to the leading Social-Democrats of Western Europe, if not the beginning of the end of the world, at all events a rude and arbitrary break with all the previous developments of Socialism. In reality, it was only the inevitable outcome of the new position resulting from imperialism and the war. If Russian Communism was the first to enter the path of casting up theoretical and practical accounts, this was due to the same historical reasons which forced the Russian proletariat to be the first to enter the path of the struggle for power.

All that has happened since then in Europe bears witness to the fact that we drew the right conclusion. To imagine that democracy can be restored in its general purity means that one is living in a pitiful, reactionary utopia.

THE METAPHYSICS OF DEMOCRACY

Feeling the historical ground shaking under his feet on the question of democracy, Kautsky crosses to the ground of metaphysics. Instead of inquiring into what is, he deliberates about what ought to be.

The principles of democracy – the sovereignty of the people, universal and equal suffrage, personal liberties – appear, as presented to him, in a halo of moral duty. They are turned from their historical meaning and presented as unalterable and sacred things-in-themselves. This metaphysical fall from grace is not accidental. It is instructive that the late Plekhanov, a merciless enemy of Kantism at the best period of his activity, attempted at the end of his life, when the wave of patriotism had washed over him, to clutch at the straw of the categorical imperative.

That real democracy with which the German people is now making practical acquaintance Kautsky confronts with a kind of ideal democracy, as he would confront a common phenomenon with the thing-in-itself. Kautsky indicates with certitude not one country in which democracy is really capable of guaranteeing a painless transition to Socialism. But he does know, and firmly, that such democracy ought to exist. The present German National Assembly, that organ of helplessness, reactionary malice, and degraded solicitations, is confronted by Kautsky with a different, real, true National Assembly, which

possesses all virtues – excepting the small virtue of reality.

The doctrine of formal democracy is not scientific Socialism, but the theory of so-called natural law. The essence of the latter consists in the recognition of eternal and unchanging standards of law, which among different peoples and at different periods find a different, more or less limited and distorted expression. The natural law of the latest history —*i. e.*, as it emerged from the middle ages – included first of all a protest against class privileges, the abuse of despotic legislation, and the other "artificial" products of feudal positive law. The theoreticians of the, as yet, weak Third Estate expressed its class interests in a few ideal standards, which later on developed into the teaching of democracy, acquiring at the same time an individualist character. The individual is absolute; all persons have the right of expressing their thoughts in speech and print; every man must enjoy equal electoral rights. As a battle cry against feudalism, the demand for democracy had a progressive character. As time went on, however, the metaphysics of natural law (the theory of formal democracy) began to show its reactionary side – the establishment of an ideal standard to control the real demands of the laboring masses and the revolutionary parties.

If we look back to the historical sequence of world concepts, the theory of natural law will prove to be a paraphrase of Christian spiritualism freed from its crude mysticism. The Gospels proclaimed to the slave that he had just the same soul as the slave-owner, and in this way established the equality of all

men before the heavenly tribunal. In reality, the slave remained a slave, and obedience became for him a religious duty. In the teaching of Christianity, the slave found an expression for his own ignorant protest against his degraded condition. Side by side with the protest was also the consolation. Christianity told him: – "You have an immortal soul, although you resemble a pack-horse." Here sounded the note of indignation. But the same Christianity said: – "Although you are like a pack-horse, yet your immortal soul has in store for it an eternal reward." Here is the voice of consolation. These two notes were found in historical Christianity in different proportions at different periods and amongst different classes. But as a whole, Christianity, like all other religions, became a method of deadening the consciousness of the oppressed masses.

Natural law, which developed into the theory of democracy, said to the worker: "all men are equal before the law, independently of their origin, their property, and their position; every man has an equal right in determining the fate of the people." This ideal criterion revolutionized the consciousness of the masses in so far as it was a condemnation of absolutism, aristocratic privileges, and the property qualification. But the longer it went on, the more it sent the consciousness to sleep, legalizing poverty, slavery and degradation: for how could one revolt against slavery when every man has an equal right in determining the fate of the nation?

Rothschild, who has coined the blood and tears of the world

into the gold napoleons of his income, has one vote at the parliamentary elections. The ignorant tiller of the soil who cannot sign his name, sleeps all his life without taking his clothes off, and wanders through society like an underground mole, plays his part, however, as a trustee of the nation's sovereignty, and is equal to Rothschild in the courts and at the elections. In the real conditions of life, in the economic process, in social relations, in their way of life, people became more and more unequal; dazzling luxury was accumulated at one pole, poverty and hopelessness at the other. But in the sphere of the legal edifice of the State, these glaring contradictions disappeared, and there penetrated thither only unsubstantial legal shadows. The landlord, the laborer, the capitalist, the proletarian, the minister, the bootblack – all are equal as "citizens" and as "legislators." The mystic equality of Christianity has taken one step down from the heavens in the shape of the "natural," "legal" equality of democracy. But it has not yet reached earth, where lie the economic foundations of society. For the ignorant day-laborer, who all his life remains a beast of burden in the service of the bourgeoisie, the ideal right to influence the fate of the nations by means of the parliamentary elections remained little more real than the palace which he was promised in the kingdom of heaven.

In the practical interests of the development of the working class, the Socialist Party took its stand at a certain period on the path of parliamentarism. But this did not mean in the slightest that it accepted in principle the metaphysical theory

of democracy, based on extra-historical, super-class rights. The proletarian doctrines examined democracy as the instrument of bourgeois society entirely adapted to the problems and requirements of the ruling classes; but as bourgeois society lived by the labor of the proletariat and could not deny it the legalization of a certain part of its class struggle without destroying itself, this gave the Socialist Party the possibility of utilizing, at a certain period, and within certain limits, the mechanism of democracy, without taking an oath to do so as an unshakable principle.

The root problem of the party, at all periods of its struggle, was to create the conditions for real, economic, living equality for mankind as members of a united human commonwealth. It was just for this reason that the theoreticians of the proletariat had to expose the metaphysics of democracy as a philosophic mask for political mystification.

The democratic party at the period of its revolutionary enthusiasm, when exposing the enslaving and stupefying lie of church dogma, preached to the masses: – "You are lulled to sleep by promises of eternal bliss at the end of your life, while here you have no rights and you are bound with the chains of tyranny." The Socialist Party, a few decades later, said to the same masses with no less right: – "You are lulled to sleep with the fiction of civic equality and political rights, but you are deprived of the possibility of realizing those rights. Conditional and shadowy legal equality has been transformed into the convicts' chain with

which each of you is fastened to the chariot of capitalism."

In the name of its fundamental task, the Socialist Party mobilized the masses on the parliamentary ground as well as on others; but nowhere and at no time did any party bind itself to bring the masses to Socialism only through the gates of democracy. In adapting ourselves to the parliamentary regime, we stopped at a theoretical exposure of democracy, because we were still too weak to overcome it in practice. But the path of Socialist ideas which is visible through all deviations, and even betrayals, foreshadows no other outcome but this: to throw democracy aside and replace it by the mechanism of the proletariat, at the moment when the latter is strong enough to carry out such a task.

We shall bring one piece of evidence, albeit a sufficiently striking one. "Parliamentarism," wrote Paul Lafargue in the Russian review, *Sozialdemokrat*, in 1888, "is a system of government in which the people acquires the illusion that it is controlling the forces of the country itself, when, in reality, the actual power is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie – and not even of the whole bourgeoisie, but only of certain sections of that class. In the first period of its supremacy the bourgeoisie does not understand, or, more correctly, does not feel, the necessity for making the people believe in the illusion of self-government. Hence it was that all the parliamentary countries of Europe began with a limited franchise. Everywhere the right of influencing the policy of the country by means of

the election of deputies belonged at first only to more or less large property holders, and was only gradually extended to less substantial citizens, until finally in some countries it became from a privilege the universal right of all and sundry.

"In bourgeois society, the more considerable becomes the amount of social wealth, the smaller becomes the number of individuals by whom it is appropriated. The same takes place with power: in proportion as the mass of citizens who possess political rights increases, and the number of elected rulers increases, the actual power is concentrated and becomes the monopoly of a smaller and smaller group of individuals." Such is the secret of the majority.

For the Marxist, Lafargue, parliamentarism remains as long as the supremacy of the bourgeoisie remains. "On the day," writes Lafargue, "when the proletariat of Europe and America seizes the State, it will have to organize a revolutionary government, and govern society as a dictatorship, until the bourgeoisie has disappeared as a class."

Kautsky in his time knew this Marxist estimate of parliamentarism, and more than once repeated it himself, although with no such Gallic sharpness and lucidity. The theoretical apostasy of Kautsky lies just in this point: having recognized the principle of democracy as absolute and eternal, he has stepped back from materialist dialectics to natural law. That which was exposed by Marxism as the passing mechanism of the bourgeoisie, and was subjected only to temporary utilization

with the object of preparing the proletarian revolution, has been newly sanctified by Kautsky as the supreme principle standing above classes, and unconditionally subordinating to itself the methods of the proletarian struggle. The counter-revolutionary degeneration of parliamentarism finds its most perfect expression in the deification of democracy by the decaying theoreticians of the Second International.

THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Speaking generally, the attainment of a majority in a democratic parliament by the party of the proletariat is not an absolute impossibility. But such a fact, even if it were realized, would not introduce any new principle into the course of events. The intermediate elements of the intelligentsia, under the influence of the parliamentary victory of the proletariat, might possibly display less resistance to the new regime. But the fundamental resistance of the bourgeoisie would be decided by such facts as the attitude of the army, the degree to which the workers were armed, the situation in the neighboring states: and the civil war would develop under the pressure of these most real circumstances, and not by the mobile arithmetic of parliamentarism.

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