

# Bilan d'une révolution

*The great lessons  
of October 1917*

Programme  
Communiste»»

# Bilan d'une révolution - Balance sheet of a revolution

## Part I: The great lessons of October 1917

In: "Programme Communiste", theoretical organ of the International Communist Party, numbers 40-41-42, October 1967 - June 1968

*Translators' note on quotation and citation:* Citations and footnotes are entirely based on the French original. This English translation itself is based on the original French text, as well as its German translation. Where fitting, quotes were replaced with already existing English translations of these works in order to provide some literary consistency. In other places, quotes were directly translated from the original versions of this text, so as to make sure its theoretical potency, as well as its stylistic and thematic eloquence remain preserved. Not meant as a work of academic pedantry, we will let the text speak for itself.

• • •

"What is now happening to Marx's theory has, in the course of history, happened repeatedly to the theories of revolutionary thinkers and leaders of oppressed classes fighting for emancipation. During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes constantly hounded them, received their theories with the most savage malice, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaigns of lies and slander. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonize them, so to say, and to hallow their *names* to a certain extent for the "consolation" of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping the latter, while at the same time robbing the revolutionary theory of its *substance*, blunting its revolutionary edge and vulgarizing it." (1).

When he wrote these lines at the beginning of **The State and the Revolution**, Lenin certainly did not think that the same fate would be reserved for his "theories" and, even less, for that revolution to which his "name" was soon to be indissolubly attached.

It is indeed with the "most furious hatred" that the armies of the international bourgeoisie threw themselves at the communist dictatorship of Russia, the center of this world proletarian revolution of which it proclaimed itself the first fortress and the torch, and of which it would never have thought of separating its own fate from. For years, the guardians of Capital erected and maintained, all around the Russian powder keg, the *cordon sanitaire* of military intervention and political counterattack.

There is nothing the bourgeois counter-revolution did not attempt in order to prevent the revolutionary flame of October from spreading to the citadels of the capitalist West and destroying it in the firestorm of the Socialist Revolution. Where weapons were not enough (and they were not enough!) heavy artillery of lies and slander were mobilised; and even though the latter proved to be powerless, the servile army of opportunism launched an assault behind the barrage of Capital. And for good reason. The bourgeoisie knew better than any other class that October was a living example, a shining "lesson"; that it was not a local or national event. They knew that there, in Russia, a link in the iron chain of its world domination had just been broken. Since then, fifty years have passed, the bourgeoisie of all countries has forgotten the terrors of the time and, for them, October has gone down in history; it is a museum piece, a body without "soul", a weapon with a blunt edge. The time for commemoration has come: October is dead. At least we think so.

The heirs and successors of the worst adversaries of the Bolsheviks of those distant years can sing their praises with impunity; the heirs and successors of this Stalinism, which began its career so well by mummifying Lenin's body and sanctifying his "name" after having distorted the "content" of his doctrine, can commemorate it at their ease, just like the leaders of the bourgeois forces, they also put October in the archives. They have transformed this crucial moment in the tragic history of the global class struggle into the day of foundation of the modern Russian nation-state. Out of this flag, this torch of the world proletarian revolution, they have made a rallying point for strictly national interests. October belonged to the international proletariat: they have made it the thing of Capital which accumulates behind the well-defended borders of the Russian state. The learnings and teachings of the revolution are for them in no way to be analysed as class struggle, rather they transformed it into a miserable catechism for the use by careerists and cadres of their country. For them, the origins of October are **Russian**, exclusively Russian, and the same goes for its historical results. October is fifty years old: we go to the mausoleum out of conscience, we don't go there to remember and learn. October is dead. Rest in peace.

In 1918 Lenin cried out: "The Russian Revolution is just one example, a first step in a series of revolutions." And in 1919: "In essence, the Russian revolution was a dress rehearsal [...] of the world proletarian revolution." For the band of mystifiers whose arid brains gave birth to such writings as "Theses for the fiftieth anniversary of the great socialist October Revolution", this can no longer hold true - on the contrary, the revolution to them was only an exception to the rule, a phenomenon - unique history that will never be repeated. Also, once its roots have been cut, which were entrenched in the global antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, the archivist on duty can easily say, with the appearance of expertise, that October "exercised a very profound influence on all the successive course of world history" (world history is no longer the history of classes, but the history of all: priests and minions included). It is exactly in the same way that one could say of a rock detached from the mountain that put others in motion, mechanically, by simple force of inertia, without imposing on them a determined direction, in leaving them "free" to each follow their own - to complete the metaphor - national, exclusive, inimitable path towards a goal. A goal that is ignored since its definition is up to the mysterious national genius, to national history with all its traditions and its Pantheon. Its origins, its nature as a collective heritage of a single class, its international perspectives thus put on display in the museum of a false and frozen national history, October is dead - very dead. At least we think so. But the two sentences above from Lenin would suffice to remind us that this is not how the Marxists waged the gigantic October battle, nor did they commemorate it year after year in this spirit. Marxism is a "guide for action". However, it can only be a guide because it is

a general and complete conception of the emancipation movement of the working class. In these great periods of upheaval when the classes seize the weapons for a merciless battle, this guide checks its predictions, drawing from the present facts themselves that momentum which will give greater relief to its predictions, thanks to the persuasive force of historical facts. In 1848-49 and in 1871, it was in contact with real class struggles that Marx and Engels sharpened their weapons of criticism - struggles whose results did not concern just the French or German proletariat, but the world proletariat in totality. With his gaze fixed on Petrograd, which is not only Petrograd but London, Berlin, or Paris, Lenin returns in the **State and the Revolution** to these brilliant verifications of doctrine. As in the entire period from 1905 to 1917, it provides the tools for translating those experiences into real events of history, not only in Russia but also world-wide.

During a century and a half of uprisings to heavenly heights and declines into the deepest depths of hell, which Marxists have celebrated and cursed, it is always the definitive confirmation of a universal doctrine and program that they have sought, and what they drew from it is a certainty of the future, caring all the less to commemorate the past.

So let them all imagine - some believe that October is dead, others that they killed it.

In truth, however, it is purely up to the revolutionary proletariat to rediscover it in order to throw it in the face of all its enemies!

• • •

In the first chapters of "**Left-Wing**" **Communism - An Infantile Disorder**, intended to remind communists of all countries of the features **of international importance** (2) of the October Revolution, Lenin emphasises as "one of the essential conditions for the success of the Bolsheviks" the necessity of having had to search **outside national limits** of Russia a theory "proved by the universal experience of the entire 19th century", subsequently confirmed by "the experience of the seekings and vacillations, the errors and disappointments of revolutionary thought in Russia". In exactly the same way, Marx and Engels, also "exiles", had found confirmation in the hesitations and errors of the petty-bourgeois socialists during the great struggles of 1848 or the years preceding the Paris Commune. The Bolsheviks who proposed, according to the program drawn up by **What Is To Be Done?**, to import Marxism into the Russian working class, had therefore, in turn, imported it from the West. They had drawn their inspiration neither from the depths of Slavic genius, like the Pan-Slavists, nor from the national "model" of mir, like the populists, but from a doctrine born from the historical and current experiences of the working class. They did not draw inspiration from the "specific peculiarities" of a country that would today be called "underdeveloped" either, but, if we may use the expression, from the "non-specific peculiarities" of the countries of the **most** evolved capitalism.

Instead of conceiving "novelties", they adopted the results of half a century of class struggle and its theoretical expression: Marxism. Their path was already marked out there; their glory, their pride as militants who always disdained to claim particular merits, both for themselves and for "their" working class (3), is to have stuck to this path, that was already called "dogmatic" in 1903.

For Marxism, the revolutionary (or counter-revolutionary: the two terms are dialectically linked) destiny of Russia fits into a whole which, since the Manifesto, is by definition global. The shadow of Tsarist Russia, the stronghold of the European counter-revolution, obscures the revolutionary

perspectives of 1848: it is no longer a question of the distant land of the Sarmatians dear to the bourgeois publicist, but the issue of a leading role in the drama, just like Metternich's Austria; without its defeat, the European revolution cannot win. After 1860, while remaining European, which at the time meant global, the Marxist perspective changed: the looming Russian revolution "would have enormous importance for all of Europe, if only for the reason that 'by destroying in one swoop the last reserve of pan-European reaction, untouched until now', it will be able to initiate the leap "from the peasant communities, this already decomposed form of the ancient common property of the land [...] to the superior communist form of land property". It however had to become "the signal for a workers' revolution in the West, with both complementing each other" (4). In the nineties, this hypothetical perspective in turn disappeared. Russia having engaged in the capitalist whirlwind, the anti-feudal and anti-Tsarist revolution promises to be the great upheaval which, by tearing the peasants "from the isolation of their villages, which form their universe" (5), and by pushing them "onto the big stage where they will learn to know the outside world and therefore also to know themselves", will give "to the Western workers' movement a new impetus, new and better conditions for struggle and, thereby will bring victory closer to the modern industrial proletariat, without which today's Russia can neither leave the peasant commune nor capitalism to move towards a socialist transformation" (6).

From its birth, Bolshevism was in continuity with this international tradition of Marxism: in these sentences of Engels, there is already the whole Bolshevik perspective of 1905 and 1917, as well as that framework of a possible counter-revolution which will only be realized later in 1926.

For us, the first of the **lessons** of October, from its brilliant beginnings to its tragic fallout, is indeed this flawless **continuity** established by the Party, twenty years before the Revolution, with the historic lineage of battles of the proletariat in the countries of fully developed capitalism and with the general doctrine and the program which predicted them and fed on them all at the same time. Without this **unbroken link**, no victory of the working class has been or will be possible. The Bolsheviks knew how to embrace 1917, 1848, 1871, or even 1894 with that same glance; likewise, it is in the fruitful perspective of the great past struggles in all countries, and their reflections in doctrine, that we must consider the **future resurgence of class struggle**.

The fertilization of the Russian workers' movement by Marxism therefore dates back to those distant years when Engels, while predicting that Russia would inevitably pass through the capitalist phase, opened up to the working class of the immense country and its Marxist Party the prospect of a revolution which would certainly be anti-feudal since it had above all to allow the peasants access to land, an objective specific to bourgeois revolutions, but which could also rise to the level of a proletarian revolution on condition of uniting with the revolutionary movement of the socialist proletariat of the West. No other European proletariat has assimilated the Marxist doctrine as fully as the Russian proletariat, no other has thus appropriated it as a whole. From 1894 (date of the polemic against Mikhailovsky and of Engels' last writing on **Social Relations in Russia**) to 1905, Lenin's struggle was summed up in a passionate defense of the entirety of Marxist doctrine, both against the perspective of a purely peasant social and political revolution, the idea having its roots in the heritage of **mir** which the **populists** vaguely dreamed of, as well as against the revisionism of the economists and against the eclectic pragmatism of the **spontaneists**. At the same time, Lenin highlights the fundamental role of theory, of the program, of the Party in short and of their "importation" into the class (7), openly rejecting any "freedom of criticism" with regard to the theory or the program. It is necessary to accept both, as Lenin himself says and repeats, in their "entirety", in their "together",

globally and without mutilation. This is the other aspect of this continuity in which we have recognized the fundamental premise and the first "lesson" of October.

The **other** aspect, we claim, is the assimilation of the theory as a unitary and invariable whole. Two facts, also of an international nature, shaped his fundamental understandings, as Lenin shows in **Infantile Disorder**: "Subject to the yoke of savage and reactionary Tsarism", the proletarian vanguard was forced to seek its theory beyond national borders, in exile which brought it into contact with the great struggles, both theoretical and practical, of the European socialist movement (Lenin was trained at the school of the exile Plekhanov and all Bolshevism was formed at the school of the exile Lenin); moreover, "no other country has known, in such a short period of time, such a rich concentration of forms, nuances, methods in the struggle of **all** classes of contemporary society" (8). And this last fact is indeed of an international nature since this dynamism was born from the import of capitalism into a backward country, from the establishment of a capitalism that has reached full maturity in a region that was historically (and therefore also economically and socially) backward. As master dialecticians that they were, it is there that Trotsky and Lenin will seek the key to the future Russian revolution: "In our time the scholastic criteria, inspired by an obtuse pedantry, are useless. It is **the world evolution** which tore Russia from its state of backwardness and its Asian barbarism"; and the other will write: "The leading role of the Russian proletariat in the world workers' movement cannot be explained by the economic development of our country: it is exactly the opposite that is true" (9). It is precisely because this economically backward country has seen a state-of-the-art Capitalism grafted onto its "Asian" and "barbaric" structure that terrible upheavals have shaken its foundations, that the stages have been burned, the historical deadlines shortened. This is why the bourgeois and sub-bourgeois classes have exhausted, in such a short period of time, all their chances of directly intervening, of directing and of controlling the social and political struggle, and the proletariat, hardly born, found itself faced with its historical tasks. Faced with the "last word" of capitalism, it had in fact to seek the "last word" of revolutionary doctrine, a doctrine strong in the confirmations brought by fifty years of history - and Tsarist absolutism could only help it. This is why the young vanguard so early on demonstrated an extraordinary maturity (10), that is to say, immediately understood that apart from the doctrine there was no salvation.

If Bolshevism has had a historical merit, it is that of having claimed **the invariance of Marxism**, that is to say, of having occupied the only platform from which the proletarian class is called upon to destroy capitalism that does not risk "slipping into the swamp" as Lenin said in **What Is To Be Done?**. And if after 1917 he was able to "re-import" into the West the theory that which the latter had forgotten or disfigured, that is what he owed it to. Those who uphold the "creative Marxism" of the Kremlin or the absurd "Maoist Marxism" of Beijing, who want to make Marxism an "elastic" doctrine therefore have no right to commemorate October.

• • •

At its birth, the Russian Marxist movement therefore found its way clear. Eight years before the revolution of 1905, they knew perfectly well that their task was **twofold**: "The practical activity of the Social Democrats is assigned the task of leading the class struggle of the proletariat and of organizing this struggle under two aspects: **socialist** (struggle against the capitalist class, a struggle which aims to destroy the class regime and to organize socialist society) and **democratic** (struggle against absolutism, which aims to win political freedom for Russia and to democratize the political and social regime of this country" (11). "Political and social" means in the first place, the destruction of large

landholdings. To fulfill it, they will have to support “the progressive classes of society against the representatives of privileged land ownership and caste, and against the body of officials; the big bourgeoisie against the reactionary greed of the petty bourgeoisie ” (12). But this solidarity will necessarily take on a "temporary and conditional character", not only because "the proletariat is a separate class, which tomorrow may prove to be the adversary of its allies of today" (13), but as well because its "class condition" makes it the only class "capable of pushing the democratization of the political and social regime **to the end** since such democratization would put this regime in the hands of the workers". Following the path traced by the **Communist Manifesto**, the **Address of 1858**, and the class struggles in France and Germany, the Russian Marxist movement therefore recognizes the proletariat as the true protagonist of the imminent revolution, although it remains confined within democratic and therefore bourgeois limits.

This is the task of the working class in countries which, having not yet accomplished their bourgeois revolution, are subject to outside pressure of rapidly expanding productive forces. It should also be noted that, for Lenin, “bourgeois” and “democratic” are always synonymous terms, and that if the proletariat is to fulfil democratic-bourgeois tasks (in **these countries** only, never in those where capitalism has already traveled its revolutionary cycle), it is in absolute independence from the classes and parties of the bourgeoisie that it must do so: it is **the proletariat**, and it alone, that can **accomplish them in full!** Today's “commemorators” have instead deified democracy and socialism, putting the Party behind the democrats even in countries of more than mature capitalism.

Since it is a question of a bourgeois revolution, the pedantic Mensheviks will say before and after 1905, the initiative and the direction must be left to the bourgeoisie (some will even go so far as to conclude that it is necessary to participate in the bourgeois government!); drowned in their hazy idealism, the populists whose supreme goal was the destruction of the great seigniorial property, proclaim for their part that the initiative and the direction must return to the peasantry; until 1917 and beyond, the position of the Bolsheviks will remain, on the contrary, that the revolution though **economically** and **socially** bourgeois cannot be accomplished "to the end" without the working class taking the lead. If it is ready to take on this enormous burden, it is because it knows that once the bourgeois revolution is carried to this extreme limit that the petty-bourgeoisie or the peasantry will never cross, the proletariat will see, with the help of the proletariat of the countries of advanced capitalism, the prospect of its **own** revolution. In 1905, Lenin will say how justified the "dreams" of the Russian Marxists were, who thought they would "achieve with an unprecedented amplitude all democratic transformations, all (their) minimum program" because, once that has been achieved, "the revolutionary fire which took hold would extend to all of Europe [...] the European worker would rise up in his turn and show (them) how to do it". As for the current "commemorators": It was them (or their spiritual fathers) who, in the China of 1927, delivered the working class, hand and foot to the "brother party" of the Kuomintang, thus prohibiting the proletariat from taking over the head of the double revolution in the Far East; they again who, in the “underdeveloped” zones, urge the workers to follow the “national bourgeoisie”, even local satraps!

In essence, the terms of the Bolsheviks’ perspective will remain unchanged until October. Only the relations between the classes and therefore also the position of the main protagonist of the bourgeois revolution in Russia, the proletariat, changed, under the action of extranational factors as well. In a very "evolved" world from the point of view of the productive forces, five years count for fifty in backward countries; the historical "phases" overlap and merge into each other, the timeframes are shortened, and it is with extreme rapidity that the fronts of the class war are made and unmade, then

reformed in a new way. **The Address of 1850** (14) foresaw for Germany (and it suffices to transpose to Russia) a rupture between the revolutionary bourgeoisie, on the one hand, the united petty-bourgeoisie and the proletariat, on the other. Then, immediately after, a new rupture, between the petty bourgeoisie and the workers this time, which should take the form of an armed struggle leading to the socialist revolution led exclusively by the proletarian class, provided that the revolution breaks out in France ("in the West", we would say for Russia). But, for Marx as for Lenin in **The Tasks of Social Democracy**, the historical delays are relatively long and he foresees that "the German workers will be able to seize power [...] only after a long revolutionary development". In Russia, as in all of today's underdeveloped countries, the historical course is, on the contrary, infinitely faster: in 1905, the liberal bourgeoisie had already burnt all its revolutionary cartridges by openly allying itself with the large landowners and Tsarism; among the bourgeois classes or subclasses, the peasantry therefore remains the only possible "ally" (but, as Lenin always reminds us, the ally of today will be the enemy of tomorrow!). In its impetuous advance, **international** capitalism has driven a deep divide between the classes, even - and perhaps especially - in the backward countries, forcing them, not to "jump" over entire historical stages, but to shorten them considerably. In Russia, the proletariat is therefore naturally the **vanguard** and we are even seeing the dawning of the day when it will remain alone, abandoned by the only "ally" that the rupture of the front of all the bourgeois classes had allowed it.

This is an October teaching, which today only applies to a few regions of the world, but that is enough to keep it important. In opposition to this invariance, only the obtuse corporatism of Stalin and his followers (15) could decree, as he did in 1926, that, once the revolutionary fire was ignited in China, it would develop by respecting distinct stages, each of which had to be entirely "completed" before one could move on to the next, and conclude on the basis of this mechanical conception that the proletariat had to wait as massed behind the "national classes", for "experts" in revolutionary strategy to proclaim its time. The tragic result was, as we know, that the proletariat realized too late that this time had irretrievably passed! The resounding Russian victory, as well as the crushing Chinese defeat of 1927, showed that the truth was exactly the opposite of this conception: even if the proletariat was in the background during the first tremors of the social earthquake, it is inevitably pushed to the head of the revolutionary movement when this earthquake reaches its climax; then, it is no longer a question for it "pushing" the bourgeois revolution "to the end", but of seizing the rudder by force and, with the support of the peasantry, of imposing its hegemonism on all other classes of society. The Leninist formula of "democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants" has no other meaning.

**"Dictatorship"**, because we cannot do without "despotic interventions", violent incursions, not so much in the forms of the political superstructure, which is only a fragile and secondary aspect of social upheaval, but in property relations - the only way to liberate the productive forces whose large noble property hinders development and to free the peasants from absolutism, both central and local. **"Democratic dictatorship"** because democracy is the political form corresponding to the bourgeois limitation of the revolution on the economic and social level. This dictatorship is nevertheless exercised **against** the bourgeoisie allied to feudalism, and that is why it does not respect any of the myths of political democracy and legal equality, even if its economic mission is bourgeois. Oh, "Commemorators", for Lenin, **even** when it comes to fulfilling historical bourgeois tasks, the proletariat and its Party need the terrible, the scandalous, the non-conformist Dictatorship, even if it means sharing it with another class like the peasantry!

Perspectives? It is important to recall them, not for academic reasons, but to shed light on the problems of the "after October". In **Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution** (1905), Lenin writes: "This victory (the decisive victory over Tsarism) will be precisely a dictatorship, that is to say, it must necessarily 'lean **on armed force**, on the arming of the masses, on the insurrection and **not on such and such institutions constituted "legally"**, by the "peaceful way". It can only be a dictatorship because the changes absolutely and **immediately** necessary for the proletariat and the peasantry will provoke desperate resistance on the part of the landowners, the big bourgeoisie, and Tsarism. Without a dictatorship, it would be impossible to break this resistance, to repel the attacks of the counter-revolution. However, it will not be a socialist dictatorship, but a democratic dictatorship. It will not be able to touch (**without the revolution having passed through various intermediate stages**) the foundations of capitalism. It will be able, in the best case, to proceed to a radical redistribution of land ownership for the benefit of the peasantry; to fully apply a consistent democratism up to and including in the proclamation of the Republic; to eradicate not only from the life of the countryside but also from the life of the factories, the survivals of Asiatic despotism; to begin to seriously improve the condition of the workers and to raise their standard of living; and last but not least, to extend the revolutionary fire to Europe. This victory **will not yet turn our bourgeois revolution into a socialist revolution; the democratic revolution will not go directly outside the framework of bourgeois social and economic relations, but this victory will nonetheless have immense significance for the future development of Russia and the whole world**" (16). And again: "This victory will allow us to lift up Europe: and the socialist proletariat of Europe, after having shaken off the yoke of the bourgeoisie, **will help us, in turn, to carry out the socialist revolution**" (we find here verbatim the last words of Engels on **Social Relations in Russia**).

This "two-man dictatorship" is, as Lenin will never fail to repeat, an uninterrupted process of struggles against the past and for the future, during which the proletariat is, in reality, the force which "directs" the peasants (17). Does this vision have anything in common with the idyllic coexistence ("pre-established harmony" as Trotsky puts it) that later, on behalf and on the orders of Stalin, the academy of the "red professors" will present as the real image of these "good relations" between the working class and the peasantry in which Lenin saw a simple prelude to the final socialist revolution? Let Lenin himself answer: "A day will come when the struggle against the Russian autocracy will be over and the era of the democratic revolution will be over for Russia: from then on it will even be RIDICULOUS to speak of "unity of will" between proletariat and peasantry, democratic dictatorship, etc. [...] We will then think directly of the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat [...] The proletariat must carry out the democratic revolution to the end, **by adding** the peasant mass, to crush by force the resistance of the autocracy and paralyze the instability of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat must make the socialist revolution by adding the mass of the semi-proletarian elements of the population, **paralyzing the instability of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie**" (18).

It is, in fact, certain that when the proletariat enters into the running for its own demands, or even only when it poses the limit-demand that should be satisfied by a bourgeois revolution led by the bourgeois classes, namely the nationalization of the land (let us recall that the **Address** already claimed it in 1850, a terrible struggle will be unleashed and "the peasantry, as a class of landowners, will play in this struggle the same role of betrayal and inconstancy that the bourgeoisie plays, now in the struggle for democracy" (19).

Aware that "the small owner will inevitably turn against the proletariat after the complete victory of the democratic revolution", the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, turn their eyes to the European revolution: "Our democratic republic has no other reserves than the socialist proletariat of the West".

• • •

If we insisted on the "prologue" of October at the risk of sacrificing part of the "epic" that it represents, it is because opportunism tries to present the Russian revolution as an "autonomous and unforeseen episode", while it was prepared during an uninterrupted theoretical and practical struggle which lasted for many years. They paint it as an event which could not fit into a world revolutionary strategy, in short as a kind of "historical anomaly", a "discovery" which is no doubt brilliant, but which will not be repeated and which is to be blamed not so much on a Party as on the individual Lenin.

On the contrary, it is a theoretical thesis and a fundamental practical teaching that the October Revolution was the fruit of a long preparation during which the following principles had been defined with increasing clarity: the determining role of the Class Party; leading role, then hegemony of the proletariat in the planned revolution in Russia; the need for a reciprocal link between this revolution and the European revolution; the inevitable passage of the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry in the bourgeois revolution "carried to the end" in the struggle for socialism, which will only end in victory in Russia with the support of the victorious proletariat in one or more countries of advanced capitalism.

This revolutionary "prologue" demonstrates (and this is the main reason why we lingered on it) that, in all fidelity to Marxism, the Bolsheviks immediately **excluded** any possibility of "building socialism" in Russia without the help of a world communist revolution.

This international perspective, invoked a thousand times, became a tangible reality at the outbreak of the world war of 1914-18. The Bolsheviks proclaim without hesitation that the "supreme phase of capitalism" is beginning; for the entire historical period opened by the first world massacre, and for all countries, the alternative is: "war or revolution", and from its birth, the Third International will translate this perspective into the following political terms: "Either dictatorship of the proletariat or dictatorship of the bourgeoisie". All the justifications put forward to induce the working class to renounce its historic mission by joining the war will be irrevocably rejected; no "defensism" is admitted under any pretext: the proletariat has no "civilization", no "democracy".

There is nothing to save or defend: you have to **attack** and **destroy**. May the proletariat not implore peace, may it practice revolutionary defeatism, may it fraternize with its class brothers over the trenches, may it sabotage its "homeland", may it struggle to "transform the imperialist war into a civil war", may the proletariat strike with the same condemnation the open adhesion to the war, as well as the refusal to oppose it. **The only proletarian solution: revolution!**

These slogans know no borders: they are valid for the proletariat of France as well as for the proletariat of Germany, England, and Russia, since if the latter is not yet bourgeois enough to be fully capitalist, it is still enough to be forced to act as an imperialist force, united in an imperialist "single stream of blood" with all the other bourgeoisies of the world and tied to their destiny. In Petrograd as in Paris or London, as in Vienna or Berlin, it is futile to invoke the need to defend the motherland in

order to preserve the supreme good of threatened "democracy" or "civilization" - this applies not only to Tsarism allied with western democracies, but also to bourgeois democracy, which replaced Tsarism after the February Revolution and possibly had an even greater interest in the military victory of the Entente. The Bolshevik perspective is unique and **immediate**; its framework is **global**: the revolution will break out in Russia and, at the beginning at least, it will be a "democratic revolution pushed to the end"; in Europe, the socialist revolution will break out: "In all the advanced countries, war puts socialist revolution on the agenda, a slogan which is imposed all the more imperatively as the burdens of war weigh more heavily on the shoulders of the proletariat and as the role of the latter must be more active in the reconstruction of Europe, after the horrors of the current "patriotic" barbarism, multiplied by the gigantic technical progress of capitalism" (20).

Finally, the continuation of the war will bring ever more to the stage the need to found a new International on the ruins of the Second, the end of which were the social-chauvinist or social-pacifist parties, whose conciliating "center" is just as reactionary as the "right", perhaps more so.

October will be born in the din of these endlessly repeated and amplified proclamations which announce the opening of an **irreversible** and **world-wide** cycle of revolutions led by those who are still called "social democrats", but who will soon shed their dirty "shirts", in order "to use the name of **communists**". An "exception", October? A departure from the rule of peaceful accession to power? The exclusive feat of a single proletariat whose unique conditions for struggle would justify the use of the term "exception"? No! The triumph of the general rule, the victory of universal and invariable doctrines, clearly defined in advance! What is the base of the absurd legend of non-revolutionary paths or, worse still, "national paths to socialism"? History undoubtedly prohibits backward countries from stepping over the economic degrees which lead to full socialism by their own means and which the "advanced" countries have already climbed (but with what contempt Lenin speaks of "gigantic technical progress of the great capitalism!"); it is indeed determined by world events and therefore has nothing "national" about it. Is it then a question, initially, of laying only the "bases of socialism", that is to say of raising the state of the lowest economic degree, represented by pre-capitalist or even patriarchal structures, to the highest degree, that is, to full capitalism? Here too, history knows no other means than revolution, the iron dictatorship of the proletariat ruling the peasants, anti-democratism, and internationalism.

The Lenin who, at the conferences of Zimmerwald and Kiental, in **Imperialism** and in countless writings of the wartime period (**Against the Current!**) kept coming back with all his power to the vital and urgent historical task: "to transform imperialist war into civil war", the Lenin who so harshly castigated the pacifist illusions, the Lenin who worked feverishly for the birth of a new International founded on these principles, the Lenin who always associated the revolutions of the West and the East and showed to the proletariat, **everywhere**, and to its Party, **in each country**, the path of the revolutionary conquest of power, whatever the immediate economic program imposed by objective conditions might have been - would this Lenin therefore be the father of "peaceful and national paths to socialism", the theorist of "peaceful co-existence", and not their mortal enemy? Would the Lenin of **The Military Program of the Proletarian Revolution** therefore be the leader of the peace marches, the respectful defender of national and democratic "values"?

In short, would Lenin have been the first to **betray the Red October**?

• • •

We will not be able to follow step by step the dense history of the few months which separate Lenin's return to Russia in April 1917 from the dazzling victory in October. Moreover, many texts and many meetings of our Party have already been devoted to it. On the other hand, it is important to identify the broad outlines, which will extend well beyond the event, by insisting on the general scope of the lessons that result from it.

The main stages are known: from the **April Theses** to the Party Conference of the same month; from the 1st All-Russian Congress of Soviets to the July Days; from the Sixth Clandestine Congress in July to the fight against Kornilov in August; the Party's intense vigil of arms, devoted both to the restoration of Marxist doctrine (**The State and the Revolution**) and the fight against resistance to the insurrection which manifested itself in the Central Committee itself; from the insurrection, through the boycott of the preparation of Kerensky, to the seizure of power and the establishment of the Council of People's Commissars; from the first major decrees to the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly; from the peace of Brest-Litovsk to the liquidation of the residues of the alliance with the left socialist-revolutionaries and to the start of civil war on all fronts. In these few months which put an end to a whole phase of history, to whole decades and which will, in turn, weigh heavily on the decades to come, **where to look for the lessons of the proletarian and communist October?**

In the economic program of the revolution, in its authoritarian interventions in the field of production and exchange? No! In a series of texts published before and after the insurrection and until the famous speech on **Tax in Kind** of 1921, Lenin will not stop repeating, on behalf of the Bolsheviks, that these measures were intended to channel backward Russia towards the fully developed capitalism or, to put it better, to build the "bases of socialism" at the cost of a bitter struggle against petty-bourgeois, rural and urban micro-production, the outcome of which depends on the extension of the proletarian revolution in the countries of developed capitalism. This program conceals nothing of the difficulties to be overcome, concedes nothing to the demagoguery of promises **unrealizable within Russia alone**, and fits perfectly into the Marxist tradition: it suffices to reread the **Communist Manifesto** of 1848 or the **Address of 1850** to be convinced. Moreover, there is nothing to allow us to suppose that the application of another program would have been possible or even desirable, nor therefore that this one was too "modest", as certain militants, carried away by their revolutionary enthusiasm, have believed. However, it is not in the economic program that we will find the proletarian and communist mark of October, the spark which will ignite the proletarian masses all over the world in the scorching years of the first post-war period, because taken in itself, it in no way indicates the universal path of workers' emancipation. In realizing this, the victorious proletarian power worked above all for its own consolidation while waiting for the European communist revolution to tear Russia from its backwardness and cut its Gordian knot thanks to a massive contribution of productive forces and technical resources torn from developed capitalism. Once the land was nationalized, they had to try to move agriculture towards more advanced forms of associated labor. Industry, as well as its financial and commercial apparatus, had to be first controlled, then forced to concentrate (forced cartelization), and finally managed by the State which intended to use it as a **political** weapon much more than an **economic one** to accelerate the development of the countryside and prepare itself, in the event of a further delay in the external revolution, to face the inevitable conflict with the peasantry on its own. The decisive factor was that this immediate and local economic program was subordinate to the political program of the proletarian revolution, and can only be understood in the light of this political program: global dictatorship of the Communist Party! The carrier of this organic bond was the

international party itself, as the leader of the international revolutionary struggle. And if we continue to develop this thought: only after it had broken this vital bond and physically liquidated its bearer by means of state repression, Stalinism could develop not only "economic capitalism" but also "political capitalism". It turned October Russia into a great Nation, the revolutionary parties into the guardians of democracy and order, and led them into the furnace of the second imperialist war to defend the very foundations of Capital. From this political break and from the exploitation of the economic base that was so painstakingly conquered by the October Revolution, the Soviet Union grew towards peaceful coexistence. Only this victory of the counter-revolution enabled the international bourgeoisie to commemorate an October so "sterilized" that it can take its place in the Palace of "Culture" by integrating itself into this "common heritage" that the bourgeoisie considers history to be - without any trace of class struggle; in short, they commemorate an October of which there is nothing left. But we know that the real October may well emerge from this nothingness much sooner than one would have thought, in all its force and splendor.

This strength and this brilliance are concealed so well from the exploited class that they can foresee no other future than the endless agony of today's decadent bourgeois society. However, they would emerge clearly from a faithful overall picture of the Revolution, including the economic measures of the years 1917-21 suitably placed in their historical framework, with their true significance.

From the **April Theses** to the founding of the Third International, the political line defended by the Bolshevik Party forms a flawless whole. In its bitter struggle, it got rid of any element, even purely formal, which could have led anyone to believe that between democracy and socialism there was some link: "The term democracy is not only scientifically incorrect when applied to the Communist Party; it has now, since March 1917, simply become a **blindfold** put on the eyes of the revolutionary people and prevented them from boldly and freely, on their own initiative, building up the new: the Soviets of Workers', Peasants', and all other Deputies, as the sole power in the "State" and as the harbinger of the "withering away" of the state in every form." (21). The Party (and the International with it) will be **communist without question or compromise**.

The Bolshevik party knew very well what international responsibility it had. The fall of Tsarism in February 1917 put the party in a revolutionary situation, a "historically privileged position." It had to take advantage of this situation to conquer the first fortress for the international proletariat and to fulfil other responsibilities: "To whom much is given, much will be asked [...] It is precisely for us, and precisely at the present time, that it behooves us to found without delay a **new** International, a revolutionary, proletarian International; more exactly, we must not be afraid to proclaim loudly that it is already founded and that it is acting. It is the International of "true internationalists" [...] They, and they alone, are the representatives, and not the corrupters, of the revolutionary internationalist masses". That these internationalist communists are then very few in number is not to frighten them: "it is not the number that matters, but the faithful expression of the ideas and the policies of the truly revolutionary proletariat. The main thing is not to "proclaim" internationalism; it is knowing how to be, even in the most difficult moments, true internationalists". The interaction of historical conditions, which were independent of the will of the bourgeoisie (these conditions had been imposed on the bourgeoisie by the relentless course of the class struggle), had turned Russia after the February Revolution into a country where tremendous "freedom" prevailed - so let us take advantage of this freedom, not to preach the support of the bourgeoisie or of bourgeois "revolutionary to the endism", but to **found** boldly, honestly, as proletarians, like Liebknecht, the **Third International**, an irreducible enemy of both the social-chauvinist traitors and the hesitant "centrists" (22). This duty

towards the international proletariat always comes to the foreground in the consciousness of the Party, which regards it as its main task. It will endow the new International with a Marxism restored in its revolutionary entirety and enhanced by the victories of Petrograd and Moscow: **The State and the Revolution** and October are contemporary; Lenin's **The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky** and Trotsky's **Terrorism and Communism** take stock of three years of civil war in theory and practice; the Theses of the First and Second Congress of the International send the message to the proletarians all over the world, not of the Russian Party **as such**, but of integral Marxism whose dynamics of class struggle make it again the pole of attraction for the exploited classes of the whole world.

• • •

To evoke 1917 as it should be, one would need the pen of a Trotsky, but what we want is simply to demonstrate that the contours of October were already taking shape long **before** the victory of the insurrection, in the writings, the speeches, the theses and the struggles of the Bolshevik Party. For October encompasses not only the civil war and the founding of the Communist International and its first congresses, but also the NEP, not only the victory but also the counter-revolution, not only the events in Russia but also the world events which affected them, and shows that they are linked.

The Bolshevik Party did not throw itself blindly into the revolution. It did not expect the movement of the masses to solve the enigmas of history and indicate the route to follow, the goal to reach; for it, on the contrary, October was the endpoint planned, expected, prepared, announced daily to the masses by word and deed - an endpoint which was to become a point of departure.

The February Revolution handed over power from the bloody hands of Tsarism to the hands of the bourgeoisie, eager to soak them too in that same blood, but at the same time it created, together with the Soviet of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies of Petrograd, a "Power based not on the law, but on the direct strength of the armed masses". Two powers that cannot coexist for long within the same state - what in Russia keeps them entangled? What determines the Petrograd Soviet to "**voluntarily** hand over state power to the bourgeoisie and **its** provisional government" when it has it? The "formidable petty-bourgeois wave," replied Lenin; it "submerged everything; it has crushed the conscious proletariat not only by numbers but also by its ideology, that is to say, it has spread in very large working-class circles, contaminated them with its petty-bourgeois political ideas" (23) (the epidemic, we will add, even reached a fraction of the Bolshevik party). October, this "second stage" of the revolution which, according to the **April Theses**, "must give power to the proletariat and to the poor layers of the peasantry", will only be possible if one "pours vinegar and gall in the sugar water of revolutionary democratic phrases" and if we "**detoxify** the proletariat in the grip of the "general" petty-bourgeois intoxication" (24). Therein lies the brake which prevents the seething masses from following their path, the possibility for the enemy to curb the rising tide of "the proletariat and the poor layers of the peasantry" while keeping in reserve the weapon of direct bourgeois repression.

Purely Russian experience? "National" phenomenon? Not at all. Having behind it three-quarters of a century of proletarian struggles, backed by the assessment drawn up by Marx and Engels of class struggles in Germany and France, the Bolshevik Party can assert, on the eve of October and for any October **to come**, that "All over the world, the experience of the governments of the bourgeoisie and of the big landowners has developed **two** methods to keep the people in oppression. First, violence. Nicholas Romanov I and Nicholas II showed the Russian people the maximum of what is possible and

impossible with this torturing process. But there is another process, **which has been best developed by the English and French bourgeoisies**, champions and "models" of democracy, who "learned their lesson" in a series of great revolutions and revolutionary movements of the masses. It is the method of deception, flattery, fine phrases, promises by the million, petty sops, and concessions of the unessential while retaining the essential." (25). Education is permanent and universal: the proletarian revolution cannot win without crushing this insidious enemy that is petty-bourgeois ideology rooted in rural and urban micro-production. The leaders of the petty-bourgeoisie "must" (it is indeed an objective fact, determined by real class relations) teach the proletariat to trust the bourgeoisie. The proletarians owe it to themselves to teach them mistrust (see note 25). This is the **first** lesson that the Communist International will retain. Fifty years later, it is against you, **commemorator-gravediggers**, that it is directed!

The gulf created by October separated the proletariat not only from the bourgeoisie but from all the middle classes. It is **in this** that the Russian Revolution manifested its **proletarian and communist** character, it is **in this** that it belongs to us and that it condemns the parties, the tendencies or the men who delight in "democratic phrases" which, today, have nothing revolutionary about them. This is why, in August 1918, the Bolsheviks could proclaim: "Our revolution began as a **world revolution**", this is why we can repeat it, fifty years later.

At the time of the great coup de barre of the **April Theses** (26), Lenin asserts first of all that, under the new bourgeois democratic regime, the war "undoubtedly remained an imperialist war of brigandage" from which we could not escape without "overthrowing capital"; for this purpose, it is necessary to spread defeatism in the ranks of the army, to encourage fraternization across borders, to transform imperialist war into civil war, **"because objectively the problem of war arises only on the revolutionary level"**. Again, what was preventing the masses from understanding it? Lenin replies: "**Revolutionary extremism** ["revolutionary to the endism"] must be regarded as the most serious, the most brilliant manifestation of the petty-bourgeois wave which has "almost everything" submerged. **It is the worst enemy of the further progress and success of the Russian revolution**". Participation in the "defense of the fatherland" under the pretext that democratic conquests are threatened, petty-bourgeois dreams of understanding between belligerent governments, calls for "good will", "internationalism in words, pusillanimous opportunism and complacency for the social-chauvinists in fact", pious wishes for disarmament: the Bolshevik criticism ruthlessly descended on the whole "reign of the petty-bourgeois phrases crammed with good intentions". For Lenin, the social-chauvinists and their servants in the "center" represent an objective phenomenon: they directly or indirectly defend bourgeois domination, and if the revolution has already taken its **first step**, it must now move on to the second, that is to give state power to the proletariat which alone can "ensure the cessation of war". He adds: "It will be the beginning of the 'breaking of the front' all over the world - of the front of the interests of Capital - and it is only by breaking this front that the proletariat **can** save humanity from the horrors of war, to provide it with the benefits of lasting peace" (27). Pacifism does not find a place in the October program: war against war, by all the means of revolutionary defeatism, until the revolutionary conquest of state power; **only** then, if the "world front of Capital" is broken, can peace reign.

The Bolshevik struggle against the "pretexts" that the ever-reviving petty-bourgeois ideology invokes to drag the proletariat into the imperialist massacre will continue to deepen and amplify between February and October. The Party is making immense, ceaseless efforts to convince the proletariat that it is necessary to take power if only to put an end to the terrible hemorrhage of the world war. And it's

with its eyes set on this **global** solution that the proletarian power, that the Communist Party, will sign in March 1918, the "incredibly heavy and humiliating" peace of Brest-Litovsk, its "Treaty of Tilsit"; for if they signed it, it was not out of pacifism, but in the name of the international proletarian revolution. If the revolution had broken out in Europe in the momentum of October, it would not have been necessary; but since they are forced to do so, they consent to that "infamous peace" with the certainty that, whatever sacrifices imposed, their withdrawal from the imperialist war will strengthen the ties forged between the proletarian dictatorship and the masses in Russia. It will also sow the ferment of defeatism in the imperialist armies still struggling in Europe. They also agree "**in the interest** of a serious preparation" for the revolutionary war, the **necessity** of which they have long recognized, that it be defensive and imposed by the foreseeable, and even inevitable, attack of the foreign bourgeoisie not yet dispossessed of power by the revolution, **or** that it be offensive and unleashed by the first proletarian state against the capitalist powers which surround it intending to come to the aid of the proletarians who are insurgent or who are about to rise up against Capital (28). Before **and** after the conquest of power, not the slightest trace of pacifism in the October program! In his **Report on War and Peace** (29), in March 1918 Lenin proclaimed: "Our watchword can only be this: **seriously study the art of war**" and, addressing his comrades who were impatient to leave for the front of the world revolutionary war: "Take hold of the truce, even of an hour, since it is offered to you, in order to maintain contact with the zone far from the rear **and to form there new armies**". In **The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky**, he will define, in a magnificent dialectical passage, the two inseparable phases of the conquest and the revolutionary exercise of power: "There is no great revolution which has avoided and can avoid the "disorganization" of the army. [...] The first concern of any victorious revolution - Marx, and Engels have repeatedly emphasized - has been to destroy the old army, to dismiss it, **to replace it with a new one**". And do not come and tell us that this is only the **internal** civil war! For Lenin, the civil war, just as much as the revolution, is an "international fact" which knows no borders and does not tolerate abandonment, even if it may suffer "truces"!

• • •

The immense scope of the October Revolution was in a way illustrated by the Bolsheviks in advance by exhuming the Marxist doctrine of the State from the dust where the reformists had forgotten it. Today's commemorative gravediggers have not quite forgotten this fact, so they go to great lengths to erase from the memory of the proletariat any vestige of the great Marxist texts and of the masterful lesson of revolutionary struggles. The Bolsheviks, for their part, took the same historical path as the Communards, the one Marx and Engels had always advocated before, during, and after the Paris Commune, the main path, the only path that the Communists recognize, whatever their country and their generation. It is certainly not an accident that the **April Theses** assign to the Party (which must become itself again by getting rid of its "dirty shirts" of reformism and opportunism) the task of redefining its program, especially with regard to "the attitude towards the State and **our** claim of the 'Commune-State'". This had to be done so that the historical absurdity of the "duality of power" would disappear and so that, at last freed from the shackles of petty-bourgeois phraseology thanks to the decisive influence of the Party, the Soviet would find the strength to openly untie the ruling class, to proclaim not only: "No support for the Provisional Government!", but above all: "Down with the Parliamentary Republic!". This was necessary for the Soviet to agree to become itself "the sole power of the state", a power not based on any law, but on the "armed force of the masses". It was then to become quite clear that there was no need to linger for a single moment in the hope of a gradual

passage from the first stage to the second, that such an evolution was excluded and that **to break down** the machine of the bourgeois state and build another - a state just as dictatorial as the old one, but proletarian in nature; a class state, just like the bourgeois state, but disdaining to conceal its nature, unlike the latter; a state destined to repress the enemy class, just as the bourgeois state has always done it without ever agreeing willingly, while **the proletarians will and they will say it**.

But - the eternal "but" of the "worker-friendly", "progressive" educated citizen - this "qualitative leap", this whole affair with the armed insurrection, dictatorship, red terror, etc. (in short, the abolition of the "pure democracy" of the bourgeoisie), all that was necessary only because of the historical, geographical, even racial peculiarities of Russia! Russia is different from the other countries! Why shouldn't you be able to go any other way in the other countries? Well no, that is simply not possible! In this month of intense struggle, when history implacably challenges the Bolshevik Central Committee to assume its responsibilities (30), **The State and the Revolution** answers this question in **a definitive way**:

- 1) "The bourgeois state cannot give way to the proletarian state (to the dictatorship of the proletariat) by way of "extinction" but only, as a rule, by a violent revolution" (31);
- 2) "The doctrine of the class struggle applied by Marx to the State and to the socialist revolution, necessarily leads to the recognition of the political domination of the proletariat, of its dictatorship, that is to say of a power that it does not share with anyone and that relies directly on the armed force of the masses. [...] "The State, that is to say, the proletariat organized as a dominant class". This theory of the state developed by Marx is indissolubly linked to all his doctrine on the revolutionary role of the proletariat in history. **The culmination of this role is the dictatorship of the proletariat, the political domination of the proletariat**. But if the proletariat needs the state as a **special** organization of violence **against the bourgeoisie**, a question arises: is such an organization conceivable without **first being destroyed, demolished, the state machine that the bourgeoisie has created for itself?**" (32);
- 3) "They alone have assimilated the doctrine of Marx on the State, who understood that the dictatorship of **one** class is necessary not only for any class society in general, not only for the **proletariat** which will have overthrown the bourgeoisie, but also for the whole **historical period** which separates capitalism from the "classless society", from communism. The forms of bourgeois state are extremely varied, but their essence is one: in the final analysis, all these states are, in one way or another, but necessarily, **a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie**. The passage from capitalism to communism obviously cannot fail to provide a great abundance and a wide diversity of political forms, but their essence will necessarily be one: **the dictatorship of the proletariat**" (33).

The demand for the dictatorship of the proletariat "for an entire historical period", far from being a subjective claim of this class, is only the translation of an **objective** demand in so far as the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are the **only** protagonists of the contemporary historical drama:

"The domination of the bourgeoisie can only be overthrown by the proletariat, a distinct class whose economic conditions of existence prepare it for this overthrow, and offer the possibility and the strength to accomplish it. While the bourgeoisie splits up and disseminates the peasantry and all the petty-bourgeois layers, it groups, unites, and organizes the proletariat. Given the economic role which it plays in large-scale production, the proletariat alone is capable of being the guide of all the toiling and exploited masses whom the bourgeoisie often exploits, oppresses and crushes not less, but more than the proletarians, and who are incapable of an **independent** struggle for their liberation [...] The

proletariat needs state power, a centralized organization of force, an organization of violence, both to suppress the resistance of the exploiters and to **lead** the great mass of the population - peasantry, petty bourgeoisie, semi-proletarians - into the "establishment" of the socialist production" (34).

This passage is crucial. All the experience of the months preceding October shows in fact that the petty-bourgeoisie necessarily slows down the upward movement of the revolution. It was under its insidious influence that the Soviet, "the only possible form of revolutionary government", had since February recoiled from the task entrusted to it by history: to take and exercise all power, without sharing it with anyone. And this experience has a general value, it is a datum of "social mechanisms" destined to play out everywhere, the dangerous pitfall which threatens any communist revolution. "After the experience of July 1917, it is precisely the revolutionary proletariat which must take power: outside of that, no victory is possible for the revolution" (35), Lenin had written a few months earlier, showing that if the Communists remained "partisans of a state built on the type of the Soviets", they [the Soviets] could not be "the Soviets of today, (of) these organs of compliance with the bourgeoisie - these new Soviets would emerge from that new revolution. By virtue of this need to dictatorially "lead" the masses, October will be the totalitarian and violent seizure of power **by the Party**, relying on the armed force of the working class; the liquidation of all democratic and parliamentary fiction, with the boycott of the pre-parliament first, the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly then; despotic intervention in the economy and the building of an army on the ruins of the democratic-tsarist army. Exemplary in this too, the hand that then wrote **The State and the Revolution** will leave the pamphlet unfinished to seize the rudder of the insurrection: it would have been futile to have traced the revolutionary path in theoretical texts and then not to take it, when the time comes, in the reality of the class struggle! Winner or vanquished, it is through combat that we prepare for the future (36). January 1918: "Certainly, the final victory of socialism is impossible in one country" (heirs of Stalinism, shudder!), but here is what is possible: "The living example, the action begun in **any** country, is more effective than all proclamations and conferences; **this is what excites the working masses of all countries**" (37). July 1918, when the fire of the civil war casts its first glimmers: "Gaining power as a proletarian communist party while the capitalist bourgeoisie still maintained its domination in other countries, our most urgent duty was, I repeat, to maintain this power, this torch of socialism, so that it can launch as many sparks as possible on the growing fire of the world revolution" (38).

This is the teaching of October! Oh gravedigger-commemorators, October never meant the development of "fair trade", of "peaceful coexistence", of the "painless path" to what you call socialism, you would like that the 'living example' remains forever buried in the soil of 1917-18 Russia!

"Leading the masses". Leading them first in the insurrectional conquest of power by the Soviets soaked and purified by the struggle; then leading them in the gigantic struggle against "the resistance of the exploiters, who cannot at once be deprived of their wealth, of their advantages of organisation and knowledge, and consequently for a fairly long period will inevitably try to overthrow the hated rule of the poor" (39), and against the weight of traditions, habits, the tenacious influence of petty-bourgeois ideology creeping into every pore of a painfully changing society. How to direct them? It is not enough to educate, it is also necessary to "neutralize" and "repress" the forces of the past which constantly reappear and threaten the future; it should be known that "any great revolution in general, and any socialist revolution in particular, is unthinkable without an internal war, that is to say without a civil war, which involves an economic ruin even greater than the external war, which

involves thousands and millions of examples of hesitation and of moving from one camp to another, an extreme state of uncertainty, imbalance and chaos” (see note 39). We must therefore rule dictatorially, because “all the elements of decomposition of the old society, which are inevitably very numerous and connected mainly with the petty bourgeoisie (because it is the petty bourgeoisie that every war and every crisis ruins and destroys first), are bound to “reveal themselves” during such a profound revolution [...] To put these down requires time and requires **an iron fist**”. This is the great lesson of the Red October: the tireless battle on all fronts of the war unleashed by the internal and external counter-revolution, the national and international bourgeoisie, must be accompanied by dictatorial control on the part of **of a single class** exerted on the "elements of decomposition" which are born or constantly reborn from the living bosom of the intermediate classes, these rejects of a "dead history" which cling desperately to "living history" and threaten to make it sink straight.

For all these reasons, without even one of them being able to be omitted, Lenin will say in his polemic against Kautsky that “the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is a power conquered and maintained by violence, which the proletariat exercises over the bourgeoisie, a power that is not bound by any law”. Consequently, “the necessary sign, the express condition of dictatorship, is the **violent** repression of exploiters as a class and consequently the **violation of “pure democracy”**” (40). The October revolution will not only deprive the bourgeoisie of all political rights but will impose on the peasant petty-bourgeoisie rights inferior to those of the proletariat. For all these reasons and even without an external war, the necessary Red Terror is the political manifestation of the proletarian dictatorship, its means of intervention in economic and social relations, its instrument of military action. For all these reasons, common to all countries, the dictatorship of the proletariat implies the existence of the (Communist) political party.

• • •

Hegemony of the proletariat - hegemony of the Party. The two terms are inseparable, just as in the **Manifesto** the “organization of the proletariat as a ruling class” is inconceivable without the “organization of the proletariat as a class and therefore as a Party”.

The story of October is that of two inverse processes whose points of contact are so many bloody clashes. While the masses are moving away from the Provisional Government, deserting the front, clashing in the streets with the police, pushing for insurrection, demanding power with rifles and not with ballots, the parties who claim to belong to the working class, but which reflect the hesitations, cowardice, servility of the petty bourgeoisie, align themselves one after another on the front of parliamentary democracy and war. Opposed we can find the Party which since April has been proclaiming the urgency of breaking this accursed front and is effectively acting for the conquest of power in the name of "the proletariat and the poor layers of the peasantry", **the Single Party of Revolution and Dictatorship**. After the test of strength of the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, there is only one last possible ally left for this Party: the socialist-revolutionaries of the left. The peace of Brest-Litovsk will break this last link, and in the civil war, up to Kronstadt and beyond, the proletarian power will come up at every step against the democratic, popular, centrifugal or anarchist resurgences of the old groups or parties and they will sweep them away in their march forward.

This "decantation" of political and social forces was not a new fact. In their study of class struggles in France and Germany, Marx and Engels had already shown, for the construction of the revolutionary

proletariat and its Party, that it was inevitable that the groups and parties defending the middle classes and embodying economic interests, habits and ideology gradually pass over to the enemy. The greatness of the Bolsheviks lies precisely in that, **for the first time in the history of the workers' movement**, they drew from this harsh negative lesson an **active force**, a **factor of victory**. Leaving the dead to bury the dead, they accepted, magnificently on their own and alone, the responsibility of power. Nothing could make them hesitate, not even the indecision and the "democratic scruples" of some of their comrades (comrades with a long past as communist militants) who recoiled before this "leap into the unknown" that was the insurrection. Not even the inevitable desertions were by any means taken by surprise. They left them aside and consciously opened the era of Party dictatorship in the name of the proletarian class. Healthy proletarian energies had emerged from the composite magma of social forces; it is the historical necessity which made the revolution of a single class the revolution of a single Party: the hegemony of the proletariat could only be expressed by the hegemony of the Party which was at the same time its theoretical conscience, the organized will, the organ of conquest and the exercise of power. And this was its victory.

In September 1917, linking as always the "qualitative leaps" of the Russian revolution to the experience of the world proletarian struggle, Lenin wrote: "The shameful end of the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik parties is no accident - it is the result, repeatedly confirmed by the European experience, of the economic situation of the small bosses, of the petty bourgeoisie" (41). Consequently, the Party will lead the insurrection alone, will take power alone, knowing full well that the real movement of the masses is not to be determined by scrutinizing the souls of parties infested by petty-bourgeois inertia, nor even that of the masses - mass organs born out of the Revolution, where the hesitations, the "following", the "force of habit" specific to the old society are free to manifest themselves. Only the theory based on an assessment, a balance sheet ("bilan") of past class struggles makes it possible to **predict** the natural disposition of class forces at the decisive hour, to **know** that this hour has struck and to intervene then, not to "make" the revolution, but to **lead it**, and lead it well beyond the seizure of power, since this is only the first act of the social drama, since the enemy will not fail to raise its head and the Party (a **single** Party) will be more necessary than ever to exercise power. In 1920, in **An Infantile Disorder**, Lenin will thus restore to the Western proletariat the lesson received from him and enriched by the results of three years of civil war and communist dictatorship: "The dictatorship of the proletariat is the most heroic war and the most implacable of the new class against a **more powerful** enemy, against the bourgeoisie whose resistance is **increased tenfold** from its overthrow (if only in one country) and whose power does not reside only in the strength of international capital, in the strength and solidity of the bourgeoisie's international links, but also in the **strength of habit**, in the strength of small production [...] Whoever weakens the iron discipline in the party of the proletariat to any extent (**especially during its dictatorship**), in reality helps the bourgeoisie against the proletariat [...] Denying the necessity of the party (and for Lenin, it is, of course, the Communist Party) and party discipline [...] this is precisely equivalent to making these defects of the petty bourgeoisie, which are dispersion, instability, and inaptitude towards firmness, union, and combined action, **faults which will inevitably cause the loss of any revolutionary movement of the proletariat** if they are encouraged" (42). The dictatorship of the proletariat is **centralization** and **discipline**, and therefore the Party dictatorship. Trotsky will express the same idea in a concise formula which has the merit of linking this "iron discipline" of the Party to the very foundations of real centralization (an essential aspect on which our current will continually insist in the congresses of the Communist International, not for academic luxury, but because it is a **vital** requirement of the revolutionary movement), that is to say **the continuity of**

**program and organization and their organic connection to the tactics employed** which oppose doctrinal eclecticism supplemented by the tendency to practical improvisation so well rooted in the “workers” parties influenced by the petty bourgeoisie and its intelligentsia: "It is only with the help of a party which relies on its **historical past**, which theoretically foresees the course of development and **all** its stages and **deduces therefrom** (which we read attentively: it is from the theoretical prediction of historical development which it "deduces" and not from this passive observation of history which results in some unforeseeable "discovery"!) what form of action is right at a given moment, it is only with the help of such a party that the proletariat can free itself from the **need to repeat its own history, its own oscillations, its own indecision and its own mistakes**" (43) .

The revolution of tomorrow will have to unearth this force, under certainty of pain and death, which allowed the October insurrection to triumph and the proletariat to win in the civil war. In writing the lines quoted above, Lenin and Trotsky were thinking more of the terrible period of the Civil War than of the brief phase of the uprising or its immediate aftermath, such as the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and the break with left-wing socialist-revolutionaries. We could thus summarize their capital teaching: when the working class presents itself on the historical scene (or worse, on the parliamentary scene, but this concerns relatively little the Russia of 1917) divided into several parties, the solution is not sharing power between these parties.

This principle of Party hegemony is found as such in the work of Marx and Engels, and more especially in their long polemic against the anarchists who attacked the General Council of the First International, but the great force of revolutions, even when they are finally overcome, is to bring vividly to light and prominence the enduring principles of doctrine and program. There was therefore nothing new in the theses on the role of the Communist Party in the proletarian revolution that the II Congress of the Communist International adopted in 1920, at the end of the bloody civil war in Russia; simply the heroic struggle of the Bolshevik proletariat gave new weight to the universal principles. "The Communist International most categorically rejects the opinion that the proletariat can carry out its revolution without having its political party. The goal of this struggle, which inevitably tends to turn into civil war, is the conquest of political power. But political power can only be taken, organized and led by a political party [...] The appearance of the Soviets, the main historical form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in no way diminishes the leading role of the Communist Party in the proletarian revolution. The history of the Russian revolution shows us at a certain moment the Soviets going against the proletarian Party and supporting the agents of the bourgeoisie. The same has been observed in Germany and it can also happen in other countries **before** and **during** the conquest of power, but also **after** it [...] The need for a political party of the proletariat only disappears with the social classes" (44).

• • •

A deep internationalism permeates this entire October Revolution in which the Party's struggle for the transformation of imperialist war into civil war, into world socialist revolution, merges completely with the impetuous force of the working masses of the great industrial centers of Russia.

When Lenin and Trotsky defined the coming revolution as "a link in the chain of international revolution", the Russian masses defending with arms the power conquered as "a detachment of the international army of the proletariat", Russia as a “besieged fortress” waiting for the “other detachments of the international revolution” to come to its aid, it was not only the militants of the

Party but all the proletarians of Russia who felt the truth of these ardent words, because then the "Political education was done quickly" (a few days, a few months) in the factories and working-class neighborhoods, in the midst of meetings and revolutionary demonstrations. In the proud preamble to the **Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited People**, the Republic of Soviets set itself the task of "the victory of socialism in all countries" and from the rostrum of the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets, it was this grandiose perspective that Lenin offered to his audience: "Events [...] have given us the honorable role of vanguard of the international socialist revolution, and now we see clearly the prospect of the development of the revolution: the Russian has started (and elsewhere: "Whoever is in the the most favorable situation must begin"), the German, the French, the English will complete and socialism will triumph" (45).

It was much more than words: beyond the rhetoric, the revolution thus expressed the **feeling** and the **passion** which armed the arm and mobilized the brain of immense proletarian masses. It was the impersonal language of a class struggle which the combatants could never have admitted was simply "Russian", narrowly "national"; with their eyes open to the world, their will stretched out, ready for any sacrifice, they knew no borders and their hearts were set on fire at the news of the struggle of their class siblings beyond these borders that the revolution was giving itself the mission to abolish. "We are not alone, before us there is the whole of Europe" cried Lenin to the hesitant, to the conciliators, to the cowards. And the proletarians who had fought tirelessly during nine tumultuous months and who still had to fight during the two and a half years of civil war knew like him, knew by instinct, knew without perhaps ever having read the battle cry at the end of the "Communist Manifesto" that they were the fighters of an international class war. For those proletarians, it was natural that their revolution would be the beginning of the world revolution.

In April, Lenin had said that the International of "de facto internationalists" was already acting, although it had not yet had a formal existence: it was embodied in the proletarians of Petrograd and Moscow as in Liebknecht in Berlin, it manifested itself in a **practical and active** internationalism, through unlimited dedication to the universal cause of socialism. During the dramatic episode of Brest-Litovsk, when the revolutionary cause may seem lost, Lenin justifies with his usual courage the "ignominious" treaty and, oh grave-diggers, he defines as "the greatest historical problem of the Russian Revolution" and "the greatest difficulty" that it has to overcome as "the need to resolve international problems, the need to provoke an international revolution, to effect this passage from our revolution, narrowly national, to revolution global" (46). Born as a **world revolution**, October put to the foreground its international tasks, its **duties** towards the world revolution, duties which do not derive from any moral code but imposed by the international character of the struggle for emancipation of the proletariat and of capitalist expansion. Once again, a lot will be asked of those who have already given a lot: the magnificent proletarians of October will not hesitate to give the best of themselves so that "the German, the French, the English" can complete the work begun, because if it should be easier for them to complete it, "it is infinitely more difficult for them to start the revolution". Even before the Communists of "the different countries of Europe, America and Asia" gathered in Moscow to found the Third International, internationalism was the blood and the oxygen on which the fighters of the gigantic Russian civil war fed daily. The "bulletins" of the front of European class struggles mixed with the burning communiques that Trotsky sent from the thousand fronts of the civil war, and thus the armed Russian workers and peasants learned that their enemy was the international bourgeoisie. "You know," Lenin tells the 8th All-Russian Congress of Soviets, "how far capital is **an international force**, how far the most important factories, enterprises and capitalist

stores are linked together in the whole world and that, consequently, to bring it down in totality, a **common action** of the workers on an international scale is necessary". No one, in truth, could know better than the heroic Russian detachment of the world proletarian revolutionary army because nobody in their ranks believed that the clash between classes could be a destiny **different** according to the nations. That the proletarians have "no fatherland", was taught to them by harsh reality.

The people, the Party, the proletarians for whom the Russian revolution was a world revolution and had no "greater historical problem" than to leave its narrow national framework to spread over the whole world, could they have any help? Another perspective than that of Lenin: "Salvation is **only** possible on the sole path of the international socialist revolution on which we are committed. As long as we remain alone, our task is to save **the revolution**, to preserve for it a certain dose of socialism, however weak it may be, until the moment when the revolution breaks out in the other countries and other detachments will come to the rescue" (47). Could they conceive of "their" revolution other than as a "dress rehearsal of the world proletarian revolution" on which they necessarily "bet" since "the communist revolution can only win as a world revolution" (48)? Certain of the outbreak of at least a European revolution, the Bolsheviks had secured the moment of respite for the peace of Brest-Litovsk and had defeated the white hordes; "Having passed from war to peace" in 1920, they did not forget that "as long as capitalism and socialism coexist, **one cannot live in peace**; in the end, one or the other must win: there will be a requiem mass either for the Republic of Soviets or for world imperialism". They knew that to defeat the world organization of capitalism there was only one weapon, "the extension of the revolution **at least** to some advanced countries".

It was a vital condition, even simply for the maintenance of the political power of the Bolsheviks. But the October Revolution was aimed at socialism and that is why internationalism was not for it a ritual formula, but the very condition of victory.

• • •

This was all the more true since it was a **double** revolution and since the proletariat in power had therefore also to fulfill the tasks of a bourgeois revolution "pushed to the end".

In the **Manifesto** of 1848 Marx and Engels regarded Germany with special attention; it was then a country where feudal structures still dominated economics and politics, and which was "on the eve of a bourgeois revolution". In this revolution, they saw "the immediate prelude of a proletarian revolution" which was to take on European dimensions (where therefore social-democratic pedantry could well have "discovered" their misunderstanding that for Marx and Engels the revolution must necessarily break out in an advanced country?), because, they said, Germany "will accomplish this revolution under the more advanced conditions" of European civilization and with a proletariat infinitely more developed than England in the 17th or France in the 18th century (49). Let the opportunist philistine measure the degree of maturity of the socialist revolution by evaluating the "economic and social level" reached in a given country considered in isolation: for Marxism, this degree of maturity is evaluated on a world scale (in 1848, the world is reduced to Europe!) and it is on the same scale that the proletarian revolution can triumph or perish. In Russia, likewise, the "more advanced conditions of European (and world) civilization" and the existence of a proletariat not only more numerous than at the time of the English and French bourgeois revolutions, but extremely concentrated (just like the semi-feudal political power of Tsarism), had accelerated the revolutionary course: starting from the "Asian and barbaric" stagnation, proletarian after a brief interlude of

bourgeois power: the "immediate prelude" had become "growth" from bourgeois revolution to proletarian revolution, the triumph of the second making the accomplishment of the political tasks of the first anachronistic. Not only was this development not sufficient to liquidate Russia's delay in a "more advanced" world civilization, but as Lenin said in 1918 and repeated it in 1920, without this delay, precisely, the proletariat would not have taken the lead and power as easily as one "lifts a feather". The happy congregation of these two conditions (which can only seem contradictory to those who limit their horizons to national borders) had placed the Russian working class at **the forefront** of the world socialist revolution; but the backwardness remained and "the more backward the country is which, as a result of the zigzags of history, has had to start the socialist revolution, the more difficult it is for it to move from old capitalist relations to socialist relations" (50). How was this historical problem, certainly more complex than that of the seizure of power, resolved in the European (that is to say, global, at the time) perspective of Marx and Engels? The German proletariat of 1848 had to bring the **doctrine** and it could become the protagonist of the double revolution in Germany insofar as the **political** conditions of the socialist revolution were fulfilled in France and the economic and social conditions in England: thus could be accelerated the conquest of power in Germany and bridged the secular gulf which separated the economy of Central Europe and that of Western Europe.

For the Bolsheviks, the perspective was no different. Socialism presupposes large-scale industry and modern agriculture; the first was manifestly insufficient in Russia, the second almost completely absent, but "if one thinks of a large prosperous industry capable of satisfying the peasantry by supplying them without delay all the products they need, one must say that this condition **exists**; to consider the question on a **global scale**, this large flourishing industry, capable of supplying the world with all products, exists on earth [...] There are countries on earth endowed with a large advanced industry, sufficient to immediately supply hundreds of millions of backward peasants." (51). The material conditions for the transition to socialism therefore came from the World or at least European revolution that the proletarian dictatorship in Russia awaits. It was only in this way that the foundations could be laid for a gigantic leap forward in industry first, then in agriculture: as stated in the **Theses on the National and Colonial Question** adopted in 1920, at the Second Congress of the Communist International, this leap forward over the capitalist phase (envisaged in this case for the colonial countries, even more backward than Russia back then) was only possible through the "creation of a global economy forming a **single whole**, on the basis of a universal plan controlled by the proletariat of all nations". The extension of the socialist revolution at least to a few advanced countries is therefore the **first condition** for the existence of a socialist economy in Russia: "The socialist revolution can only be achieved in a country where the vast majority of the population is made up of small agricultural producers by means of a whole series of **special transitional measures, completely unnecessary in the developed capitalist countries** where the salaried industrial workers and agricultural workers are in the overwhelming majority [...] We have stressed in many books, in all our speeches, in all the press, that the situation is different in Russia: industrial workers are in the minority and small farmers in the overwhelming majority. **In this country, the socialist revolution can only win definitively on two conditions. First, if it is supported in due time by a socialist revolution in one or more advanced countries [...]**" (52).

Taking again the great perspective of Marx in 1848, we can say that the Russian proletariat brought to the European revolution the **political flame**, as well as a complete restoration of the **doctrine** (roles formerly devolved to France and Germany); Germany, England, France or even just one of them would have provided it with its **economic base**. In the meantime, as the international revolution

cannot break out either on command, or following a "methodical progression", or simultaneously, the communist power had to **manage** an economy still backward with the help of "transitory measures [...] completely unnecessary in the countries of advanced capitalism", analogous in substance to the "despotic interventions" recommended by the **Manifesto** and whose results could not go beyond the construction of the **material bases** of socialism.

Far from making a secret of it, the Bolsheviks had said it over and over again, the **April Theses** declaring with the greatest frankness: "Our **immediate** task is not to 'introduce' socialism, but only to pass right away the **control** of social production and the distribution of products to the Soviets of Workers 'Deputies'" (53). Five months later, in September, Lenin defined the measures for "averting impending catastrophe" as follows: "control, supervision, accounting, regulation by the state, introduction of a proper distribution of labour-power in the production and distribution of goods, husbanding of the people's forces, the elimination of all wasteful effort, economy of effort", which, in the field of industrial production and its financial apparatus, supposed "the merger of all the banks into one; the nationalization of the syndicates, the abolition of commercial secrecy, compulsory syndication, [and] compulsory organisation of the population into consumers' societies, or encouragement of such organisation, and the exercise of control over it". But he also explained that these measures, which only the dictatorial power of the workers and poor peasants could apply, would represent "A step towards socialism, for socialism is nothing more than the step immediately following the state-capitalist monopoly [...] The imperialist war marks the eve of the socialist revolution. Not only because its horrors engender proletarian insurrection - no insurrection will create socialism unless it is ripe - but also because state-monopoly capitalism is the most complete **material** preparation for socialism, the antechamber of socialism, the stage of history that no other intermediate stage separates from socialism" (54).

Anxious to find a "left" cover for their class collaboration, the Mensheviks and revolutionary socialists shouted that this program was too timid, that it was not "socialist", without realizing that it was only a question of "Progress towards socialism (**progression conditioned and determined by the level of technology and culture**)", socialism being moreover "at the end of all avenues of modern capitalism", appearing "directly and practically in every important disposition constituting a step forward on the basis of this modern capitalism". The Bolshevik program was timid compared to the final goals of socialism, but daring when one considers the level reached by "technology and culture, both a little and a lot so that without a world socialist revolution to bridge the gap between its aspirations and its possibilities, socialism was not possible in Russia (55). "How many transitional steps we will have to take towards socialism, we do not know nor can we know. It depends on when the European revolution has really started on a large scale" (56). The question of the "steps towards socialism" was therefore not administrative, but political and, depending on international conditions, it could not be decided at will by the Russian revolutionaries.

As in regards to agriculture, the measures endlessly recommended by the Bolsheviks from 1906 to 1917 are even more radical if one takes into account the extremely low level of development of the agrarian productive forces - did they go beyond the limits of a bourgeois-democratic revolution? Certainly, only a revolutionary power in the hands of the proletariat and supported by the poor peasants could nationalize the land, but this nationalization remained nonetheless "a bourgeois measure" (57). Nevertheless, the Party of the proletariat had to strive to achieve it by all means, because it "implies freedom for the class struggle and freedom of land tenure from all non-bourgeois adjuncts to the greatest possible degree conceivable in a capitalist society"; moreover, it was to deal "a

formidable blow to the private property of all means of production in general". In addition, the Party knew, since 1906 at least, that "The more determined and consistent the break-up and elimination of the landed estates and the more determined and consistent the bourgeois-democratic agrarian reform in Russia in general, **the more vigorous and speedy will be the development of the class struggle of the agricultural proletariat against the well-to-do peasants (the peasant bourgeoisie)**".

Consequently, "depending on whether the urban proletariat succeeds in rallying the rural proletariat and adding to it the mass of semi-proletarians in the countryside, or whether this mass follows the peasant bourgeoisie, inclined to ally [...] with the capitalists and the big landowners and, in general, the counter-revolution, the fate and the outcome of the Russian revolution will be decided in one direction or another, **insofar as the incipient proletarian revolution in Europe does not directly exercise, on our country, its powerful influence**" (58).

Prophetic words: the European revolution will indeed be slow in coming and if its upheavals in Germany, Bavaria, Hungary, its outbursts in Italy or Bulgaria, will be enough to loosen the stranglehold of the foreign counter-revolution threatening the Bolshevik dictatorship, they will not be enough to tear Russia away from its "barbaric" isolation. The whole fate of the October Revolution, after 1918, when Lenin was already outlining the future NEP (still impracticable due to the civil war), depended on the answer of the facts to this fundamental question: "Will we be able to hold on with our small and very small peasant production, with the state of disrepair of our country, until the day when the capitalist countries of Western Europe will have completed their development towards socialism? [...] We are not civilized enough to be able to go directly to socialism, even though we have the political prerequisites" (59).

The complete nationalization of industry, imposed in 1918 by the necessities of the civil war, and the monopoly of foreign trade, will give the proletarian dictatorship an advantage more political than economic: a means of controlling the ever-reviving hydra of the micro-production, an instrument to accelerate, by modern means of production, the evolution towards large-scale agricultural production employing associated labor, and above all a weapon against the external and especially internal enemy. It will thus be possible to "use capitalism (above all by orienting it in the direction of state capitalism) as an intermediate link between small production and socialism; as a means of ensuring the increase of the productive forces" and "to arrive, after a long series of gradual transitions, at mechanized, large-scale, collective agriculture" (60); it will be possible to "put in place the economic foundations of the new socialist edifice, instead of the demolished feudal edifice and the half-demolished capitalist edifice" (61). **This was not to achieve socialism**, but constituted a radical struggle between the proletarian power controlling state capitalism and using it as **a political weapon of economic transformation** and "the millions and millions of small bosses (who), by their elusive, daily, habitual activity achieve the same results which are necessary for the bourgeoisie, which **restore** the bourgeoisie" (62).

It was to be the continuation of the civil war by other means, and the outcome of this new phase of the class struggle should not only depend on the possession of power and control over big industry but also and above all on the vicissitudes of the international struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat. In his **The Economic Situation of Soviet Russia from the Standpoint of the Socialist Revolution** presented to the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, Trotsky will say: "Just as in the civil war we fought largely to conquer the peasantry politically, so today the struggle has as its main object the domination of the peasant market. In this struggle, the proletariat has for itself powerful advantages: the most highly developed productive forces in the country and political power; for its

part, the bourgeoisie has greater skill and, to a certain extent, its relations with foreign capital, especially emigration capital". That the proletariat of the "more advanced" countries did not raise up arms in hand against this international bourgeois force, that is the whole drama of the years 20-26. In defining the NEP, Lenin said: "History [...] has followed such special paths that in 1918 it gave birth to two halves of socialism, separated and neighboring like two future chicks under the common shell of international imperialism. Germany and Russia embody in 1918, with a special highlight, the material realization of the conditions of socialism, conditions economic, productive and social, on the one hand, and political conditions, on the other. A victorious proletarian revolution in Germany would immediately and with the greatest ease break all the shells of imperialism [...] and would undoubtedly ensure the victory of world socialism [and therefore also the victory of socialism in Russia; *Editor's note*] without difficulties or with insignificant difficulties, on condition obviously to consider the "difficulties" on the scale of world history, and not that of some group of Philistines" (63). The two separate halves of socialism could not be united. And while the revolutionary power in Russia finally managed "to learn from the state capitalism of the Germans, to take it over with all its might, not shying away from dictatorial methods, in order to accelerate this takeover even more than Peter accelerated the takeover of western culture by barbarian Russia, utilising barbaric methods against barbarism", they could not succeed without the help of the second "halve". The Russian revolutionary power could not resist the pressure of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois classes in the long run giving the "tax" of the Russian state a direction that was opposite to that desired by the Bolsheviks. The fight flared up again in the cities (64) and in the country; the productive forces of a past, not only pre-socialist but even pre-capitalist, reared up [i.e. revolted] under the vigorous central economic management; and this new class war was so bitter that some party and state leaders who had previously believed that they could hide the reality behind demagogic optimism (which, incidentally, was completely alien to Lenin) forced themselves to realize it at the XIV party conference in late 1925 and finally saw that a change in the balance of power was underway and consolidated.

In 1921, with regard to the NEP, Lenin had said: "**It only takes ten, twenty years of good relations with the peasants and victory is assured throughout the world, even if the proletarian revolutions which are brewing were still to be delayed; otherwise, we will have twenty years or forty years of torment under the white terror**". The White Terror began long before Lenin's ten or twenty years or the fifty years Trotsky spoke of, for the forces which opposed the establishment of "rational relations" with the peasantry were too powerful to possibly to contain and ultimately to defeat with the sole resources of the Russian proletariat. And it was the Stalinist counter-revolution, whose cult of false "socialism in one country" poorly covered the cruel reality: forced capitalist accumulation and massacre of the old Bolshevik guard.

• • •

The story of Lenin's long struggle on the deathbed to convince the Party of the **need** to accept the risks of the NEP as the only way forward while remaining **fully aware that** it meant construction of capitalism, this struggle to safeguard the rigorously classist and internationalist character of the Party was all the more necessary as the dangers presented by the NEP were greater. It alone deserves a separate chapter and will undoubtedly be the subject of a collective study by the Party. The same goes for the history of the Oppositions: As Lenin's intransigence was diluted, they waged an energetic, albeit belated and desperate battle against Stalinism, against its political abdication in the face of opportunism and its nefarious theory of "socialism in one country", for the safeguard of doctrine

(whose keystone is precisely proletarian internationalism, as demonstrated **a contrario** the tragic outcome of October) and for its transmission to future generations.

Lenin was too good a Marxist to ignore that even defeat can be fruitful, on condition that he fought to the end without giving in anything and being beaten while standing, without having denied anything, and that is why he exclaimed one day: "Even if the Bolshevik power were overthrown tomorrow, we would not regret for a single second having taken it". Was the final outcome preventable? Was it possible to prevent the Bolshevik power ending up being controlled and even overthrown by the capitalism it sought to control and build while awaiting the world revolution? The imperialists could not manage to topple the proletarian power. Could it have been prevented that the internal bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces slowly took power of the "state machinery", that the enemy did not just turn out victorious, but, even worse, that a primitive capitalist accumulation (which in the light of the Russian backwardness took on even more gruesome forms than the same accumulation at the first appearance of capitalism on the world stage) presented itself as "socialist construction"?

This is an idle question in many ways since history has ruled and ruled against us, like it or not. Yet, it deserves to be asked if not **to moan about the past, but to prepare for the future**. It must be done by looking at things on an international scale and by seeking the answer outside the borders of Russia. In 1926-1927, in the debates of the Russian Party and of the 7th and 8th Enlarged Executives of the International devoted to the economic and social questions of Russia, the Opposition spoke on behalf of a working class that the civil war, the hunger, and economic reconstruction had decimated and exhausted despite its exemplary fighting spirit. The drama of the Opposition is doubtless due to the fact that the development and the victory of capitalism in Russia had triggered a social wave which irresistibly carried forward the official leadership of the Party it was trying to fight.

October had drawn most of its strength from an international source, but in 1926-1927 the source had dried up and the Russian Opposition was alone. At the Fifth Congress of the Communist International, the Communist Left had courageously called on the international communist movement to restore to the Bolshevik Party some of the formidable theoretical and practical contributions they had made to it a few years earlier, but the call had fallen into the void. At the enlarged Sixth Executive, at the beginning of 1926, the same Communist Left showed that it was urgently necessary to overturn the "pyramid" of the International in unstable equilibrium on its summit, since it rested on a Bolshevik Party which had lost its homogeneity, and to establish this pyramid on a more stable basis, that is to say on a world communist movement conscious of its duties; unfortunately, this base was already cracked too. The Left also asked the world movement to take up the "Russian question" and discuss it as a vital question since it was essentially international; but the International abdicated, no force capable of fulfilling this duty having had the courage to respond to the call. The International no longer delegated to Moscow just Social Democrats but also Mensheviks and centrists, in short, all that political scum which had nestled in the various "national" parties and which felt that it was once again its hour. Thälmann, Smeral, the Cachins, the Sémards, the Martynovs (behind whom were social forces and very specific political traditions) were eager to become Stalin's corporals after having been the obtuse executioners of the Communists of the Opposition. The heroic struggle of the Chinese proletarians and the English miners during the same years could only be in vain without a vanguard to guide it since their Party had been submerged by this social-democratic scum. The dialectic of the counterrevolution had been fulfilled: the opportunistic degeneration of the International, determined by the ebb of the revolutionary wave and by the pressure of conditions in Russia, now became itself a determinant of the international retreat of the proletariat and the definitive

victory of the capitalist counter-revolution in Russia; the capitalist counter-revolution in Russia, determined by the international weakness of the proletariat, had an effect on that international proletariat and ushered in the greatest counterrevolutionary period in the history of the labor movement.

It would be childish and above all anti-Marxist to invoke a single factor to explain the appalling decline of the international communist movement; but it would be just as childish and, worse still, **defeatist**, to attribute everything to "objective facts", as if they constituted a "fatality" to which, like the Ancients, one would have to resign oneself, and not to put in evidence the "subjective" factor that is the Party and, in this case, the World Party, the Communist International which is the source of decisive lessons (65). Now, on this level, we, the Communist Left, have the right to say that the lesson we have learned from the rout of 1926, the starting point of the most terrible counter-revolution of which the working class has ever been a victim - we assert this not **a posteriori**, but as the confirmation of our forecasts of 1920, a confirmation valid for all countries and all situations, a forecast from which the future proletarian revolution will profit.

If the Communists of the West saw in Bolshevism a prestigious master to whom they recognized the right to "teach them", this is due to the fact that it had stubbornly advocated theoretical intransigence and had shown itself capable of translating it in action. It never hesitated to irrevocably cut the bridges, not only with right-wing revisionism but also with centrist revisionism, more subtle and therefore more pernicious: having isolated and identified the social and political origins of one and the other, it knew in advance that they would be on the other side of the barricades. This is what the demarcation of the Leninist left from the pacifist left at the conference of Zimmerwald had proved, the **April Theses** and the "coup de barre" which they gave to the Party. It is from this that October drew the strength to liquidate the last alliances with other groups or parties, to exercise dictatorship and red terror, to lead the civil war. This is the main lesson that communists and revolutionary proletarians all over the world should have learned from the Russian Revolution. This is all the more true for the defeat that was suffered shortly afterwards in Hungary which showed clearly and precisely what price you pay if you forget this doctrine, not to mention that the Comintern's 21 conditions of admission made it obligatory for the Communists to strictly remember and internalise this doctrine.

The Bolsheviks were the first to forget this lesson when they lost sight of the fact that it was even more valid in the West than in Russia. Here, the economic structure was that of a developed capitalism, but a century of governmental experience had enabled the bourgeoisie to firmly establish its parliamentary democracy. As Lenin repeated a hundred times, these **political** conditions made it more difficult to start the revolution, while economic and social conditions would have made it easy to bring it to fruition. **Theoretical and organizational intransigence**, the "sectarian" courage to separate organically from dubious elements, even those tinted with "maximalism", and the awareness of the irrevocable nature of the borders drawn by history between communism and **all** the variants of opportunism, starting with centrism, should have played with maximum force in the world political organization of the revolutionary proletariat. It was not so. At the Second Congress of the International, the Communist Left showed that the lack of severity of the admission requirements (66) risked allowing opportunism "driven out the door to come in through the window": it [the Communist Left] deeply regretted that it had not defined in a clear and precise manner, from the outset, the theoretical and programmatic bases of the international movement to deduce defined tactical rules that are just as precise and just as "mandatory"; its long experience enabled it to highlight the dissolving effects of electoral and parliamentary practices on Western parties and it therefore proposed a tactic of

electoral abstention, which had nothing in common with anarchist, unionist or other positions, instead of the tactics of "revolutionary parliamentarism" which the majority of the Third International wanted to apply; it proposed that the splits take place as far as possible on the left. Finally, it asked that the adherence to the Communist Party of each country (but it would have preferred that there existed a World Party, unique by its program, its doctrine and the anticipated definition of its tactics and its organization) be individual, never collective. From that moment on, it did not hesitate to insist on the danger of a degeneration of the right.

While the revolutionary situation seemed to intensify, the "subjective forces", which stood firmly on the ground of communism, were still too small in these crucial countries of the West to have a decisive influence on the working masses of Russia and therefore, reflecting back, the world.

The Bolsheviks therefore preferred to adopt a "more elastic", "lighter" method to accelerate the formation of communist parties. For example, centrist wings and groups were included in the national sections of the Comintern in the hope that the purifying power of the revolutionary crucible would remove the centrist leaders, or that they could be assimilated and disciplined under the communist authority of Bolshevism. As a counterweight (to neutralize right-wing tendencies), attempts were made to rely on radical left-wing groups. However, the Bolsheviks placed their hopes, alongside Lenin and Trotsky, on the purifying flames of the European revolution, the tradition of their own party's theoretical and practical intransigence, and finally, with Lenin dead and Trotsky silenced, in the self-immunisation of the "Vanguard Party" against any opportunistic poison. The prerequisites for this "generous" maneuver gradually disappeared under the pressure of material conditions, but the methods based on these prerequisites were not changed, on the contrary sharpened: the return of the revolutionary wave, the weakening of the Bolshevik party, and the opportunistic mistakes of the communist parties in the other countries led, not to a temporary and orderly withdrawal, but increasingly to a "flight forward" for the Comintern, and, with that, to an increasing dissolution of the invariant limits of the movement in organization and tactics. With the tactic of the "political united front" on the 3rd World Congress (1921) the Comintern also relativized the counter-revolutionary role of social democracy (in 1923 the KPD would throw overboard this fundamental premise of communist doctrine and declare the transition of social democracy to the side of the revolution as a result of these efforts). In 1922 the central slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat was weakened by the demand for a "workers' government" (later even for a "workers' and peasants' government"). The slogan of "conquering the majority of the working class", which meant for Lenin the conquest of the greatest possible real influence and was therefore a matter of self-evidence (this is always to be emphasized), was transformed in the interpretation of the epigones into the ideal of the numerical majority, an abstract one, a measure of the effectiveness of the communist parties, completely detached from any deterministic view. People did not understand or did not want to understand, despite the best Bolshevik tradition, that if the Party is a factor of history, it is also its product, and that the tactics that it employs are not indifferent, that on the contrary, it is a force which reacts to those who employ it and sets in motion objective forces which, depending on the direction given to it, can obstruct the road to revolution instead of smoothing it out. They forgot that a slogan, by the mere fact that it is issued, becomes an objective fact which determines the Party itself, whatever its intentions, and that however skilful he may be, the apprentice-sorcerer cannot dominate the **demons** that he himself unleashed.

The history of the Communist International is that of the destructive usury which the instruments of tactics and organisation, **arbitrarily detached** from the principles, exercised on those who employed

them. First errors of organization, then of tactics, finally (and **consequently**, this is what must be understood!) a revision of the theoretical principles and of the program: opportunism driven out the door could enter through the window... in the name of "Bolshevization" by decree. When we fought against these successive missteps, we never claimed to offer the International an infallible recipe for victory: it was only a question of preventing social-democratic infection, of protecting the Party from it, within the limits allowed by history, to help it to preserve its own physiognomy, moving forward through the storms of class struggle, that is to say, to preserve **its capacity to orient the proletarian masses in a determined direction, and only in this direction**; to automatically close the door to defectors of revisionism, to their ideology as well as to their practice; to make the International, really and no longer only formally, **the one World Party of the Revolution**. This also meant to allow it, if necessary, to safeguard in defeat, from which then **the conditions of the recovery can be built**, instead of **losing everything**.

On the contrary, all was lost. In 1926-27, the Opposition found itself alone in front of the enemy it had unconsciously helped to install within the movement. It remained a prisoner of the forces against which it had not considered it useful to build an effective rampart. It had to fight **in the Party** against the worst agents of reformist conformism who should never have been able to enter it. It was not supported by an international movement capable of standing up as one force against the denial of **all** principles, for it was no longer unitary and it was no longer even itself. This in no way diminishes the greatness of a Trotsky who strongly claims **internationalism** against what he called the "Monroe doctrine" of Stalin's and, alas, Bukharin's International, nor the greatness of a Zinoviev who, at the enlarged Sixth Executive, himself dug his grave by demonstrating that "Socialism in one country" was **the negation of all Marxism** and therefore also of "Leninism". But that was not enough; it was necessary to give up "elastic" tactics and methods of organization, it was already too late to do so and it was not they who could.

• • •

We, in the dark tunnel of a counter-revolution whose end we can only glimpse, turn our eyes to the past for the sole purpose of finding the road to the future, all this is part of the lessons of October. The events **could not have** happened **otherwise**, but the past has forged, in the form of historical lessons, the only weapons capable within the realm where the "subjective" factor, the action of the Party, is determining, to prevent the class which holds the keys of the future from "repeating its own errors, its own oscillations, its own uncertainties" by reopening for it the unique path of revolution which setbacks and defeats can temporarily block, but which the proletariat will inevitably have to clear even if, like it is the case today, it needs to start from scratch.

The counter-revolution may have crushed October, but it could not and never will be able to prevent capitalism from accumulating the explosive charges of a revolutionary renaissance, more powerful than ever. Historical development reduces the "national peculiarities" on which Stalinism has nourished itself to a vulgar pasteboard scaffolding which cannot conceal the deep unity of the world. In this world, the proletarian revolution, the only one possible in contemporary times, is objectively on the agenda of all the key countries of the world capitalist system. It is set on this material base, this granite base, that is armed with the teachings of both the defeat and the victory of October.

• • •

## *Footnotes:*

1. Lenin, *The State and the Revolution*; complete works, Moscow Foreign Language Editions, 1962, volume 25, p. 417.
2. The text specifies that we must understand international importance "in the narrowest sense of the word": "the international value or the inevitable historical repetition, on an international scale, of what happened at home"; complete works, volume 31, pp. 15-20.
3. "The Russian revolution is in no way due to a particular merit of the Russian proletariat but due to the general sequence of historical events, which means that this proletariat is provisionally at the forefront of the world revolution"; Lenin, *Report On Combating The Famine*, Complete Works, Volume 27, p. 449.
4. Marx and Engels, preface to the second Russian edition of the Manifesto, 1882.
5. Should we add that any country, for a Marxist, is a mir, a closed universe where the exploited are locked in a degrading solitude?
6. Engels - Afterword to *Social Relations in Russia*.
7. No revolution is possible without the union of what we could call "consciousness", that is to say precisely the doctrine, the program, the Party as definitive anticipations of the historical course of the real physical struggles of the proletariat - and the "spontaneity" of mass actions.
8. complete works, T. 31, p. 20.
9. Lenin, *Report Delivered at a Moscow Gubernia Conference of Factory Committees*, July 23, 1918; complete works, T. 27, p. 580.
10. It was the dialectical consequence of the maturity of capitalism which, as Trotsky will show in one of his powerful syntheses, the core of which can be found in Lenin's pages, is not measured within the limits of a single country, but on a global scale.
11. Lenin, *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*. 1897. Complete works, T. 2, p. 333.
12. What a slap in the face for the "Leninists" of today who join in the lamentations that the "monopolies" are wringing from the petty bourgeoisie.
13. Indeed, the bourgeoisie will ally with absolutism against the peasants claiming the land and against the workers demanding more humane working conditions; the petty bourgeoisie, modern Janus, will present its two faces alternately depending on whether it is attracted to one or the other of the fundamental classes of society; as for the "educated people and the intelligentsia," their agitation will not suffice to stifle their servility.
14. Important extracts from the Address of the Central Committee of the League of Communists were published in *Programme Communiste* No. 14, under the title: "The Proletarian Party and National and Democratic Movements".
15. Or even the "historical inertia" of a part of the Bolsheviks in February-April 1917. Trotsky will speak in this connection of "social democratic recurrence" in the face of the great turning points in history, and it is undeniable that this wing of the Bolshevik old guard then fell back to the level of Menshevism of the years 1905-07.

16. Foreign language editions, 1954, pp 50-51.
17. Trotsky will say "dragging behind him" and the pedants of "Leninist" exegesis will split hairs to make this "nuance" into an abyss!
18. Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, 1905. Foreign Language Editions of Moscow, 1954, pp. 85 and 100.
19. Ibidem, p. 139.
20. Lenin, The War and Russian Social-Democracy (1-11-1914). complete works, T. 21, p. 27.
21. Lenin, The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution (April 10, 1917); complete works, T. 24, p. 79.
22. Ibidem, pp. 75-76.
23. Ibidem, pp. 52-54.
24. Ibidem, p. 55.
25. Ibidem, p. 56.
26. This change of direction, let us remember, was not intended to change the course followed until then by the Bolshevik Party, but to react energetically against the abandonment of the program by the Bolshevik "conciliators".
27. The tasks of the proletariat in our revolution. comp. works, T. 24, p. 59.
28. These two cases are explicitly provided for in Opportunism and the Bankruptcy of the Second International (1915) and The Slogan of the United States of Europe (1916); the April Theses likewise instilled recourse to revolutionary war provided the following conditions are met: "a) passage of power to the proletariat and to the poor elements of the peasantry, close to the proletariat; b) effective, and non-verbal, renunciation of any annexation; c) total break in practice with all the interests of Capital".
29. complete works, T. 27, p. 83.
30. "The success of the Russian revolution and the world revolution (when will we find these two separate terms in the revolutionary literature of October?) Depends on two or three days of struggle", Lenin, Advice of an Onlooker (8- 21/10/17), complete works, T. 26, p. 184.
31. complete works, T. 25, c. 433.
32. complete works, T. 25, pp. 437-438.
33. complete works, T. 25, p. 446.
34. complete works, T. 25, p. 437.
35. On Slogans, complete works, T. 25, pp. 204-205.
36. The drafting of the VII Chapter of State and Revolution, "The Experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1907", did not go beyond the beginnings, but "It is nicer and more useful to participate in the experience of a revolution than to write about it", Lenin would say by way of justification. Let us add that we leave to the Philistines the idea that the literary or revolutionary work of Lenin belongs to a "man", to an "exceptional individual"; for us Lenin, beyond his personal gifts, was and remains the weapon of a class and a Party - and this is the greatest homage that can be paid to him.
37. Report On The Activities Of The Council Of People's Commissars at the Third All-Russia Congress Of Soviets Of Workers', Soldiers' And Peasants' Deputies (24/1/1918). complete works, T. 26, p. 492.
38. Speech At a Joint Session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the Moscow Soviet, Factory Committees and Trade Unions of Moscow (7/29/1918). complete works, T. 28, p. 19.
39. On the Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government, comp. Works, T. 27, p. 247.

40. The proletarian revolution and the renegade Kautsky, complete works, T. 28, pp. 244 and 264.
41. Lessons of the Revolution, complete works, T. 25, p. 261.
42. complete works T. 31, pp. 17, 38 and 39.
43. The teachings of the Municipality, 1920; this text is published as an annex in the brochure *Insegnamenti dell'Ottobre*, published by our Party.
44. Manifestos, Theses and Resolutions of the first four Congresses of the CI (1919-1923); Librairie du Travail, 1934, p. 50.
45. complete works, T. 26, p. 494.
46. Report on War and Peace to the VII Congress of the Russian Communist Party (6-8 / 11/1918) complete works, T. 27. p. 88.
47. The Chief Task of Our Day, complete works. T. 27, p. 162.
48. ABC of Communism, Bukharin and Preobrazhensky. In his Principles of Communism, the first draft of the Manifesto of the Communist Party, written in 1847, Engels, to the question: "Will the proletarian revolution take place in one country?" Replied with the same clarity: "No [...] It will be a world revolution and will therefore have to have global ground. "
49. Manifesto, Ed. Soc. 1956, p. 61.
50. Lenin, Report to the VII Congress of the PCR (March 7, 1918); complete works, T. 27, p. 86.
51. Lenin, Report to the IX All-Russian Congress of Soviets; complete works, T. 33, pp. 156-157.
52. Lenin, Report on the Tax In Kind to the Xth Congress of the PCR (March 15, 1921): complete works, T. 32, p. 224-225.
53. complete works, T. 24, p. 14.
54. The impending catastrophe and the means to ward off it: complete works, T. 25, pp. 352-389-39
55. "If we look at things on a global scale, it is absolutely certain that the final victory of our revolution, if it were to remain isolated, if there were no revolutionary movement in other countries, would be without hope "(Lenin. VII Congress of the PCR, Complete Works, T. 27, p. 91).
56. Lenin, Report on the revision of the program and the change of the name of the Party, VII Congress of the PCR, comp. Works, T. 27, p. 130.
57. Lenin, Resolution of the VIIIth Conference of the RSDLP on the Agrarian Question (May 1917); complete works, T. 24, p. 293.
58. Ibidem, p. 293.
59. Lenin, The Tax in Kind (1921); complete works, T. 32, p. 373.
60. Lenin, Theses on the tactics of the PCR (III ° Congress of the CI, 1921); complete works, T. 32, p. 486. The French translation is ambiguous: "collective" here means "socialized", in the sense that one can say that the large capitalist agricultural enterprise is socialized.
61. Lenin, For the fourth anniversary of the October Revolution (1921); complete works, T. 33, p. 50.
62. Lenin, Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder, 1920; complete works, T. 31, p. 39.
63. On "leftist" infantilism; complete works, T. 27, p. 355.
64. "We are advancing towards the socialist revolution consciously, firmly and unswervingly, knowing that it is not separated from the bourgeois-democratic revolution by a Chinese Wall, and knowing too that (in the last analysis) struggle alone will determine how far we shall advance, what part of this immense and lofty task we shall accomplish, and to what extent we shall succeed in consolidating our victories. Time will show. But we see even now that a tremendous amount—tremendous for this ruined, exhausted and backward country—has

already been done towards the socialist transformation of society.”(Lenin, For the Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution; Complete Works, T. 33. p. 44).

65. We place the two adjectives in quotation marks because it goes without saying that for us, for Marxism, there is no subjective factor which does not act in History, as a non-individual factor, as an objective factor, as a material force.
66. The conditions of admission were adopted by the II Congress of the CI, in July 1920. Our current proposed, among other things, that instead of simply requiring the old parties adhering to the new International that they modify their old social-democratic program and work out "in connection with the particular conditions of their country, a new communist program in conformity with the deliberations of the Communist International", they are obliged to work out "a new program in which the principles of the International Communist Party are fixed in an unequivocal manner and fully in accordance with the resolutions of international congresses [...] the minority which would declare itself against this program (being) excluded for this sole reason ”(speech by the representative of the Communist Left, meeting of 29 July 1920). Congress refused this drastic measure, leaving the door open to all speculation on the "particular conditions" of such and such a country.