The Russian bourgeois revolution of 1905 revealed a highly original turn in world history: in one of the most backward capitalist countries, the strike movement attained a scope and power unprecedented anywhere in the world. In the first month of 1905 alone, the number of strikers was ten times the annual average for the previous decade (1895-1904); from January to October 1905, strikes grew all the time and reached enormous proportions. Under the influence of a number of unique historical conditions, backward Russia was the first to show the world, not only the growth, by leaps and bounds, of the independent activity of the oppressed masses in time of revolution (this had occurred in all great revolutions), but also that the significance of the proletariat is infinitely greater than its proportion in the total population; it showed a combination of the economic strike and the political strike, with the latter developing into an armed uprising, and the birth of the Soviets, a new form of mass struggle and mass organisation of the classes oppressed by capitalism.
The revolutions of February and October 1917 led to the all-round development of the Soviets on a nation-wide scale and to their victory in the proletarian socialist revolution. In less than two years, the international character of the Soviets, the spread of this form of struggle and organisation to the world working-class movement and the historical mission of the Soviets as the grave-digger, heir and successor of bourgeois parliamentarianism and of bourgeois democracy in general, all became clear.

But that is not all. The history of the working-class movement now shows that, in all countries, it is about to go through (and is already going through) a struggle waged by communism — emergent, gaining strength and advancing towards victory — against, primarily, Menshevism, i.e., opportunism and social-chauvinism (the home brand in each particular country), and then as a complement, so to say, Left-wing communism. The former struggle has developed in all countries, apparently without any exception, as a duel between the Second International (already virtually dead) and the Third International. The latter struggle is to be seen in Germany, Great Britain, Italy, America (at any rate, a certain section of the Industrial Workers of the World and of the anarcho-syndicalist trends uphold the errors of Left-wing communism alongside of an almost universal and almost unreserved acceptance of the Soviet system), and in France (the attitude of a section of the former syndicalists towards the political party and parliamentarianism, also alongside of the acceptance of the Soviet system); in other words, the struggle is undoubtedly being waged, not only on an international, but even on a worldwide scale.

But while the working-class movement is everywhere going through what is actually the same kind of preparatory school for victory over the bourgeoisie, it is achieving that development in its own way in each country. The big and advanced capitalist countries are travelling this road far more rapidly than did Bolshevism, to which history granted fifteen years to prepare itself for victory, as an organised political trend. In the brief space of a year, the Third International has already scored a decisive victory; it has defeated the yellow, social-chauvinist Second
International, which only a few months ago was incomparably stronger than the Third International, seemed stable and powerful, and enjoyed every possible support—direct and indirect, material (Cabinet posts, passports, the press) and ideological — from the world bourgeoisie.

It is now essential that Communists of every country should quite consciously take into account both the fundamental objectives of the struggle against opportunism and "Left" doctrinairism, and the concrete features which this struggle assumes and must inevitably assume in each country, in conformity with the specific character of its economics, politics, culture, and national composition (Ireland, etc.), its colonies, religious divisions, and so on and so forth. Dissatisfaction with the Second International is felt everywhere and is spreading and growing, both because of its opportunism and because of its inability or incapacity to create a really centralised and really leading centre capable of directing the international tactics of the revolutionary proletariat in its struggle for a world Soviet republic. It should be clearly realised that such a leading centre can never be built up on stereotyped, mechanically equated, and identical tactical rules of struggle. As long as national and state distinctions exist among peoples and countries—and these will continue to exist for a very long time to come, even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a world-wide scale—the unity of the international tactics of the communist working-class movement in all countries demands, not the elimination of variety of the suppression of national distinctions (which is a pipe dream at present), but an application of the fundamental principles of communism (Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat), which will correctly modify these principles in certain particulars, correctly adapt and apply them to national and national-state distinctions. To seek out, investigate, predict, and grasp that which is nationally specific and nationally distinctive, in the concrete manner in which each country should tackle a single international task: victory over opportunism and Left doctrinairism within the working-class movement; the overthrow of the bourgeoisie; the establishment of a Soviet republic and a proletarian
dictatorship—such is the basic task in the historical period that all the advanced countries (and not they alone) are going through. The chief thing—though, of course, far from everything—the chief thing, has already been achieved: the vanguard of the working class has been won over, has ranged itself on the side of Soviet government and against parliamentarianism, on the side of the dictatorship of the proletariat and against bourgeois democracy. All efforts and all attention should now be concentrated on the next step, which may seem—and from a certain viewpoint actually is—less fundamental, but, on the other hand, is actually closer to a practical accomplishment of the task. That step is: the search after forms of the transition or the approach to the proletarian revolution.

The proletarian vanguard has been won over ideologically. That is the main thing. Without this, not even the first step towards victory can be made. But that is still quite a long way from victory. Victory cannot be won with a vanguard alone. To throw only the vanguard into the decisive battle, before the entire class, the broad masses, have taken up a position either of direct support for the vanguard, or at least of sympathetic neutrality towards it and of precluded support for the enemy, would be, not merely foolish but criminal. Propaganda and agitation alone are not enough for an entire class, the broad masses of the working people, those oppressed by capital, to take up such a stand. For that, the masses must have their own political experience. Such is the fundamental law of all great revolutions, which has been confirmed with compelling force and vividness, not only in Russia but in Germany as well. To turn resolutely towards communism, it was necessary, not only for the ignorant and often illiterate masses of Russia, but also for the literate and well-educated masses of Germany, to realise from their own bitter experience the absolute impotence and spinelessness, the absolute helplessness and servility to the bourgeoisie, and the utter vileness of the government of the paladins of the Second International; they had to realise that a dictatorship of the extreme reactionaries (Kornilov [37] in Russia; Kapp [38] and Co. in Germany) is inevitably the only alternative to a dictatorship of the proletariat.
The immediate objective of the class-conscious vanguard of the international working-class movement, i.e., the Communist parties, groups and trends, is to be able to lead the broad masses (who are still, for the most part, apathetic, inert, dormant and convention-ridden) to their new position, or, rather, to be able to lead, not only their own party but also these masses in their advance and transition to the new position. While the first historical objective (that of winning over the class-conscious vanguard of the proletariat to the side of Soviet power and the dictatorship of the working class) could not have been reached without a complete ideological and political victory over opportunism and social-chauvinism, the second and immediate objective, which consists in being able to lead the masses to a new position ensuring the victory of the vanguard in the revolution, cannot be reached without the liquidation of Left doctrinairism, and without a full elimination of its errors.

As long as it was (and inasmuch as it still is) a question of winning the proletariat’s vanguard over to the side of communism, priority went and still goes to propaganda work; even propaganda circles, with all their parochial limitations, are useful under these conditions, and produce good results. But when it is a question of practical action by the masses, of the disposition, if one may so put it, of vast armies, of the alignment of all the class forces in a given society for the final and decisive battle, then propagandist methods alone, the mere repetition of the truths of "pure" communism, are of no avail. In these circumstances, one must not count in thousands, like the propagandist belonging to a small group that has not yet given leadership to the masses; in these circumstances one must count in millions and tens of millions. In these circumstances, we must ask ourselves, not only whether we have convinced the vanguard of the revolutionary class, but also whether the historically effective forces of all classes—positively of all the classes in a given society, without exception—are arrayed in such a way that the decisive battle is at hand—in such a way that: (1) all the class forces hostile to us have become sufficiently entangled, are sufficiently at loggerheads with each other, have sufficiently weakened themselves in a struggle which is beyond their
strength; (2) all the vacillating and unstable, intermediate elements—the petty bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeois democrats, as distinct from the bourgeoisie—have sufficiently exposed themselves in the eyes of the people, have sufficiently disgraced themselves through their practical bankruptcy, and (3) among the proletariat, a mass sentiment favouring the most determined, bold and dedicated revolutionary action against the bourgeoisie has emerged and begun to grow vigorously. Then revolution is indeed ripe; then, indeed, if we have correctly gauged all the conditions indicated and summarised above, and if we have chosen the right moment, our victory is assured.

The differences between the Churchills and the Lloyd Georges—with insignificant national distinctions, these political types exist in all countries—on the one hand, and between the Hendersons and the Lloyd Georges on the other, are quite minor and unimportant from the standpoint of pure (i.e., abstract) communism, i.e., communism that has not yet matured to the stage of practical political action by the masses. However, from the standpoint of this practical action by the masses, these differences are most important. To take due account of these differences, and to determine the moment when the inevitable conflicts between these "friends", which weaken and enfeeble all the "friends" taken together, will have come to a head—that is the concern, the task, of a Communist who wants to be, not merely a class-conscious and convinced propagandist of ideas, but a practical leader of the masses in the revolution. It is necessary to link the strictest devotion to the ideas of communism with the ability to effect all the necessary practical compromises, tacks, conciliatory manoeuvres, zigzags, retreats and so on, in order to speed up the achievement and then loss of political power by the Hendersons (the heroes of the Second International, if we are not to name individual representatives of petty-bourgeois democracy who call themselves socialists); to accelerate their inevitable bankruptcy in practice, which will enlighten the masses in the spirit of our ideas, in the direction of communism; to accelerate the inevitable friction, quarrels, conflicts and complete disintegration among the Hendersons, the Lloyd Georges and the Churchills (the
Mensheviks, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the Constitutional-Democrats, the monarchists; the Scheidemanns, the bourgeoisie and the Kappists, etc.); to select the proper moment when the discord among these "pillars of sacrosanct private property" is at its height, so that, through a decisive offensive, the proletariat will defeat them all and capture political power.

History as a whole, and the history of revolutions in particular, is always richer in content, more varied, more multiform, more lively and ingenious than is imagined by even the best parties, the most class-conscious vanguards of the most advanced classes. This can readily be understood, because even the finest of vanguards express the class-consciousness, will, passion and imagination of tens of thousands, whereas at moments of great upsurge and the exertion of all human capacities, revolutions are made by the class-consciousness, will, passion and imagination of tens of millions, spurred on by a most acute struggle of classes. Two very important practical conclusions follow from this: first, that in order to accomplish its task the revolutionary class must be able to master all forms or aspects of social activity without exception (completing after the capture of political power — sometimes at great risk and with very great danger—what it did not complete before the capture of power); second, that the revolutionary class must be prepared for the most rapid and brusque replacement of one form by another.

One will readily agree that any army which does not train to use all the weapons, all the means and methods of warfare that the enemy possesses, or may possess, is behaving in an unwise or even criminal manner. This applies to politics even more than it does to the art of war. In politics it is even harder to know in advance which methods of struggle will be applicable and to our advantage in certain future conditions. Unless we learn to apply all the methods of struggle, we may suffer grave and sometimes even decisive defeat, if changes beyond our control in the position of the other classes bring to the forefront a form of activity in which we are especially weak. If, however, we learn to use all the methods of struggle, victory will be certain, because we represent the interests
of the really foremost and really revolutionary class, even if circumstances do not permit us to make use of weapons that are most dangerous to the enemy, weapons that deal the swiftest mortal blows. Inexperienced revolutionaries often think that legal methods of struggle are opportunist because, in this field, the bourgeoisie has most frequently deceived and duped the workers (particularly in "peaceful" and non-revolutionary times), while illegal methods of struggle are revolutionary. That, however, is wrong. The truth is that those parties and leaders are opportunists and traitors to the working class that are unable or unwilling (do not say, "I can’t"; say, "I shan’t") to use illegal methods of struggle in conditions such as those which prevailed, for example, during the imperialist war of 1914-18, when the bourgeoisie of the freest democratic countries most brazenly and brutally deceived the workers, and smothered the truth about the predatory character of the war. But revolutionaries who are incapable of combining illegal forms of struggle with every form of legal struggle are poor revolutionaries indeed. It is not difficult to be a revolutionary when revolution has already broken out and is in spate, when all people are joining the revolution just because they are carried away, because it is the vogue, and sometimes even from careerist motives. After its victory, the proletariat has to make most strenuous efforts, even the most painful, so as to "liberate" itself from such pseudo-revolutionaries. It is far more difficult—and far more precious—to be a revolutionary when the conditions for direct, open, really mass and really revolutionary struggle do not yet exist, to be able to champion the interests of the revolution (by propaganda, agitation and organisation) in non-revolutionary bodies, and quite often in downright reactionary bodies, in a non-revolutionary situation, among the masses who are incapable of immediately appreciating the need for revolutionary methods of action. To be able to seek, find and correctly determine the specific path or the particular turn of events that will lead the masses to the real, decisive and final revolutionary struggle—such is the main objective of communism in Western Europe and in America today.
Britain is an example. We cannot tell—no one can tell in advance—how soon a real proletarian revolution will flare up there, and what immediate cause will most serve to rouse, kindle, and impel into the struggle the very wide masses, who are still dormant. Hence, it is our duty to carry on all our preparatory work in such a way as to be "well shod on all four feet" (as the late Plekhanov, when he was a Marxist and revolutionary, was fond of saying). It is possible that the breach will be forced, the ice broken, by a parliamentary crisis, or by a crisis arising from colonial and imperialist contradictions, which are hopelessly entangled and are becoming increasingly painful and acute, or perhaps by some third cause, etc. We are not discussing the kind of struggle that will determine the fate of the proletarian revolution in Great Britain (no Communist has any doubt on that score; for all of us this is a foregone conclusion): what we are discussing is the immediate cause that will bring into motion the now dormant proletarian masses, and lead them right up to revolution. Let us not forget that in the French bourgeois republic, for example, in a situation which, from both the international and the national viewpoints, was a hundred times less revolutionary than it is today, such an "unexpected" and "petty" cause as one of the many thousands of fraudulent machinations of the reactionary military caste (the Dreyfus case [39]) was enough to bring the people to the brink of civil war!

In Great Britain the Communists should constantly, unremittingly and unswervingly utilise parliamentary elections and all the vicissitudes of the Irish, colonial and world-imperialist policy of the British Government, and all other fields, spheres and aspects of public life, and work in all of them in a new way, in a communist way, in the spirit of the Third, not the Second, International. I have neither the time nor the space here to describe the "Russian" "Bolshevik" methods of participation in parliamentary elections and in the parliamentary struggle; I can, however, assure foreign Communists that they were quite unlike the usual West-European parliamentary campaigns. From this the conclusion is often drawn: "Well, that was in Russia, in our country parliamentarianism is different." This is a false conclusion. Communists, adherents of the Third International in all
countries, exist for the purpose of changing — all along the line, in all spheres of life—the old socialist, trade unionist, syndicalist, and parliamentary type of work into a new type of work, the communist. In Russia, too, there was always an abundance of opportunism, purely bourgeois sharp practices and capitalist rigging in the elections. In Western Europe and in America, the Communist must learn to create a new, uncustomary, non-opportunist, and non-careerist parliamentarianism; the Communist parties must issue their slogans; true proletarians, with the help of the unorganised and downtrodden poor, should distribute leaflets, canvass workers’ houses and cottages of the rural proletarians and peasants in the remote villages (fortunately there are many times fewer remote villages in Europe than in Russia, and in Britain the number is very small); they should go into the public houses, penetrate into unions, societies and chance gatherings of the common people, and speak to the people, not in learned (or very parliamentary) language, they should not at all strive to "get seats" in parliament, but should everywhere try to get people to think, and draw the masses into the struggle, to take the bourgeoisie at its word and utilise the machinery it has set up, the elections it has appointed, and the appeals it has made to the people; they should try to explain to the people what Bolshevism is, in a way that was never possible (under bourgeois rule) outside of election times (exclusive, of course, of times of big strikes, when in Russia a similar apparatus for widespread popular agitation worked even more intensively). It is very difficult to do this in Western Europe and extremely difficult in America, but it can and must be done, for the objectives of communism cannot be achieved without effort. We must work to accomplish practical tasks, ever more varied and ever more closely connected with all branches of social life, winning branch after branch, and sphere after sphere from the bourgeoisie.

In Great Britain, further, the work of propaganda, agitation and organisation among the armed forces and among the oppressed and underprivileged nationalities in their "own" state (Ireland, the colonies) must also be tackled in a new fashion (one that is not socialist, but communist not reformist, but
revolutionary). That is because, in the era of imperialism in general and especially today after a war that was a sore trial to the peoples and has quickly opened their eyes to the truth (i.e., the fact that tens of millions were killed and maimed for the sole purpose of deciding whether the British or the German robbers should plunder the largest number of countries), all these spheres of social life and heavily charged with inflammable material and are creating numerous causes of conflicts, crises and an intensification of the class struggle. We do not and cannot know which spark—of the innumerable sparks that are flying about in all countries as a result of the world economic and political crisis—will kindle the conflagration, in the sense of raising up the masses; we must, therefore, with our new and communist principles, set to work to stir up all and sundry, even the oldest, mustiest and seemingly hopeless spheres, for otherwise we shall not be able to cope with our tasks, shall not be comprehensively prepared, shall not be in possession of all the weapons and shall not prepare ourselves either to gain victory over the bourgeoisie (which arranged all aspects of social life—and has now disarranged them—in its bourgeois fashion), or to bring about the impending communist reorganisation of every sphere of life, following that victory.

Since the proletarian revolution in Russia and its victories on an international scale, expected neither by the bourgeoisie nor the philistines, the entire world has become different, and the bourgeoisie everywhere has become different too. It is terrified of "Bolshevism", exasperated by it almost to the point of frenzy, and for that very reason it is, on the one hand, precipitating the progress of events and, on the other, concentrating on the forcible suppression of Bolshevism, thereby weakening its own position in a number of other fields. In their tactics the Communists in all the advanced countries must take both these circumstances into account.

When the Russian Cadets and Kerensky began furiously to hound the Bolsheviks—especially since April 1917, and more particularly in June and July 1917—they overdid things. Millions of copies of bourgeois papers, clamouring in every key against the Bolsheviks, helped the masses to make an appraisal of
Bolshevism, apart from the newspapers, all public life was full of discussions about Bolshevism, as a result of the bourgeoisie’s "zeal". Today the millionaires of all countries are behaving on an international scale in a way that deserves our heartiest thanks. They are hounding Bolshevism with the same zeal as Kerensky and Co. did; they, too, are overdoing things and helping us just as Kerensky did. When the French bourgeoisie makes Bolshevism the central issue in the elections, and accuses the comparatively moderate or vacillating socialists of being Bolsheviks; when the American bourgeoisie, which has completely lost its head, seizes thousands and thousands of people on suspicion of Bolshevism, creates an atmosphere of panic, and broadcasts stories of Bolshevik plots; when, despite all its wisdom and experience, the British bourgeoisie—the most "solid" in the world—makes incredible blunders, founds richly endowed "anti-Bolshevik societies", creates a special literature on Bolshevism, and recruits an extra number of scientists, agitators and clergymen to combat it, we must salute and thank the capitalists. They are working for us. They are helping us to get the masses interested in the essence and significance of Bolshevism, and they cannot do otherwise, for they have already failed to ignore Bolshevism and stifle it.

But at the same time, the bourgeoisie sees practically only one aspect of Bolshevism—insurrection, violence, and terror, it therefore strives to prepare itself for resistance and opposition primarily in this field. It is possible that, in certain instances, in certain countries, and for certain brief periods, it will succeed in this. We must reckon with such an eventuality, and we have absolutely nothing to fear if it does succeed. Communism is emerging in positively every sphere of public life; its beginnings are to be seen literally on all sides. The "contagion" (to use the favourite metaphor of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois police, the one mostly to their liking) has very thoroughly penetrated the organism and has completely permeated it. If special efforts are made to block one of the channels, the "contagion" will find another one, sometimes very unexpectedly. Life will assert itself. Let the bourgeoisie rave, work itself into a frenzy, go to extremes, commit follies, take vengeance on the Bolsheviks in advance, and endeavour to
kill off (as in India, Hungary, Germany, etc.) more hundreds, thousands, and hundreds of thousands of yesterday’s and tomorrow’s Bolsheviks. In acting thus, the bourgeoisie is acting as all historically doomed classes have done. Communists should know that, in any case, the future belongs to them; therefore, we can (and must) combine the most intense passion in the great revolutionary struggle, with the coolest and most sober appraisal of the frenzied ravings of the bourgeoisie. The Russian revolution was cruelly defeated in 1905; the Russian Bolsheviks were defeated in July 1917; over 15,000 German Communists were killed as a result of the wily provocation and cunning manoeuvres of Scheidemann and Noske, who were working hand in glove with the bourgeoisie and the monarchist generals, White terror is raging in Finland and Hungary. But in all cases in all countries, communism is becoming steeled and is growing; its roots are so deep that persecution does not weaken or debilitate it but only strengthens it. Only one thing is lacking to enable us to march forward more confidently and firmly to victory, namely, the universal and thorough awareness of all Communists in all countries of the necessity to display the utmost flexibility in their tactics. The communist movement, which is developing magnificently, now lacks, especially in the advanced countries, this awareness and the ability to apply it in practice.

That which happened to such leaders of the Second International, such highly erudite Marxists devoted to socialism as Kautsky, Otto Bauer and others, could (and should) provide a useful lesson. They fully appreciated the need for flexible tactics; they themselves learned Marxist dialectic and taught it to others (and much of what they have done in this field will always remain a valuable contribution to socialist literature); however, in the application of this dialectic they committed such an error, or proved to be so undialectical in practice, so incapable of taking into account the rapid change of forms and the rapid acquisition of new content by the old forms, that their fate is not much more enviable than that of Hyndman, Guesde and Plekhanov. The principal reason for their bankruptcy was that they were hypnotised by a definite form of growth of
the working-class movement and socialism, forgot all about the one-sidedness of that form, were afraid to see the break-up which objective conditions made inevitable, and continued to repeat simple and, at first glance, incontestable axioms that had been learned by rote, like: "three is more than two". But politics is more like algebra than like higher than elementary arithmetic, and still more like higher than elementary mathematics. In reality, all the old form of the socialist movement have acquired a new content, and, consequently, a new symbol, the "minus" sign, has appeared in front of all the figures; our wiseacres, however, have stubbornly continued (and still continue) to persuade themselves and others that "minus three" is more than "minus two".

We must see to it that Communists do not make a similar mistake, only in the opposite sense, or rather, we must see to it that a similar mistake, only made in the opposite sense by the "Left" Communists is corrected as soon as possible and eliminated as rapidly and painlessly as possible. It is not only Right doctrinairism that is erroneous; Left doctrinairism is erroneous too. Of course, the mistake of Left doctrinairism in communism is at present a thousand times less dangerous and less significant than that of Right doctrinairism (i.e., social-chauvinism and Kautskyism); but, after all, that is only due to the fact that Left communism is a very young trend, is only just coming into being. It is only for this reason that, under certain conditions, the disease can be easily eradicated, and we must set to work with the utmost energy to eradicate it.

The old forms burst asunder, for it turned out that their new content—anti-proletarian and reactionary—had attained an inordinate development. From the standpoint of the development of international communism, our work today has such a durable and powerful content (for Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat) that it can and must manifest itself in any form, both new and old; it can and must regenerate, conquer and subjugate all forms, not only the new, but also the old—not for the purpose of reconciling itself with the old, but for the purpose of making all and every form—new and old—a weapon for the complete and irrevocable victory of communism.
The Communists must exert every effort to direct the working-class movement and social development in general along the straightest and shortest road to the victory of Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world-wide scale. That is an incontestable truth. But it is enough to take one little step farther—a step that might seem to be in the same direction—and truth turns into error. We have only to say, as the German and British Left Communists do, that we recognise only one road, only the direct road, and that we will not permit tacking, conciliatory manoeuvres, or compromising—and it will be a mistake which may cause, and in part has already caused and is causing, very grave prejudices to communism. Right doctrinairism persisted in recognising only the old forms, and became utterly bankrupt, for it did not notice the new content. Left doctrinairism persists in the unconditional repudiation of certain old forms, failing to see that the new content is forcing its way through all and sundry forms, that it is our duty as Communists to master all forms to learn how, with the maximum rapidity, to supplement one form with another, to substitute one for another, and to adapt our tactics to any such change that does not come from our class or from our efforts.

World revolution has been so powerfully stimulated and accelerated by the horrors, vileness and abominations of the world imperialist war and by the hopelessness of the situation created by it, this revolution is developing in scope and depth with such splendid rapidity, with such a wonderful variety of changing forms, with such an instructive practical refutation of all doctrinairism, that there is every reason to hope for a rapid and complete recovery of the international communist movement from the infantile disorder of "Left-wing" communism.

April 27, 1920

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Footnotes
This refers to the counter-revolutionary mutiny organised in August 1917 by the bourgeoisie and the landowners, under the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, the tsarist general Kornilov. The conspirators hoped to seize Petrograd, smash the Bolshevik Party, break up the Soviets, establish a military dictatorship in the country, and prepare the restoration of the monarchy.

The mutiny began on August 25 (September 7), Kornilov sending the 3rd Cavalry Corps against Petrograd, where Kornilov counter-revolutionary organisations were ready to act.

The Kornilov mutiny was crushed by the workers and peasants led by the Bolshevik Party. Under pressure from the masses, the Provisional Government was forced to order that Kornilov and his accomplices be arrested and brought to trial.

The reference is to the military-monarchist coup d’état, the so-called Kapp putsch organised by the German reactionary militarists. It was headed by the monarchist landowner Kapp and Generals Ludendorff, Seeckt and Luttwitz. The conspirators prepared the coup with the connivance of the Social-Democratic government. On March 13, 1920, the mutinous generals moved troops against Berlin and, meeting with no resistance from the government, proclaimed a military dictatorship. The German workers replied with a general strike. Under pressure from the proletariat the KaDT, Rovernment was overthrown on March 17, and the Social-Democrats again took power.

The Dreyfus case—a provocative trial organised in 1894 by the reactionary-monarchist circles of the French militarists. On trial was Dreyfus, a Jewish officer of the French General Staff, falsely accused of espionage and high treason. Dreyfus’s conviction—he was condemned to life imprisonment—was used by the French reactionaries to rouse anti-Semitism and to attack the republican regime
and democratic liberties. When, in 1898, socialists and progressive bourgeois democrats such as Emile Zola, Jean Jaures, and Anatole France launched a campaign for Dreyfus’s re-trial, the case became a major political issue and split the country into two camps—the republicans and democrats on the one hand, and a bloc of monarchists, clericals, anti-Semites and nationalists, on the other. Under the pressure of public opinion, Dreyfus was released in 1899, and in 1906 was acquitted by the Court of Cassation and reinstated in the Army.
17. CRITICISM OF THE "LEFT-WING" INFANTILE DISORDER IN THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

THE TWO ERRONEOUS TRENDS IN THE WORKING-CLASS MOVEMENT

The guiding of the proletarian revolution to the road of victory demanded of every Communist Party that it should be like the Bolshevik Party, firm in principle, flexible in tactics, neither sinking into the mire of the Right opportunism and capitulationism of the Second International nor making the error of "Left" dogmatism and adventurism. And to serve this very need, in April 1920 Lenin wrote "Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder.

In this work, Lenin summed up the experience of both the Russian and the international working-class movement. He pointed out that Bolshevism had grown up, had gained in strength, and had become steeled in long years of struggle against the internal enemies in the working-class movement. He spoke of Right opportunism as "the principal enemy of Bolshevism within the working-class movement". He added, "It remains the principal enemy internationally too. The Bolsheviks devoted, and continue to devote, most attention to this enemy."1 The other enemy of Bolshevism within the

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working-class movement was the “Left” trend, the petty-bourgeois revolutionism “which falls short, in anything essential, of the conditions and requirements of a consistently proletarian class struggle”.¹ Lenin maintained:

The history of the working-class movement now shows that in all countries it is about to experience (and has already begun to experience) a struggle between Communism, which is growing, gaining strength and marching towards victory, and, first and foremost, its own (in each country) “Menshevism,” i.e., opportunism and social-chauvinism, and, secondly — as a supplement so to say — “Left-wing” Communism.²

Of the “Left” error that existed at the time in the international communist movement, Lenin gave the following estimation:

... the mistake of Left doctrinairism in Communism is at present a thousand times less dangerous and less significant than the mistakes of Right doctrinairism (i.e., social-chauvinism and Kautskyism); but, after all, that is only due to the fact that Left Communism is a very young trend, is only just coming into being.³

The comrades who committed the “Left” error had communist revolutionary fervour. Lenin wrote:

This temper is highly gratifying and valuable; we must learn to value it and to support it, for without it, it would be hopeless to expect the victory of the proletarian revolution in Great Britain, or in any other country for that matter. People who can give expression to this temper of the masses, who can rouse such a temper (which is very often dormant, unrealized and unaroused) among the masses, must be valued and every assistance must be given them. And at the same time we must openly and frankly tell them that temper alone is not enough to lead the masses in a great revolutionary struggle, and that such and such mistakes that very loyal adherents of the cause of the revolution are about to commit, or are committing, may damage the cause of the revolution.¹

The Right and “Left” trends are both non-proletarian and anti-Marxist in nature. In given conditions, they complement each other or even change into one another. Lenin repeatedly stressed that the international communist movement must go on putting the major effort into fighting Right opportunism, while at the same time must oppose the “Left” error which had emerged in certain Communist Parties.

In “Left-Wing” Communism, an Infantile Disorder, Lenin trenchantly condemned the betrayal by the opportunists of the Second International, and thoroughly criticized the “Left” trend. He summed up the experience of the three Russian revolutions and the early days of the Soviet state, and the lessons of the failure of the revolutions in Germany and Hungary. He developed the theory of proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat and explained Marxist strategy and tactics. Again and again he showed how Communists should master the scientific theory and methods of struggle of proletarian revolution and exert their best efforts in leading

¹ Ibid., pp. 418-19.
² Ibid., p. 432.
³ Ibid., p. 406.
millions of people to victory in the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat throughout the world.

THE COMBINATION OF UNIVERSAL LAWS AND NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Lenin described the sufferings of the Russian revolutionaries in their search for the truth, and recounted the many forms of struggle which the Bolsheviks used. He said:

Russia achieved Marxism, the only correct revolutionary theory, through veritable suffering, through half a century of unprecedented torment and sacrifice, of unprecedented revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, devoted searching, study, practical trial, disappointment, verification and comparison with European experience.¹

Built on this theoretical foundation, Bolshevism passed through fifteen years (1903-17) of practical history. Through complicated struggles, "legal and illegal, peaceful and stormy, underground and open, circles and mass movements, parliamentary and terrorist",² the Bolsheviks mastered the revolutionary tactics of advance and retreat, offensive and defensive, and accumulated an unequalled wealth of experience.³

And certain fundamental features of the Russian revolution, he stated, possess "the international validity of the historical inevitability of a repetition on an international scale".¹ In that sense, the basic theory and tactics of the Bolsheviks are of international significance, and the road of the October Revolution reflects the universal laws of proletarian revolution in all countries. But, as Lenin pointed out:

This the "revolutionary" leaders of the Second International, such as Kautsky in Germany and Otto Bauer and Friedrich Adler in Austria, failed to understand, and therefore proved to be reactionaries and advocates of the worst kind of opportunism and social treachery.²

Undoubtedly, in their application of the universal truth of Marxism and the laws of proletarian revolution as reflected by the October Revolution, the Communists in each country must combine these laws with the specific economic, political and cultural features of their own country. Anyone failing to do so would commit the mistake of dogmatism. Lenin said:

... the Communists of every country should quite consciously take into account both the main fundamental tasks of the struggle against opportunism and "Left" doctrinairism and the specific features which this struggle assumes and inevitably must assume in each separate country in conformity with the peculiar features of its economics, politics, culture, national composition (Ireland, etc.), its colonies, religious divisions, and so on and so forth.³

¹Ibid., p. 346.
²Ibid., p. 347.
³Ibid., pp. 419-20.
The unity of tactics of the international communist movement demands not the elimination of variety, not the abolition of national differences, but “such an application of the fundamental principles of Communism (Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat) as will correctly modify these principles in certain particulars, correctly adapt and apply them to national and national-state differences”.¹ Lenin wrote:

Investigate, study, seek, divine, grasp that which is peculiarly national, specifically national in the concrete manner in which each country approaches the fulfilment of the single international task, in which it approaches the victory over opportunism and “Left” doctrinairism within the working-class movement, the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, and the establishment of a Soviet republic and a proletarian dictatorship — such is the main task of the historical period through which all the advanced countries (and not only the advanced countries) are now passing.²


In the same book, “Left-Wing” Communism, an Infantile Disorder, Lenin elaborated on the relationship between the leaders, the Party, the class, the masses, and Party discipline, and criticized the wrong views of the “Left” Communists on these questions.

Sharp divergence between “leaders” and the masses was a particular striking phenomenon in all countries at the end of and after the imperialist war. The betrayal of the proletarian revolutionary cause by the opportunist leaders roused indignation against them among the rank-and-file Party members and the working people. In the circumstances, some “Left” Communists posed the question: “Dictatorship of the Party or dictatorship of the class, dictatorship (Party) of the leaders, o r dictatorship (Party) of the masses?”¹ because, lacking a historical-materialist approach, they did not understand the question of the relationship between leaders, the Party, the class and the masses. Lenin pointed out that it was inconceivable for the proletariat and its party to engage in revolutionary activity without leaders. The question was what kind of leaders they were to choose. He said:

To go so far in this connection as to contrast, in general, dictatorship of the masses to dictatorship of the leaders is ridiculously absurd and stupid. What is particularly curious is that actually, in place of the old leaders, who hold the common human views on ordinary matters, new leaders are put forth (under cover of the slogan: “Down with the leaders!”) who talk unnatural stuff and nonsense.²

He stated:

Everyone knows that the masses are divided into classes; that the masses can be contrasted to classes only by contrasting the vast majority in general, regardless of division according to status in the social

¹Ibid., p. 363.
²Ibid., p. 365.
system of production, to categories holding a definite status in the social system of production. . . .

He added, "... the dictatorship is exercised by the proletariat, organized in the Soviets; the proletariat is led by the Communist Party (Bolsheviks). . . ." He also said that usually "classes are led by political parties" and that "political parties, as a general rule, are directed by more or less stable groups composed of the most authoritative, influential and experienced members, who are elected to the most responsible positions and are called leaders". A proletarian party had to learn how to link together the leaders and the class, the leaders and the masses, in one integral whole, or otherwise it would not deserve the name.

The muddled views of the "Left" Communists on the inter-relationship between the leaders, the Party, the class and the masses actually reflected their denial of Party principle and Party discipline. Lenin said that this was tantamount to completely disarming the proletariat in the interests of the bourgeoisie. It was equivalent to the kind of petty-bourgeois diffuseness, instability, incapacity for sustained effort, unity and organized action, which, if indulged, would inevitably destroy every proletarian revolutionary movement.

In summing up the historical experience of the Bolshevik Party, Lenin took the view that absolute centralization and extremely strict proletarian discipline constituted one of the fundamental conditions for the Bolsheviks' victory over the bourgeoisie and their success. He wrote:

... the dictatorship of the proletariat is essential, and victory over the bourgeoisie is impossible without a long, stubborn and desperate war of life and death, a war demanding perseverance, discipline, firmness, indomitableness and unity of will.

How is this discipline maintained, tested and reinforced? Lenin said:

First, by the class consciousness of the proletarian vanguard and by its devotion to the revolution, by its perseverance, self-sacrifice and heroism. Secondly, by its ability to link itself with, to keep in close touch with, and to a certain extent, if you like, to merge with the broadest masses of the toilers — primarily with the proletariat, but also with the nonproletarian toiling masses. Thirdly, by the correctness of the political leadership exercised by this vanguard, by the correctness of its political strategy and tactics, provided that the broadest masses have been convinced by their own experience that they are correct.

Lenin stressed:

Without these conditions, discipline in a revolutionary party that is really capable of being the party of the advanced class, whose mission it is to overthrow the bourgeoisie and transform the whole of society, cannot be achieved. Without these conditions, all at-

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1 Ibid., pp. 363-64.
2 Ibid., p. 370.
3 Ibid., p. 364.
tempts to establish discipline inevitably fall flat and end in phrasemongering and grimacing.¹

IT IS NECESSARY TO MASTER ALL FORMS OF STRUGGLE

Analysing the situation in the international communist movement, Lenin held that the task coming up on the agenda for the Communist Parties was the organizing of vast battalions and the bringing into alignment of all the class forces of a given society so as to hasten the ripening of conditions for the decisive battle. What this required was that: (1) all the hostile class forces should become sufficiently entangled, sufficiently at loggerheads with each other, sufficiently weakened in a struggle beyond their strength; (2) all the vacillating, wavering, unstable, intermediate elements should sufficiently expose themselves in the eyes of the people; and (3) a mass sentiment in favour of the most determined, supremely bold, revolutionary action against the bourgeoisie should have arisen and begun to gain vigour among the proletariat. Then the time for revolution would be ripe. And if the Communists chose the moment rightly, they would be assured of victory.

To this end Communists had to combine the strictest devotion to communism with the ability to make whatever practical compromises were necessary, to manoeuvre, to make agreements, zigzags, retreats and so on, in order to make the fullest use of the contradictions in the enemy's camp and accelerate its disintegration and collapse. They must be able to master all forms or facets of social activity without any exception, to move the masses into action to the fullest degree, and to be ready to pass from one form to another in the quickest and most unexpected manner. Lenin said:

Everyone will agree that an army which does not train itself to wield all arms, all the means and methods of warfare that the enemy possesses or may possess, behaves in an unwise or even in a criminal manner. But this applies to politics even more than it does to war. . . . Unless we master all means of warfare, we may suffer grave, often even decisive, defeat if changes beyond our control in the position of the other classes bring to the forefront forms of activity in which we are particularly weak.¹

Lenin taught Communists that when the conditions for direct, open, really mass and really revolutionary struggle do not yet exist, they must be able to champion the interests of the revolution in non-revolutionary bodies, and even in downright reactionary bodies, among people who are incapable of immediately appreciating the need for revolutionary methods of action, and to lead the masses forward to undertake the real, last, decisive, and great revolutionary struggle.

“Left” Communists held that Communists should not work in reactionary trade unions; they should leave them and create absolutely brand-new, immaculate “Workers’ Unions” consisting only of Communists. Lenin regarded this as “ridiculous and childish nonsense” which

¹Ibid., p. 425.
clearly revealed the frivolous attitude of the "Left" Communists towards the question of influencing the masses. He pointed out that to refuse to work in the reactionary trade unions meant leaving the insufficiently developed or backward masses of workers under the influence of the reactionary leaders, the agents of the bourgeoisie, the labour aristocrats, or the "workers who have become completely bourgeois". Lenin maintained:

If you want to help "the masses" and to win the sympathy and support of "the masses," you must not fear difficulties, you must not fear the pinpricks, chicanery, insults and persecution on the part of the "leaders" (who, being opportunists and social-chauvinists, are in most cases directly or indirectly connected with the bourgeoisie and the police), but must imperatively work wherever the masses are to be found. You must be capable of every sacrifice, of overcoming the greatest obstacles in order to carry on agitation and propaganda systematically, perseveringly, persistently and patiently, precisely in those institutions, societies and associations — even the most ultra-reactionary — in which proletarian or semiproletarian masses are to be found.¹

Of course, the Communists working in the reactionary trade unions must enter into battle against the opportunists. Lenin said that the opportunists and labour-aristocrats had acquired a firm footing in the trade unions of the West European countries. These people were imperialist-minded and imperialist-bribed. The fight against them had to be carried to the point where all the incorrigible opportunist leaders were completely discredited and driven out of the trade unions. Political power could not be captured without carrying this fight to a certain stage.

The "Left" Communists said, "One must emphatically reject . . . all reversion to parliamentary forms of struggle, which have become historically and politically obsolete. . . ."¹ Lenin’s answer to that was: " . . . we must not regard what is obsolete for us as being obsolete for the class, as being obsolete for the masses."² This was an illustration of the fact that the "Left" Communists failed to judge and handle questions as the party of the class, the Party of the masses. Lenin said:

. . . participation in parliamentary elections and in the struggle on the parliamentary rostrum is obligatory for the party of the revolutionary proletariat precisely for the purpose of educating the backward strata of its own class, precisely for the purpose of awakening and enlightening the undeveloped, downtrodden, ignorant rural masses.³

He added:

Criticism — the keenest, most ruthless and uncompromising criticism — must be directed, not against parliamentarism or parliamentary activities, but against those leaders who are unable — and still more against those who are unwilling — to utilize parliamentary

¹ Ibid., p. 377.
² "Left-Wing' Communism, an Infantile Disorder", ibid., p. 382.
³ Ibid., p. 383.
elections and the parliamentary tribune in a revolutionary, communist manner.\textsuperscript{1}

Refusal to participate in parliament was childish; it was a simple, easy and supposedly revolutionary method but provided no solution for the difficult problem of combating bourgeois-democratic influence within the working-class movement. To go that way was in reality to skip difficulties.

Lenin said:

The Communists . . . must learn to create a new, unusual, nonopportunist, noncareerist parliamentarism; the Communist parties must issue their slogans; real proletarians, with the help of the unorganized and downtrodden poor, should scatter and distribute leaflets, canvass workers' houses and the cottages of the rural proletarians and peasants in the remote villages (fortunately there are many times less remote villages in Europe than in Russia, and in England the number is very small); they should go into the most common taverns, penetrate into the unions, societies and casual meetings where the common people gather, and talk to the people, not in learned (and not in very parliamentary) language; they should not at all strive to "get seats" in parliament, but should everywhere strive to rouse the minds of the masses and draw them into the struggle, to hold the bourgeoisie to its word and utilize the apparatus it has set up, the elections it has appointed, the appeals it has made to the whole people, and to tell the people what Bolshevism is.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 390.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., pp. 427-28.

THE COMPROMISES OF A REVOLUTIONARY AND THE COMPROMISES OF A TRAITOR

The "Left" Communists also advanced the slogan: "No compromises!" They said that all compromises with other parties and all policies involving manoeuvring were incorrect, exceedingly dangerous and should be resolutely rejected. Lenin criticized this harmful idea of opposing compromises "on principle", and saw it as an expression of childishness which it was difficult to take seriously. Throughout the history of Bolshevism, there were many instances of compromise. As far back as 1901-02, before Bolshevism emerged, the old editorial board of Iskra in which Lenin participated had concluded a political alliance with Struve, the political leader of bourgeois liberalism. In 1907 during the Duma elections, for a brief period the Bolsheviks had entered into a political bloc with the Socialist-Revolutionaries. Between 1903 and 1912, they had been formally united with the Mensheviks in one Social-Democratic Party. During World War I, the Bolsheviks had met with the Kautskyites and their like at the Zimmerwald and Kienthal Conferences and had issued joint manifestoes. At the time of the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks had adopted the Socialist-Revolutionary agrarian programme in its entirety without a single alteration. All these were compromises. Through such compromises, the Bolsheviks had united with these forces, in given conditions for a limited period of time, against the common enemy. However, the Bolsheviks had never allowed themselves to be restricted by these political forces ideologically or politically, and they never ceased pitilessly to expose and combat their errors. Lenin compared the experience
which the Communist Party, as the vanguard of the proletariat, had to undergo in its revolutionary activity, and especially in the struggle for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie, to the difficult ascent of an unexplored and previously inaccessible mountain. There could be no straight and direct high road; many zigzags and intermediate stations had to be negotiated to arrive at the final destination. In other words, the Party's tactics had to include the use of manoeuvre, agreement and compromise. However, these tactics had to be used in such a way as not to lower but to raise the general level of proletarian class consciousness, revolutionary spirit and ability to fight and win; they had to be used in such a way as to consolidate and strengthen the proletarian forces while weakening and disintegrating the enemy.

The "Left" Communists opposed the revolutionary compromises of the Bolsheviks, while the opportunists tried to cover up their own betrayal by distorting various examples of such compromises. To educate the revolutionaries as well as to make a counter-attack against the opportunists, Lenin repeatedly explained the two different kinds of compromises. He said:

Every proletarian — owing to the conditions of the mass struggle and the sharp intensification of class antagonisms in which he lives — notices the difference between a compromise enforced by objective conditions (such as lack of strike funds, no outside support, extreme hunger and exhaustion), a compromise which in no way diminishes the revolutionary devotion and readiness for further struggle on the part of the workers who have agreed to such a compromise, and a compromise by traitors who try to ascribe to outside causes their own selfishness (strikebreakers also enter into "compromises")! cowardice, desire to toady to the capitalists, and readiness to yield to intimidation, sometimes to persuasion, sometimes to sops, and sometimes to flattery on the part of the capitalists.¹

In the former case, the compromise is partial, non-fundamental and temporary, designed to gain time to reorganize the forces and prepare for heroic, fearless attacks against the enemy. In the latter case, the compromise is treacherous, leading to the abandonment of the fundamental interests of the proletariat. Lenin cited the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty by the Bolsheviks as an example, explaining that this was a revolutionary and absolutely correct compromise which left no room whatever for opportunist misinterpretation; whereas the opportunists by their compromises with the capitalist-imperialist robbers made themselves accomplices in bourgeois banditry and betrayed the basic interests of the proletariat. The attempts to confuse the compromises of the opportunists with the compromises of the revolutionaries were inept and contemptible. Lenin said:

A political leader who desires to be useful to the revolutionary proletariat must know how to single out concrete cases when such compromises are inadmissible, when they are an expression of opportunism and treachery, and direct all the force of criticism, the full edge of merciless exposure and relentless war, against those concrete compromises, and not allow the past masters at "practical" Socialism and the parlia-

¹Ibid., p. 393.
mentary Jesuits to dodge and wriggle out of responsibility by disquisitions on “compromises in general.”

REVOLUTIONARY FEVER AND COOLNESS OF MIND

The victory of the proletarian revolution in Russia and its ever wider impact throughout the world had incensed the bourgeoisie of Russia and the world over, almost to the point of frenzy. On the one hand they used force to suppress revolution, on the other they started an all-round attack on Bolshevism. They founded all sorts of richly endowed organizations, hired any number of extra scholars, sensation-mongers and priests, published numerous books, magazines and newspapers and shrieked at the Bolsheviks in every key. The bourgeoisie and its accomplices thought that they could stifle the truth with guns and verbal attacks, but things turned out contrary to their wishes. Their very campaigns induced wider sections of the people to explore the truth. Lenin commented on their folly in these terms:

... we must bow and thank the capitalist gentry. They are working for us. They are helping us to get the masses interested in the nature and significance of Bolshevism. And they cannot do otherwise; for they have already failed to stifle Bolshevism, to “ignore” it.

The “Left” Communists showed their petty-bourgeois revolutionism in the face of the furious enemy attacks. They decided revolutionary tactics solely by emotion, led the masses solely by emotion, and they mistook their subjective desires for objective reality. When he analysed the social origin of this kind of mental reaction, Lenin said:

... the small owner, the small master ..., who under capitalism always suffers oppression and, very often, an incredibly acute and rapid deterioration in his conditions, and ruin, easily goes to revolutionary extremes, but is incapable of perseverance, organization, discipline and steadfastness. The petty bourgeois “driven to frenzy” by the horrors of capitalism is a social phenomenon which, like anarchism, is characteristic of all capitalist countries. The instability of such revolutionism, its barrenness, its liability to become swiftly transformed into submission, apathy, fantasy, and even a “frenzied” infatuation with one or another bourgeois “fad” — all this is a matter of common knowledge.

Lenin remarked that the temper of the “Left” Communists in some respects expresses the hatred of the oppressed and exploited masses for the bourgeoisie and this temper is highly valuable. But revolutionary fervour alone is not enough for deciding revolutionary tactics, which require a sober and most objective assessment of all the class forces, both in the given country and on a world scale, and also a scrutinizing of the experience of many other revolutionary movements. He said that “politics is a science and an art that does not drop from the skies”, that “it is not obtained gratis”, and that “the proletariat, if it wants to conquer the bourgeoisie, must train its own, proletarian ‘class politicians’.”

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1 Ibid., p. 359.
2 Ibid., p. 430.
The political representatives of the proletariat have to be able to utilize the contradictions of the enemy and win over the greatest possible number of allies. Lenin said:

The more powerful enemy can be vanquished only by exerting the utmost effort, and without fail, most thoroughly, carefully, attentively and skilfully using every, even the smallest, “rift” among the enemies, of every antagonism of interest among the bourgeoisie of the various countries and among the various groups or types of bourgeoisie within the various countries, and also by taking advantage of every, even the smallest, opportunity of gaining a mass ally, even though this ally be temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable and conditional. Those who fail to understand this, fail to understand even a particle of Marxism, or of scientific, modern socialism in general.¹

Propaganda and agitation alone are not enough to educate the millions upon millions of people politically; the masses needed their own political experience. Lenin said that to lead the masses to the final and decisive battle, “we must not only ask ourselves whether we have convinced the vanguard of the revolutionary class, but also whether the historically effective forces of all classes — positively of all the classes of the given society without exception — are aligned in such a way that everything is fully ripe for the decisive battle”.² He also said:

To throw the vanguard alone into the decisive battle, before the whole class, before the broad masses have taken up a position either of direct support of the vanguard, or at least of benevolent neutrality towards it, and one in which they cannot possibly support the enemy, would be not merely folly but a crime. And in order that actually the whole class, that actually the broad masses of the working people and those oppressed by capital may take up such a position, propaganda and agitation alone are not enough. For this the masses must have their own political experience. Such is the fundamental law of all great revolutions. . . .¹

The political representatives of the proletariat have to have firm confidence in the cause of communism and a most intense passion for it, and at the same time they have to be cool and collected in practical struggle. Furthermore, they have to be able to combine these qualities. Lenin said:

Life will assert itself. Let the bourgeoisie rave, work itself into a frenzy, go to extremes, commit follies, take vengeance on the Bolsheviks in advance, and endeavour to kill off (in India, Hungary, Germany, etc.) more hundreds, thousands, and hundreds of thousands of yesterday’s and tomorrow’s Bolsheviks. In acting thus, the bourgeoisie is acting as all classes doomed by history have acted.³

Everywhere and in every case communism was becoming tempered and was growing; its roots were so deep that persecution did not weaken or debilitate it, but strengthened it. Communists of all countries must have the firm belief that whatever happens the future is theirs.

¹ Ibid., p. 396.
² Ibid., p. 423.
³ Ibid., p. 431.
In the midst of the great revolutionary struggles, it is necessary for them to make a full estimate of the frenzied attacks of the bourgeoisie. They have to combine the most intense fervour with the coolest and soberest calculation, to combine the high sense of principle of boundless devotion to the communist cause with the utmost flexibility of tactics, in order to march forward to victory with still greater confidence and firmness.