

# The Red Mole





# RETURN TO LENINISM



"WHAT IS NOW BEING DONE WITH MARX'S TEACHING IS WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN HISTORY MORE THAN ONCE TO THE TEACHINGS OF REVOLUTIONARY THINKERS AND LEADERS OF OPPRESSED CLASSES IN THEIR STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION. OPPRESSING CLASSES REWARDED GREAT REVOLUTIONARIES IN THEIR LIFETIME WITH UNCEASING PERSECUTION....AFTER THEIR DEATH ATTEMPTS ARE MADE TO MAKE THEM INTO HARMLESS ICONS, AS IT WERE TO CANONISE THEM..." —LENIN, STATE AND REVOLUTION

A spectre has emerged once again, this time to haunt not only Europe, but the entire world. It is the spectre of Leninism and in a few weeks we will see how the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy will try to exorcise it. The mass media in the capitalist world will observe Lenin's centenary by devoting all their energy to prove that Lenin and Leninism is now only of historical interest. In the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe the bureaucracies will celebrate the occasion by claiming that they are practising Leninism in their respective countries.

The task which confronts revolutionists throughout the world today is to rescue Lenin from the bear-hugs of the bourgeoisie and from the dead hand of the decaying Kremlin bureaucracy. That is why The Red Mole has decided to commemorate the centenary of Lenin's birth by devoting this issue in its entirety to restating and examining some of the basic concepts for which Lenin fought and struggled all his life. The fact that it is still necessary to do this is an indication of the enormity of the task involved in rehabilitating Leninism today. There is a basic unity underlying the material printed in this issue, which includes a little known text by Lenin on guerrilla warfare and Trotsky's brilliant exposition of the real essence of Leninism in our epoch. There are two main reasons why we have published these texts in particular: first to stress that Leninism today is of

sympathetic to organisations whose leaderships have either converted Leninism to a trendy, demagogic liberalism or have dogmatized it beyond recognition) that the time is now ripe for them to return to Leninism.

## THE BOURGEOISIE—HOW TO DESTROY IT

The struggle against capitalism in Europe which has acquired a new dynamic since the pre-revolutionary crisis in France in May 1968 and the social and economic crisis which has existed in Italy throughout 1969 has shown large numbers of young militants the necessity of building revolutionary organisations of the working class and displacing the hegemony enjoyed today by social-democratic and Stalinist parties in the labour movement. However it is worth pointing out that many of these new militants have come to this conclusion in the process of struggle and not merely through abstract propaganda. The task before them now is the construction of revolutionary organisations. The experiences and examples of the Bolshevik-Leninists are an invaluable guide to the way forward. But we have also to understand that today, a hundred times more than in Lenin's time, we cannot merely confine ourselves to building organisations in one country. The increasing internationalisation of capital over the last few decades only serves to

Market—the Europe of monopoly capitalism must be countered not by retreating into chauvinistic responses or by ignoring the problem but by counterposing the Europe of the workers and revolutionary students—A United Socialist Europe. It is obvious that the struggle must take place increasingly on a continental scale.

## THE BUREAUCRACY—HOW TO SMASH IT

At the same time as we struggle against capitalism in Europe and the colonial world, we must fully support the anti-bureaucratic struggle of our comrades in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Many of them are beginning a long protracted struggle to smash the bureaucracy and replace it with Soviets, and building organisations which are essential to make political revolution in their countries. The bureaucracy cannot be overthrown only in one country. It has to be overthrown in the Soviet Union itself so that the real face of Leninism can really be seen by the millions of workers and students in Russia and Eastern Europe; so that those who have distorted and mummified Leninism can be swept off the stage of history and with the same broom which Lenin used to overthrow capitalism in Russia.

Leninism is above all the unity of word and the deed, a unity which can only be realised nationally within a revolutionary organisation in which the experiences of all the revolutionary

("Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder by V. I. Lenin—available from Collets, Pioneer Book Service and most left-wing bookshops)

"Revisionist" is one the most powerful words in the vocabulary of the mindless. There are useful and correct ways of employing it but these become progressively fewer as intra-left polemic grows. Attempts to canonise Lenin and to incorporate his work into the New Testament of socialism are bred of a petty-bourgeois liberal consciousness unable to cope with the idea of revolution.

#### WHERE TO WORK

Lenin's work is vast and inaccessible because it represents campaign writing. He was a pamphleteer, a polemicist and a fighter; he was also a great thinker but his work has to be seen in the context of the battles he was waging. This is, of course, true of everyone but it is quite acutely so in the case of Lenin. "Left-Wing" Communism has been a source document for the left throughout the world ever since it was written, and has probably been the base for building more vicious and internecine denunciation than anything else in the history of socialist writing. Those of us not in the CP and finding ourselves the subject of many of these denunciations must look at this pamphlet with care.

Lenin's polemic was directed against those, particularly in Germany, but also elsewhere, including many in the ranks of the Bolshevik Party, who took what they felt to be an uncompromisingly revolutionary line. These comrades rejected all forms of activity that might involve them in collaboration with organs of the bourgeoisie. This meant no traditional parliamentary opposition, no Trade Union work, no attempt to use the bourgeois media and so on. Lenin rejected this "ultra" attitude as frivolous and went on:

"If you want to help the 'masses' and win the sympathy and support of the 'masses', you should not fear difficulties...but must absolutely work wherever the masses are to be found. You must be capable of any sacrifice... in order to carry on agitation and propaganda systematically, perseveringly, persistently and patiently in those institutions, societies and associations—even the most reactionary—in which the proletarian or semi-proletarian masses are to be found. The trade unions and the workers' co-operatives (the latter sometimes, at least) are the very organisations in which the masses are to be found."

Later, he attacks the claim made by "left" communists that bourgeois parliaments are politically obsolete on the ground that, at the time of writing and in the years before, this claim was demonstrably untrue. Their sheer effectiveness as organs of the counter-revolution and of bourgeois rule made them the very opposite of obsolete. Lenin continues:

"We Bolsheviks participated in the most counter-revolutionary parliaments, and experience has shown that participation was not only useful but indispensable to the party of the revolutionary proletariat...If a parliament becomes an organ and a "centre"...of counter-revolution...then it follows that the workers must prepare—ideologically, politically and technically—for the struggle of the Soviets against parliament...But it does not at all follow that this dispersal [of parliament] is hindered, or is not facilitated, by the presence of a Soviet opposition within the counter-revolutionary parliament...We know perfectly well that the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly on January 5, 1918 was not hampered but was actually facilitated by the fact that, within the counter-revolutionary Constituent Assembly which was about to be dispersed, there was a consistent Bolshevik, as well as an inconsistent Left Socialist-Revolutionary, opposition."

#### THE ENTRY TACTIC

Quite aside from the need to use the traditional bourgeois forms as a means of making and maintaining contact with the mass of workers on the one hand and of forming a sort of revolutionary fifth column on the other, Lenin saw the need to make careful distinctions in the nature of what was being opposed. Within the bourgeoisie there are differences of approach, differences of direction and control, all of which must be exploited; and that is not something we can do by heroic withdrawal from the scene of battle. Moreover there is the very important tactic of temporary collaboration. Lenin used as his example the situation in Britain during the struggle between the Labour Party and Lloyd George's hoped-for Liberal-Conservative axis. Lloyd George's purpose was the defeat of the Labour Party which had become a real threat to the divided right. It was Lenin's thesis that even though a Labour parliament would go the way of the continental social democrats and betray the cause of the working class, what was important was to give the working class some experience of parliamentary power, to demonstrate the impossibility of achieving revolution through the left liberalism of the British Labour Party and to further the principle of attacking the situation from within. All three objectives could be achieved if the genuine left would recognise the importance of this kind of tactic:

they want to assume power (though they would prefer a coalition with the bourgeoisie), that they want to 'rule' along the old bourgeois lines and that when they are in power they will certainly behave like the Scheidemanns and Noskes. All that is true. But...in the interests of the revolution, working-class revolutionaries should give these gentlemen a certain amount of parliamentary support."

If any justification for Lenin's tactics is needed, it is easy to find. First, these were the tactics used very successfully by the Bolsheviks. Second, the analysis of the political situation in the rest of Europe in the early '20s left very little alternative. "Left-Wing" Communism clearly grows out of Lenin's experience with the Anarchists and the Social Revolutionaries, both of whom worked for more precipitate action than that engaged in by the Bolsheviks. It is impossible now to say whether either of these groups would have been capable of carrying through the revolution with any success—we only know that the Bolsheviks, largely through the brilliant work of Lenin and Trotsky, prevailed, particularly at the first All-Russian Congress of the Soviets (Petrograd, June 1917), and that it was the Bolsheviks who led and won the revolution.

#### GUIDELINE

Lenin's analysis in this pamphlet and in other letters and speeches has been the guideline to the greater part of left political activity ever since, and this is particularly so in the case of the Communist Parties of Western Europe. Our problem is that Lenin's polemic has been transferred wholesale as a means of attack on those of us who feel that the groups of the traditional left have adopted an incorrect and self-defeating course. The reaction of the "old" left to the "new" has been very curious, for it has consisted in nervous glances at the Lenin polemic rather than in any attempt to discover whether, in fact, a new analysis is not needed. This is particularly sad, for Lenin (in this pamphlet above all) demonstrated the way in which Marxist thinking could be developed to meet particular situations. It is our contention that a Marxist analysis of the contemporary British situation makes the parliamentary tactic adopted by the Bolsheviks in the years before and through the revolution of no immediate value.

#### NEO-CAPITALISM

Capitalism has changed into a very different beast from that of the 1920s. Its expansionist, profit-orientated and exploitative nature has not changed, except possibly for the worse; but its methods, its priorities, its organisations, its controls and, particularly, its power have all changed, sharpened and expanded. It has developed the tactic of reform as a means of self-preservation to an extraordinary degree. In a way not yet fully analysed by the left, it has even reduced the role of its own bourgeois parliamentary system and shifted the locus of power more completely to the apparatus of government and to the large capital amalgams. The extent to which the official unions have sold out and the degree to which the TUC is now a mere instrument of governmental appeasement is a matter of common knowledge. The Labour governments forecast by Lenin have come and gone the way of the corrupt social democrats—Harold (Noske) Wilson is the consensus symbol.

"Left-Wing" Communism still has much to say to us. We must of course conduct the fight as part of the masses (we must, incidentally, reject the bourgeois sneer that to be an intellectual or to be a member of a small Socialist group is somehow not to be a worker). But the workers who are prepared to fight are often not in the leadership of the Trades Unions or members of the Labour Party. They are to be found somewhere else—they are supporting their shop-stewards in the face of official union disapproval, they are squatting in empty houses, they are banding into tenants' groups, they are demonstrating for Vietnam. To continue to fight parliamentary battles, to engage in the old-style negotiations with the bosses is to give ourselves and our comrades not the experience of power, but the experience of emasculation.

Left communism still exists and it still presents its problems. But a more serious threat has come from Right/Reformist "communism" whose hand has bureaucratized the movement. As Lenin's centenary falls we can once more quote the final words of his pamphlet with confidence:

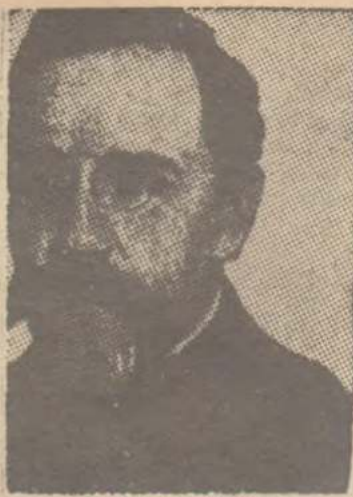
"World revolution has received such a powerful impetus and acceleration from the horrors, vileness and abominations of the world imperialist war and from the hopelessness of the situation it created—this revolution is developing in breadth and depth with such magnificent rapidity, with such a splendid variety of changing forms, with such instructive practical refutation of all doctrinarism, that there is every reason to hope for a rapid and complete recovery of the international communist movement..."

Only the last words: "from the infantile dis-





ZINOVIEV  
Shot



KAMENEV  
Shot



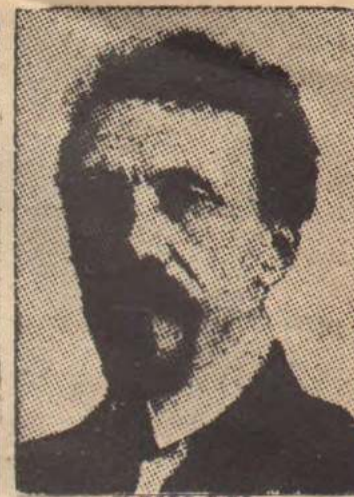
TROTSKY  
In Exile



LENIN  
Dead



SVERDLOV  
Dead



RYKOV  
Shot



URITSKY  
Dead



BUKHARIN  
Shot



NOGIN  
Dead



BUBNOV  
Disappeared



DZERZHINSKY  
Dead



SOKOLNIKOV  
In Prison



SMILGA  
Shot



LOMOV  
?



SHOMYAN  
Dead



MURANOV  
Disappeared



KRESTINSKY  
Shot



KOLLONTAI  
?



JOFFE  
Suicide



MILIUTIN  
Missing



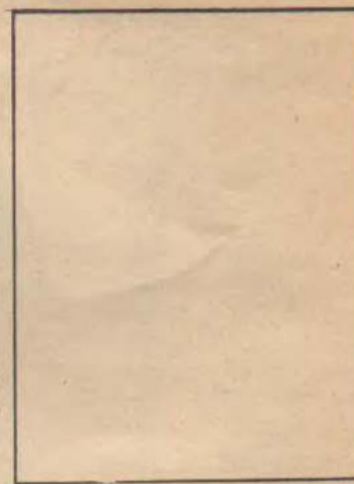
STASSOVA  
Disappeared



ARTEM  
Dead



BERZIN  
?



The state of Lenin's Central Committee at the end of 1938

**Defeat Stalinism:**



STALIN  
Survivor



# LENIN / THE NEW LEFT / SPONTANEISM

The first thesis of Leninism, the premises of all his writings and actions as Lukacs indicates in his brilliant study of Lenin, is the *actuality of the revolution*. With imperialism the objective historical possibility and necessity of overthrowing capitalism presented itself on a global scale. Unshakeable in his conviction that revolution was on the order of the day he devoted his astonishing intellect and will to its preparation.

It is most instructive to note that Lenin, who demonstrated to the highest degree this commitment to the proletarian revolution and its victory, was also the least prone to the old idealist/inevitable notion that the contradiction of capitalism would explode where it achieved its purest incarnation. He replaced the perennial belief that capitalism would suddenly be overtaken by a revolution radiating out from its heartlands by the theory that the imperialist chain must first break at its *weakest link* and that it was precisely these weak links which presented the point of insertion *par excellence* for revolutionary practice. Revolution would not occur where the bourgeoisie and proletariat were both strongest but rather where the export of capital and war (two aspects of the same phenomenon: imperialism) combined to enfeeble the local capitalist class and awaken the mass of workers and peasants.

For the idealist Marxists as much as for the anarchists the new social order is immanent within the old. Capitalist society is riven by one simple master contradiction: Bourgeois/Proletarian, Oppressors/Oppressed, Rulers/Ruled. Revolutionary propaganda consists in denouncing this relation, revolutionary action in suppressing it in favour of the spontaneous harmony of social relations once the oppressors have been removed. The dialectic at work here is rooted in the subjectivity of the revolutionary and is in this sense profoundly idealist. Even though it appears to recognise the independent reality of the social world this is a counterfeit materialism since it conceives that world as prestructured by the revolutionary project.

Louis Althusser has recently emphasised the radically different dialectic underlying Lenin's thought and action. With increasing clarity Lenin became aware of the implications for practice of the mature Marx's break with all his predecessors and with his own youth. The bourgeois order on a national or international scale had an already-given complexity which cannot be conjured away by even the most impatient slogan. However partially or provisionally, this structure and its weak links must be deciphered by the revolutionary for it is the field of his practice. As Althusser puts it in his essay "On the Materialist Dialectic":

"...the theory of the 'weakest link' is identical with the theory of the 'decisive' link. Once we have realised this we can return to Lenin with a quiet mind. However much any ideologist tries to bury him beneath a proof by historical analysis, there is always this one little man standing there in the plain of history and our lives, that eternal 'current situation'. He goes on talking, calmly or passionately. He goes on talking to us about something quite simple: about his revolutionary practice, about the practice of the class struggle, in other words, about what makes it possible to act on history from within the sole history present, about what is specific in the contradiction and in the dialectic, about the specific difference in the contradiction which quite simply allows us, not to demonstrate or explain the 'inevitable' revolutions *post festum*, but to 'make' them in our unique present, or, as Marx profoundly formulated it, to make the dialectic into a revolutionary method, rather than the theory of the *fait accompli*."

What then are the consequences of the materialist dialectic for revolutionary practice which makes this altogether arrogant, unnecessary presumption that man can "make" his history in the revolutionary process. To begin with it means that no revolutionary should allow himself to imagine that the established society furnishes ready-made that

revolutionary classes. It is precisely the task of political practice to encourage that degree of inter-class harmony which scientific analysis reveals to be possible, not to invoke the rhetorical concept "the people" as if it could magically dissolve the real social antagonisms generated by capitalist society.

We can see here the domain of theoretical practice which must refuse to allow the concepts and notions generated spontaneously by capitalist society to impose on it. As Marx says in *Capital* there would be no need for science if appearance coincided with essence. Revolutionaries need to know the essential rather than the apparent workings of the social system (though one should add in parenthesis that materialism recognises and explains the being of the appearance, too). The lived reality of capitalist society should be the starting point of both revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice but their vocation must be to transform both by acting on the real contradictions to be discovered within it. The revolutionary armed with that concrete analysis of a concrete situation which Lenin called the living soul of Marxism should have a provisional conception of the structures of power and of social forces within the social formation. In this sense, theory is certainly not confined to critiques of the established society and its ideologies, nor is political practice confined to exhorting the ideal to emerge from the wings of history.

As I have used more than once the delicate concept "spontaneity", perhaps I should clarify what I believe Lenin meant by his celebrated but perhaps little understood critique of it within the revolutionary movement. First, it must be emphasised that the spontaneous resistance of the masses to capitalism was something to be cherished as the most precious aspect of the workers' movement: revolutionaries were urged to "learn from the masses", to "take up and develop" the new forms of action which a mass struggle always throws up. Nobody has been more Leninist than those Asian revolutionaries who took up and developed the spontaneous revolts of the peasantry, in the process transforming a social phenomenon which seemed always to be fated to heroic failure into the invincible flood of social revolution which is cleansing a continent of imperialist exploitation and oppression. What separates the glorious Tai Pings and Boxers from the mighty Peoples Liberation Army is really nothing but that slim pamphlet "Report of an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan" and a few other distillations and clarifications of the revolutionary practice of people's war. Perhaps these strange Asian revolutionaries can help us

to understand our own traditions of revolutionary thought better. The spontaneity that Lenin assailed was that of the capitalist system itself. Because of his profound conviction that the revolution was actual he could not allow it to be thought that bourgeois society was destined to carry out itself the death sentence passed against it. He was, for example, concerned to refute the notion that economic or trade union struggles necessarily lead to revolution or socialism. Left to themselves such struggles would inevitably remain under the dominion of bourgeois ideology.

Today much of Lenin's critique of economism is not difficult to accept for most Western revolutionaries. Unfortunately, it has been replaced by other versions of the cult of spontaneity which a Leninist standpoint must equally reject. Lenin, who fought so determinedly against the notion that there was a spontaneous proletarian socialist consciousness would have been absolutely rigid with horror at the "theory" that such groups as the "new" working class, middle strata, intellectual workers or some group of petit-bourgeois could have spontaneous access to such consciousness.

Some European theorists have argued that these strata are bound to demand increasing autonomy within their work situation and that this is a naturally socialist demand. Now it is, I think, true that the new petit-bourgeois strata do have at least this in common with the classical small producers of early capitalism, a strong identification with their occupational skill and a strong resentment of the capitalist system where it encroaches or limits that skill. But just as they have, in a necessarily different form, some of the same revolutionary potentialities of the old-style petit-bourgeoisie, so also they are not exempt from some of its reactionary possibilities either. Their usual role within the structure of authority or manipulation within late capitalism, and their cultural traditions all help to make this the case, not to speak of the inconvenient fact that these strata are usually small-scale owners of productive property in the form of the various pension plans and insurance policies which are invariably concomitants of the jobs they hold.

It is difficult to know which social class will next be promoted as the spontaneous author of truly socialist consciousness, but for revolutionaries revolution must remain, as it was for Lenin, a creative, conscious, collective act which cannot be achieved in the twilight realm of ideology nor by relying on bourgeois society to fashion a naturally socialist consciousness. Capitalist society may produce its own gravediggers: but it is up to the latter to slay the monster and inter it in its grave. I hope I have not overstressed the voluntaristic content in Lenin's thought—though if I have maybe some polemic corrective was needed to dispel prevailing misinterpretations.

The lonely intellectual in his study is, of course, no more capable of generating a fully adequate socialist theory. His privileged access to culture and research facilities certainly do not carry him as far as this. The truth is, of course, that revolutionary theory develops and sharpens in the interaction and dialectic between revolutionary intellectual and mass activity. The space where this interaction occurs is the revolutionary party and in the long run without a revolutionary party there will be no accumulation and cross-fertilisation of practice and theory.

## In Defence of the Leninist Party

Let us begin where Lenin did, with the battle against Menshevism in the ranks of Russian social democracy. What was the kernel of this conflict at the time of its inception? First, it was not really about the programme of the Party, though there were programmatic differences—on the peasantry and its role in the revolution for example—which were later to become very acute. The elementary cause of the conflict was the famous Clause One of the Party Statutes. Lenin wanted to insist that a party member should not only support the essential programme of the Party but that each member should have a duty to be directly active in it. Active, that is to say, in the discussion, formulation and execution of policy. This was really a quite logical corollary of the idea he had already enunciated in *What is to be Done?* that the Party should be an organisation of professional revolutionaries.

All this was in the greatest contrast, though Lenin may have been only half aware of this at the time, with the practice of the German Social Democratic Party which complacently prided itself on its huge paper membership and its throng of ancillary organisations. Today, the large revisionist parties have very similar features, especially the key one of a large mass of passive sympathisers actually inside the Party, a continual burden on the activists who have to service them and a docile block vote

fundamental principle of the personal participation of every member with its essential activities. It is this militancy which, as Lucio Magri has argued, is the hallmark of the revolutionary communist. Of course, on this cornerstone a good or bad edifice will be constructed—but either way it will tend to be strong one. A good organisation will be one that combines militancy with genuine democratic centralism. That is full and unfettered democracy as regards discussion of policy together with firm discipline and unity in action. It is necessary to emphasise that the democracy in democratic centralism always included the right to form tendencies and factions in the Bolshevik Party up until 1921 and that during the early years of the Comintern the same was true of all its constituent Parties: indeed the central organisation often intervened to prevent the annihilation of minority tendencies. In fact Lenin's own practice should be closely studied here. How did he come to be in the same Party and section of a Party as Bukharin, how is it that Kamenev and Zinoviev were allowed not only to remain in the Party but to retain their Party positions after their opposition to the October insurrection? How is it that Lenin could tolerate Bogdanov and Lunacharsky, the notorious "god-builders" in the Bolshevik Party? His pamphlet *Ultra-Leftism—an Infant Disorder of Communism* is another case in point: it is certainly not the one-sided rejection of ultra-leftism which some of those who quote it selectively try to make out. In fact Lenin stresses that the spirit of the ultra-leftists is just what is needed in the revolutionary movement. Lenin pays as eloquent a tribute to leftism in this pamphlet as Marx and Engels paid to capitalism in *The Communist Manifesto* and the same reason—only by acknowledging its strength and historical merits could it be overcome.

He emphasised more than once that fight helped to maintain a certain flexibility, fight spirit and dialectical preparedness within the revolutionary organisation. The revolutionary Party is precisely the place where the diverse currents and sectors which go to make up the revolutionary movement meet to achieve a similar perspective and common purpose.

The charge that the Leninist Party is elitist is in a way true. But then capitalism generates the most harsh inequalities in opportunities of every sort, because there is vastly unequal provision of education, culture and free time (which is not to say that being spared an extra dose of bourgeois culture may not be good for a revolutionary). Also the dominating structure of capitalist society creates certain especially efficacious regions for actions against it. The class from whom the social surplus is extracted clearly has a strategic potential which is much larger than its numbers. The first guarantee that should be sought are in the internal structure of the organisation. Anything else is not a genuine anti-elitism but a tolerance of the existing deformities of social inequality within capitalist society. The important thing that the Party should itself incarnate the superior organising principle which the revolution represents and in contemporary Western capitalism this must involve a rejection of bureaucracy and top-down control—though of course, this does not mean all differentiation of function within the revolutionary ranks. In practice all these desirable qualities are never the consequence of constitutions, however formally democratic, but rather of the dedication and vigilance of the Party militaries.

This little-known piece by Lenin is both a good example of his ceaseless struggle against conservative dogmatic distortions of Marxism and a demonstration of his own revolutionary method of analysis. It is also relevant to the understanding of the armed struggles being pursued throughout the world today. The article was written in 1906 before Kautsky and the European Social-Democratic parties had degenerated. The Cadets and Bezzaglavtsi which Lenin mentions were right-wing liberal groups. The Black Hundreds were the Tzarist political police. Blanquism refers to a belief originating among French socialists that the revolution could be achieved by a small conspiratorial group cut off from the masses seizing control of the central government. The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party was the party of which the Bolsheviks formed the revolutionary wing.

### I. Forms of Struggle

Let us begin from the beginning. What are the fundamental demands which every Marxist should make of an examination of the question of forms of struggle? In the first place, Marxism differs from all primitive forms of socialism by not binding the movement to any one particular form of struggle. It recognises the most varied forms of struggle; and it does not "concoct" them, but only generalises, organises, gives conscious expression to those forms of struggle of the revolutionary classes which arise of themselves in the course of the movement. Absolutely hostile to all abstract formulas and to all doctrinaire recipes, Marxism demands an attentive attitude to the mass struggle in progress, which, as the movement develops, as the class-consciousness of the masses grows, as economic and political crises become acute, continually gives rise to new and more varied methods of defence and attack. Marxism, therefore, positively does not reject any form of struggle. Under no circumstances does Marxism confine itself to the forms of struggle possible and in existence at the given moment only, recognising as it does that new forms of struggle, unknown to the participants of the given period, inevitably arise as the given social situation changes. In this respect Marxism learns, if we may so express it, from mass practice, and makes no claim whatever to teach the masses forms of struggle invented by "systematisers" in the seclusion of their studies. We know—said Kautsky, for instance, when examining the forms of social revolution—that the coming crisis will introduce new forms of struggle that we are now unable to foresee.

In the second place, Marxism demands an absolutely historical examination of the question of the forms of struggle. To treat this question apart from the concrete historical situation betrays a failure to understand the rudiments of dialectical materialism. At different

stages of economic evolution, depending on differences in political, national-cultural, living and other conditions, different forms of struggle come to the fore and become the principal forms of struggle; and in connection with this, the secondary, auxiliary forms of struggle undergo change in their turn. To attempt to answer yes or no to the question whether any particular means of struggle should be used, without making a detailed examination of the concrete situation of the given movement at the given stage of its development, means completely to abandon the Marxist position.

These are the two principal theoretical positions by which we must be guided. The history of Marxism in Western Europe provides an infinite number of examples corroborating what has been said. European Social-Democracy at the present time regards parliamentarism and the trade union movement as the principal forms of struggle; it recognised insurrection in the past, and is quite prepared to recognise it, should conditions change, in the future—despite the opinion of bourgeois liberals like the Russian Cadets and the Bezzaglavtsi. Social-Democracy in the seventies rejected the general strike as a social panacea, as a means of overthrowing the bourgeoisie at one stroke by non-political means—but Social-Democracy fully recognises the mass political strike (especially after the experience of Russia in 1905) as one of the methods of struggle essential under certain conditions. Social-Democracy recognised street barricade fighting in the forties, rejected it for definite reasons at the end of the nineteenth century, and expressed complete readiness to revise the latter view and to admit the expediency of barricade fighting after the experience of Moscow, which in the words of K. Kautsky, initiated new tactics of barricade fighting.

### II. Armed Struggle

Having established the general Marxist propositions, let us turn to the Russian revolution. Let us recall the historical development of the forms of struggle it produced. First there were the economic strikes of workers (1896-1900), then the political demonstrations of workers and students (1901-02), peasant revolts (1902), the beginning of mass political strikes variously combined with demonstrations (Rostov 1902, the strikes in the summer of 1903, January 9, 1905), the all-Russian political strike accompanied by local cases of barricade fighting (October 1905), mass barricade fighting and armed uprising (1905, December), the peaceful parliamentary struggle (April-June 1906), partial military revolts (June 1905-July 1906) and partial peasant revolts (autumn 1905-autumn 1906).

Such is the state of affairs in the autumn of 1906 as concerns forms of struggle in general. The "retaliatory" form of struggle adopted by the autocracy is the Black-Hundred pogrom, from Kishinev in the spring of 1903 to Sedlets in the autumn of 1906. All through this period the organisation of Black-Hundred pogroms and the beating up of Jews, students, revolutionaries and class-conscious workers continued to progress and perfect itself, combining the violence of Black-Hundred troops with the violence of hired ruffians, going as far as the use

of artillery in villages and towns and merging with punitive expeditions, punitive trains and so forth.

Such is the principal background of the picture. Against this background there stands out—unquestionably as something partial, secondary and auxiliary—the phenomenon to the study and assessment of which the present article is devoted. What is this phenomenon? What are its forms? What are its causes? When did it arise and how far has it spread? What is its significance in the general course of the revolution? What is its relation to the struggle of the working class organised and led by Social-Democracy? Such are the questions which we must now proceed to examine after having sketched the general background of the picture.

The phenomenon in which we are interested is the armed struggle. It is conducted by individuals and by small groups. Some belong to revolutionary organisations, while others (the majority in certain parts of Russia) do not belong to any revolutionary organisation. Armed struggle pursues two different aims, which must be strictly distinguished. In the first place, this struggle aims at assassinating individuals, chiefs and subordinates in the army and police; in the second place, it aims at the confiscation of monetary funds both from the government and from private persons. The confiscated funds go partly into the treasury of the Party, partly for the special purpose of arming and preparing for an uprising, and partly for the maintenance of persons engaged in the struggle we are describing. The big expropriations (such as the Caucasian, involving over 200,000 rubles, and the Moscow, involving 875,000 rubles) went in fact first and foremost to revolutionary parties—small expropriations go mostly, and sometimes entirely, to the maintenance of the "expropriators". This form of struggle undoubtedly became widely developed and extensive only in 1906, i.e. after the December uprising. The intensification of the political crisis to the point of armed struggle and, in particular, the intensification of poverty, hunger and unemployment in town and country, was one of the important causes of the struggle we are describing. This form of struggle was adopted as the preferable and even exclusive form of social struggle by the vagabond elements of the population, the lumpen proletariat and anarchist groups. Declaration of martial law, mobilisation of fresh troops, Black-Hundred pogroms (Sedlets), and military courts must be regarded as the "retaliatory" form of struggle adopted by the autocracy.

### III. "Anarchism"

The usual appraisal of the struggle we are describing is that it is anarchism, Blanquism, the old terrorism, the acts of individuals isolated from the masses, which demoralise the workers, repel wide strata of the population, disorganise the movement and injure the revolution. Examples in support of this appraisal can easily be found in the events reported every day in the newspapers.

But are such examples convincing? In order to test this, let us take a locality where the form of struggle we are examining is most developed—the Lettish territory. This is the way *Novoye Vremya* (in its issues of September 9 and 12) complains of the activities of the Lettish Social-Democrats. The Lettish Social-Democratic Labour Party (a section of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party) regularly issues its paper in 30,000 copies. The announcement columns publish lists of spies whom it is the duty of every decent person to exterminate. People who assist the police are proclaimed "enemies of the revolution", liable to execution and, moreover, to confiscation of property. The public is instructed to give money to the Social-Democratic Party only against signed and stamped receipt. In the Party's latest report, showing a total income of 48,000 rubles for the year, there figures a sum of 5,600 rubles contributed by the Libau branch for arms which was obtained by expropriation. Naturally, *Novoye Vremya* rages and fumes against this "revolutionary law", against this "terror government".

Nobody will be so bold as to call these activities of the Lettish Social-Democrats anarchism, Blanquism or terrorism. But why? Because here we have a clear connection between the new form of struggle and the uprising which broke out in December and which is again brewing. This connection is not so perceptible in the case of Russia as a whole, but it exists. The fact that "guerrilla" warfare became widespread precisely after December, and its connection with the accentuation not only of the economic crisis but also of the political crisis is beyond dispute. The old Russian terrorism was an affair of the intellectual conspirator; today as a general rule guerrilla warfare is waged by the worker combatant, or simply by the unemployed



worker. Blanquism and anarchism easily occur to the minds of people who have a weakness for stereotype; but under the circumstances of an uprising, which are so apparent in the Lettish Territory, the inappropriateness of such trite labels is only too obvious.

The example of the Letts clearly demonstrates how incorrect, unscientific and unhistorical is the practice so very common among us of analysing guerrilla warfare without reference to the circumstances of an uprising. These circumstances must be borne in mind, we must reflect on the peculiar features of an intermediate period between big acts of insurrection, we must realise what forms of struggle inevitably arise under such circumstances, and not try to shirk the issue by a collection of words learned by rote, such as are used equally by the Cadets and the *Novoye Vremya*-ites: anarchism, robbery, hooliganism!

#### "Disorganisation"

It is said that guerrilla acts disorganise our work. Let us apply this argument to the situation that has existed since December 1905, to the period of Black-Hundred pogroms and martial law. What disorganises the movement more in such a period: the absence of resistance or organised guerrilla warfare? Compare the centre of Russia with her western borders, with Poland and the Lettish Territory. It is unquestionable that guerrilla warfare is far more widespread and far more developed in the western border regions. And it is equally unquestionable that the revolutionary movement in general, and the Social-Democratic movement in particular, are *more disorganised* in central Russia than in the western border regions. Of course, it would not enter our heads to conclude from this that the Polish and Lettish Social-Democratic movements are less disorganised thanks to guerrilla warfare. No. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that guerrilla warfare is not to blame for the state of disorganisation of the Social-Democratic working-class movement in Russia in 1906.

#### "National Oppression"

Allusion is often made in this respect to the peculiarities of national conditions. But this allusion very clearly betrays the weakness of the current argument. If it is a matter of national conditions then it is not a matter of anarchism, Blanquism or terrorism—sins that are common to Russia as a whole and even to the Russians especially—but of something else. Analyse this something else *concretely*, gentlemen! You will then find that national oppression or antagonism explain nothing, because they have always existed in the western border regions, whereas guerrilla warfare has been engendered only by the present historical period. There are many places where there is national oppression and antagonism, but no guerrilla struggle, which sometimes develops where there is no national oppression whatever. A concrete analysis of the question will show that it is not a matter of national oppression, but of conditions of insurrection. Guerrilla warfare is an inevitable form of struggle at a time when the mass movement has actually reached the point of an

uprising and when fairly large intervals occur between the "big engagements" in the civil war.

It is not guerrilla actions which disorganise the movement, but the weakness of a party which is incapable of taking such actions *under its control*. That is why the anathemas which we Russians usually hurl against guerrilla actions go hand in hand with secret, casual, unorganised guerrilla actions which really do disorganise the Party. Being incapable of understanding what historical conditions give rise to this struggle, we are incapable of neutralising its deleterious aspects. Yet the struggle is going on. It is engendered by powerful economic and political causes. It is not in our power to eliminate these causes or to eliminate this struggle. Our complaints against guerrilla warfare are complaints against our Party weakness in the matter of an uprising.

#### "Demoralisation"

What we have said about disorganisation also applies to demoralisation. It is not guerrilla warfare which demoralises, but *unorganised*, irregular, non-party guerrilla acts. We shall not rid ourselves one least bit of this *most unquestionable* demoralisation by condemning and cursing guerrilla actions, for condemnation and curses are absolutely incapable of putting a stop to a phenomenon which has been engendered by profound economic and political causes. It may be objected that if we are incapable of putting a stop to an abnormal and demoralising phenomenon, this is no reason why the Party should adopt abnormal and demoralising methods of struggle. But such an objection would be a purely bourgeois-liberal and not a Marxist objection, because a Marxist cannot regard civil war, or guerrilla warfare, which is one of its forms, as abnormal and demoralising *in general*. A Marxist bases himself on the class struggle, and not social peace. In certain periods of acute economic and political crises the class struggle ripens into a direct civil war, i.e., into an armed struggle between two sections of the people. In such periods a Marxist is *obliged* to take the stand of civil war. Any moral condemnation of civil war would be absolutely impermissible from the standpoint of Marxism.

In a period of civil war the ideal party of the proletariat is a *fighting party*. This is absolutely incontrovertible. We are quite prepared to grant that it is possible to argue and prove the *inexpediency* from the standpoint of civil war of particular forms of civil war at any particular moment. We fully admit criticism of diverse forms of civil war from the standpoint of *military expediency* and absolutely agree that in *this* question it is the Social-Democratic practical workers in each particular locality who must have the final say. But we absolutely demand in the name of the principles of Marxism that an analysis of the conditions of civil war should not be evaded by hackneyed and stereotyped talk about anarchism, Blanquism and terrorism, and that senseless methods of guerrilla activity adopted by some organisation or other of the Polish Socialist Party at some moment or other should not be used as a bogey when discussing the question of the participation of the Social-Democratic Party as such in guerrilla warfare in general.

#### New Forms of Struggle

The argument that guerrilla warfare disorganises the movement must be regarded critically. Every new form of struggle, accompanied as it is by new dangers and new sacrifices, inevitably

"disorganises" organisations which are unprepared for this new form of struggle. Our old propagandist circles were disorganised by recourse to methods of agitation. Our committees were subsequently disorganised by recourse to demonstrations. Every military action in any war to a certain extent disorganises the ranks of the fighters. But this does not mean that one must not fight. It means that one must *learn* to fight. That is all.

When I see Social-Democrats proudly and smugly declaring "we are not anarchists, thieves, robbers, we are superior to all this, we reject guerrilla warfare"—I ask myself: Do these people realise what they are saying? Armed clashes and conflicts between the Black-Hundred government and the population are taking place all over the country. This is an absolutely inevitable phenomenon at the present stage of development of the revolution. The population is spontaneously and in an unorganised way—and for that very reason often in unfortunate and *undesirable* forms—reacting to this phenomenon also by armed conflicts and attacks. I can understand us refraining from Party leadership of *this* spontaneous struggle in a particular place or at a particular time because of the weakness and unpreparedness of our organisation. I realise that this question must be settled by the local practical workers, and that the remoulding of weak and unprepared organisations is no easy matter. But when I see a Social-Democrat theoretician or publicist not displaying regret over this unpreparedness, but rather a proud smugness and a self-exalted tendency to repeat phrases learned by rote in early youth about anarchism, Blanquism and terrorism, I am hurt by this degradation of the most revolutionary doctrine in the world.

It is said that guerrilla warfare brings the class-conscious proletarians into close association with degraded, drunken riff-raff. That is true. But it only means that the party of the proletariat can never regard guerrilla warfare as the only, or even as the chief, method of struggle; it means that this method must be subordinated to other methods, that it must be commensurate with the chief methods of warfare, and must be ennobled by the enlightening and organising influence of socialism. And without this *latter* condition, *all*, positively all, methods of struggle in bourgeois society bring the proletariat into close association with the various non-proletarian strata above and below it and, if left to the spontaneous course of events, become frayed, corrupted and prostituted. Strikes, if left to the spontaneous course of events, become corrupted into "alliances"—agreements between the workers and the masters *against* the consumers. Parliament becomes corrupted into a brothel, where a gang of bourgeois politicians barter wholesale and retail "national freedom", "liberalism", "democracy", republicanism, anti-clericalism, socialism and all other wares in demand. A newspaper becomes corrupted into a public pimp, into a means of corrupting the masses, of pandering to the low instincts of the mob, and so on and so forth. Social-Democracy knows of no universal methods of struggle, such as would shut off the proletariat by a Chinese wall from the strata standing slightly above or slightly below it. At different periods Social-Democracy applies different methods, *always* qualifying the choice of them by *strictly* defined ideological and organisational conditions.\*

#### IV. Civil War

The forms of struggle in the Russian revolution are distinguished by their colossal variety compared with the bourgeois revolutions in Europe. Kautsky partly foretold this in 1902 when he said that the future revolution (with the exception *perhaps* of Russia, he added) might be not so much a struggle of the people against the government as a struggle between two sections of the people. In Russia we undoubtedly see a wider development of this *latter* struggle than in the bourgeois revolutions in the West. The enemies of our revolution among the people are few in number, but as the struggle grows more acute they become more and more organised and receive the support of the reactionary strata of the bourgeoisie. It is therefore absolutely natural and inevitable that the uprising should assume the higher and more complex form of a prolonged civil war embracing the whole country, i.e. an armed struggle between two sections of the people. Such a war cannot be conceived otherwise than as a series of few big engagements at comparatively long intervals and a large number of small encounters during these intervals. That being so—and it is undoubtedly so—the Social-Democrats must absolutely make it their duty to create organisations best adapted to lead the masses in these big engagements and, as far as possible, in these small encounters as well. In a period when the class struggle has become accentuated to the point of civil war, Social-Democrats must make it their duty not only to participate but also to play the leading role in *this* civil war. The Social-Democrats must train and prepare their organisations to be really able to act as a *belligerent side* which does not miss a single opportunity of inflicting damage on the enemy's forces.

This is a difficult task, there is no denying. It cannot be accomplished at once. Just as the whole people are being re-trained and are learning to fight in the course of the civil war, so our organisation must be trained, must be reconstructed in conformity with the lessons of experience to be equal to this task.

We have not the slightest intention of foisting on practical workers any artificial form of struggle, or even of deciding from our arm-chair what part any particular form of guerrilla warfare should play in the general course of the civil war in Russia. We are far from the thought of regarding a concrete assessment of particular guerrilla actions as indicative of a *trend* in Social-Democracy. But we do regard it as our duty to help as far as possible to arrive at a *correct theoretical* assessment of the new forms of struggle engendered by practical life. We do regard it as our duty relentless to combat stereotypes and prejudices which hamper the class-conscious workers in correctly presenting a new and difficult problem and in correctly approaching its solution.





The Ulyanov family, 1879. Standing, from left to right: Olga, Alexander, and Anna. Seated: Maria Alexandrovna with Maria Illichna, Dmitri Illich, Ilya Nikolayevich, and nine-year-old Vladimir.

Lenin's lifework is a totality, in which theory and practice cannot be separated from each other. Lenin himself stated: without revolutionary theory, no revolutionary practice. No serious person today could deny the historic significance of the socialist October Revolution or the creation of the Soviet state: these events have indelibly marked the history of our century—and of the century to come. But the theoretical insight which made these great events possible is as important, if not more important, from the long-term point of view, than these events themselves. For that insight will in the long run make possible a world-wide extension of the October Revolution, an endeavour which temporarily failed during the life-time of Lenin and Trotsky themselves.

Seven main pillars constitute the body of Leninism, an extension of Marxism in the imperialist epoch. These seven main parts of Leninism continue to hold true today as they did forty-six years ago when Lenin died—nay, their full significance is only coming to be understood today by larger and larger masses of workers and poor peasants, revolutionary intellectuals and students, in several important parts of the world:

### 1. Imperialism: Last Stage of Capitalism

The theory of imperialism as the supreme phase of capitalism, in which free competition leads to the creation of great monopolies (trusts, holdings, cartels, combines; we would add today: multinational corporations), that is to say the domination of a tiny handful of finance groups over the economy and society of the imperialist countries and their colonial and semi-colonial satellites. Imperialism doesn't mean necessarily the end of economic growth, a final stop to the growth of the productive forces. But it means that capitalism has fulfilled its historically progressive task of the creation of the world-market and of the introduction of an international division of labour, and that an epoch of structural crisis of the capitalist world economy is opened. This structural crisis, while coinciding sometimes with deep conjunctural crises of overproduction (as it did in 1929-33 and during the subsequent so-called "recessions"), is marked by two decisively reactionary traits: in the under-developed parts of the world, it impedes those very processes of national liberation and unification, of agrarian emancipation and industrialisation, which the great bourgeois revolutions of the past realised in the West. In the imperialist countries themselves, it is marked by a growing and frightful parasitism (large-scale waste of material and human resources, not only through wars, unemployment, overcapacity, etc., but also through massive increases of the selling and distribution costs, systematic degrading of the quality of products, threats against the ecologic equilibrium, and threats against the very physical survival of mankind).

### 2. Revolutionary Character of Our Epoch

The theory of the revolutionary character of our epoch, of the "up-to-dateness" of socialist revolution, which flows directly from the structural crisis of world capitalism. While that crisis is permanent (although knowing ups and downs, periods of temporary stabilisation and periods of great instability of capitalism in key countries and continents), there are from Lenin's point of view, no "permanent revolutionary situations": if the working

temporary comeback of the capitalist class. The socialist world revolution, which has been on the agenda since World War I, takes the form of a process. The chain of countries subjected by imperialist capitalism breaks first in its weakest links (these can be underdeveloped countries like Russia and China, but there is no law in Lenin's thought which says that they have to be such). For Lenin, while the workers of each country where a favourable revolutionary situation occurs should by all means seize power, they should consider this as a means to strengthen the revolutionary forces in neighbouring countries and on a world scale, and should consider themselves always a detachment of the world revolutionary communist movement.

### 3. The Party

The theory of the revolutionary vanguard party, which is based upon a correct, dialectic, understanding of the inter-relationship between objective mass struggles and subjective class consciousness under capitalism. Defending and expanding Marx' and Engels' concepts of historical and dialectical materialism, Lenin rejected the mechanistic and naive belief that class struggle in itself gives to the exploited class—cut off from all the main sources of science—the power to spontaneously reconstruct Marxist theory, the highest product of centuries of intellectual and scientific developments of mankind. Marxist theory, socialist consciousness, must be introduced from the outside in the class struggle, by conscious efforts of a revolutionary vanguard. Without such a constant effort, the overwhelming majority of the working class remains subjected to the prevailing influence of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois ideology. But without a successful fusion with a large working-class vanguard, the revolutionary minority is not yet a party; it is only an attempt to build such a party. Lenin rejected all ideas of self-proclaimed vanguards. For him, the proof of the pudding was in the eating, i.e. in the capacity of the vanguard to actually lead large working-class struggles. And the supreme test of the party—the leadership in the struggle for power—presupposes the conquest of the conscious support by the majority of the working class and the toiling masses.

### 4. Workers Councils

The theory of workers councils (soviets) as power instruments of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and as higher forms of democracy than parliamentary bourgeois democracy. Lenin believed, as Marx did, that between capitalism and socialism there is a transition period called the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. No more than Marx did Lenin believe that you could overthrow capitalism along the road of gradual reforms, parliamentary elections, or legislation in the framework of bourgeois institutions. The victory of socialist revolution presupposes not only collective ownership of the means of production, but also destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus—i.e. of the apparatus of repression directed against the great mass of the people. The essence of a workers state, i.e. of a dictatorship of the proletariat, is for Lenin not any "totalitarian" nightmare of the 1984 type, but, as described in *State and Revolution*, a democratically-centralised system of freely elected workers councils, which exercise simultaneously all legislative and executive functions, as the Paris Commune had done. For Lenin,

regime. It means full and unfettered enjoyment of freedom of the press, freedom of association and of demonstration for all and every group of toilers (and not only for a single party), as well as the material means to enjoy these freedoms. Even for the bourgeois classes, Lenin did not in principle rule out the right to enjoy democratic liberties under the dictatorship of the proletariat, but neither was he ready to guarantee this to them. In his opinion, this was a matter of relationship of forces, i.e. of the strength and violence of counter-revolutionary opposition to the victorious working class. As for the leading role of the party inside the Soviet institutions, this was for Lenin strictly a matter of political persuasion, of capacity to win the allegiance of the majority, and not at all a matter of systematic repression of all contending tendencies (Lenin admitted the necessity of such repression only under exceptional circumstances of civil war, when most of these tendencies were involved in open military violence against the revolutionary government).

### 5. The International

The theory of internationalism, the International being the only organisational form for the proletarian vanguard and for the workers states congruent with the needs of world economy and toiling mankind, produced by imperialism. That's why Lenin proclaims the need for a Third International the very day he recognises the Second International is dead. That's why he remained till his end a passionate defender of the right of self-determination of all nations. That is why he proclaimed the necessity of the independence of the Communist International from the Soviet State: no manoeuvre of that state (e.g. concluding a truce with German imperialism; making an alliance with the Kemalist state in Turkey, etc.) should imply any change of orientation by the Communist International from its line of preparing, favouring and assuring the best possible conditions for victory of proletarian revolutionary struggles everywhere. For the same reason, he opposed any attempt at russification of the non-Russian soviet republics, and considered the attitude of communists in imperialist countries towards national-liberation movements in the countries oppressed by their own bourgeoisie as a key-stone of internationalism.

### 6. Role of the Party

The theory of the political centralisation, through the revolutionary vanguard party, of all progressive democratic mass demands and mass movements, into a single flow towards a socialist revolution. —While Lenin developed that concept at a time when he did not yet accept the idea of the Russian revolution growing uninterruptedly over into a socialist revolution, he maintained it and extended it during the founding years of the Communist International, when he based all his thinking upon the strategy towards socialist world revolution.

This concept flows from a dialectical understanding of the stratification of the working class and the toiling masses into layers with different levels of consciousness and with different immediate interests, which have all to be united (inasmuch as they don't stand for counter-revolutionary causes) in order to make a mass revolution possible. It also flows from a deep understanding of the anti-democratic and reactionary nature of imperialism, which not only does

countries themselves the very conquests of the bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the past.

But contrary to opportunists of all kinds, Lenin's concept of uniting the struggle for democratic and the struggle for transitional demands did not mean in any way a dismissal or a subordination of the socialist goal to the wishes or prejudices of temporary "allies"; on the contrary, it was based on the firm belief that only the victorious socialist revolution could bring about a final and definite triumph of these democratic goals.

### 7. Democratic Centralism

The theory of the inner-party regime based upon democratic centralism, which does not only mean majority rule, the need of minorities to apply in practice majority decisions, but also full democratic rights of discussion inside the party, the right to form tendencies, to submit collective platforms to party congresses, to have them discussed on equal footing with the leadership proposals before congresses, to full and impartial information of the membership about political differences which crop up in the organisation, etc., etc. This was the way the Bolshevik Party and the Communist International functioned in Lenin's lifetime. It is indicative of the gulf which separates Leninism from the bureaucratic centralism applied today in the USSR and Eastern Europe that the hesitant attempt of the Czechoslovak CP leadership to return in 1968 to some of these Leninist norms in a new draft statute for the XIVth Congress of the Party was seized upon furiously as a sign of "rightist anti-socialist tendencies" inside that party by Brezhnev & Co.

Already before Lenin's death, many, if not all, of these basic tenets of Leninism were beginning to be challenged by the new Stalinist leadership inside the CPSU and the Communist International. Lenin's last struggle was a desperate attempt to stop this perversion of his doctrine. This revisionism was, obviously, not a purely ideological phenomenon. It reflected a deep-going social shift inside Russian post-revolutionary society and inside the CPSU.

On the basis of the growing passivity of the Russian working class—resulting from the backwardness of the country and from the temporary retreat of world revolution—a privileged bureaucratic layer monopolised the exercise of power and the administration of the state and the economy. It ruthlessly subordinated the party into an apparatus defending its own particular interests, if necessary against the historic and immediate interests of world revolution and of the Russian working class itself. Stalinism was the only ideological expression of the rise of that parasitic caste. It is the very antithesis of Leninism, the proletarian doctrine of socialist revolution.

### Lenin's Heritage

The Left Opposition around Trotsky, and later the Fourth International, maintained and enriched the heritage of Leninism in the years of reaction and of receding world revolution. These are now superseded again by a new epoch of rising world revolution. A growing number of workers, revolutionary students and intellectuals, and poor peasants, understand the validity of Leninism and participate in the building of new revolutionary parties on a world-wide basis. The future belongs to Leninism. That's why it belongs to the Fourth International.



## Essence of Bolshevism

Trotsky wrote this passionate defence of Leninism in 1923 when Lenin was dying and when his revolutionary heritage was being transformed into a series of lifeless formulae at the service of a bureaucratic power growing in strength in the Soviet party and state. This is an extract from Trotsky's book *The New Course* which first revealed the concern he had previously expressed only to Lenin and his closest comrades about the direction in which the Revolution was moving. The publication of *The New Course* precipitated a struggle which marked a dividing line in the Russian Revolution and which is continued today by revolutionary Marxists against the reactionary Soviet bureaucracy.

Marxism is a method of historical analysis, of political orientation, and not a mass of decisions prepared in advance. Leninism is the application of this method in the conditions of an exceptional historical epoch. It is precisely this union of the peculiarities of the epoch and the method that determines that courageous, self-assured policy of *brusque turns* of which Lenin gave us the finest models and which he illumined theoretically and generalised on more than one occasion.

Marx said that the advanced countries show, to a certain extent, the backward countries the image of their future. Out of this conditional proposition an effort was made to set up an absolute law which was, at bottom, at the basis of the "philosophy" of Russian Menshevism. By means of it, limits were fixed for the proletariat, flowing not from the course of the revolutionary struggle but from a mechanical pattern, and Menshevik Marxism was and remains solely the expression of the needs of bourgeois society, an expression adapted to a belated "democracy". In reality, it turned out that Russia, joining in its economy and its politics extremely contradictory phenomena, was the first to be pushed upon the road of the proletarian revolution.

Neither October, nor Brest-Litovsk, nor the creation of a regular peasant army, nor the system of requisitioning food products, nor the NEP, nor the State Planning Commission, were or could have been foreseen or predetermined by pre-October Marxism or Bolshevism. All these facts and turns were the result of the independent, critical application, marked by the spirit of initiative, of the methods of Bolshevism in situations that differed in each case.

Every one of these decisions, before being adopted, provoked struggles. The simple appeal to tradition never decided anything. As a matter of fact, with each new task and at each new turn, it is not a question of searching in tradition and discovering there a non-existing

reply, but of profiting from all the experience of the party to find by oneself a new solution suitable to the situation and, by doing so, enriching tradition. It may even be put more sharply: Leninism consists in being courageously free from conservative retrospection, from being bound by precedent, purely formal references and quotations.

Every time objective conditions demand a new turn, a bold about-face, creative initiative, conservative resistance betrays a natural tendency to counterpose the "old traditions", and what is called Old Bolshevism, but is in reality the empty husk of a period just left behind, to the new tasks, to the new conditions, to the new orientation.

The more ingrown the party apparatus, the more imbued it is with the feeling of its own intrinsic importance, the slower it reacts to needs emanating from the ranks and the more inclined it is to set formal tradition against new needs and tasks. And if there is one thing likely to strike a mortal blow to the spiritual life of the party and to the doctrinal training of the youth, it is certainly the transformation of Leninism from a method demanding for its application initiative, critical thinking and ideological courage into a canon which demands nothing more than interpreters appointed for good and aye.

Leninism cannot be conceived of without theoretical breadth, without a critical analysis of the material bases of the political process. The weapon of Marxian investigation must be constantly sharpened and applied. It is precisely in this that tradition consists, and not in the substitution of a formal reference or of an accidental quotation. Least of all can Leninism be reconciled with ideological superficiality and theoretical slovenliness.

Leninism cannot be chopped up into quotations suited for every possible case, because for Lenin the formula never stands higher than the reality; it is always the tool that makes it possible to grasp the reality and to dominate it. It would not be hard to find in Lenin dozens and hundreds of passages which, formally speaking, seem to be contradictory. But what must be seen is not the formal relationship of one passage to another, but the real relationship of each of them to the concrete reality in which the formula was introduced as a lever. The Leninist truth is always concrete!

As a system of revolutionary action, Leninism presupposes a revolutionary sense sharpened by reflection and experience which in the social realm, is equivalent to the muscular sensation in physical labour. But revolutionary sense cannot be confused with demagogical flair. The latter may yield ephemeral successes, sometimes even sensational ones. But it is a political instinct of an inferior type. It always leans toward the line of least resistance. Leninism, on the other hand, seeks to pose and

resolve the fundamental revolutionary problems, to overcome the principal obstacles; its demagogical counterpart consists in evading the problems, in creating an illusory appeasement, in lulling critical thought to sleep.

Leninism is, first of all, realism, the highest qualitative and quantitative appreciation of reality, from the standpoint of revolutionary action. Precisely because of this it is irreconcilable with the flight from reality behind the screen of hollow agitationism, with the passive loss of time, with the haughty justification of yesterday's mistakes on the pretext of saving the tradition of the party.

Leninism is genuine freedom from formalistic prejudices, from moralising doctrinalism, from all forms of intellectual conservatism attempting to bind the will to revolutionary action. But to believe that Leninism signifies that "anything goes" would be an irreparable mistake. Leninism includes the morality, not formal but genuinely revolutionary, of mass action and the mass party. Nothing is so alien to it as reactionary-arrogance and bureaucratic cynicism. A mass party has its own morality, which is the bond of fighters in and for action. Demagogy is irreconcilable with the spirit of a revolutionary party because it is deceitful: by presenting one or another simplified solution of the difficulties of the hour, it inevitably undermines the next future, weakens the party's self-confidence. Swept by the wind and gripped by a serious danger, demagogy easily dissolves into panic. It is hard to juxtapose, even on paper, panic and Leninism.

Leninism is warlike from head to foot. War is impossible without cunning, without subterfuge, without deception of the enemy. Victorious war cunning is a constituent element of Leninist politics. But at the same time, Leninism is supreme revolutionary honesty toward the party and the working class. It admits of no fiction, no bubble-blowing, no pseudo-grandeur!

Leninism is orthodox, obdurate, irreducible, but it does not contain so much as a hint of formalism, canon, nor bureaucratism. In the struggle, it takes the bull by the horns. To make out of the tradition of Leninism a supra-theoretical guarantee of the infallibility of all the words and thoughts of the interpreters of these traditions, is to scoff at genuine revolutionary tradition and transform it into official bureaucratism. It is ridiculous and pathetic to try to hypnotise a great revolutionary party by the repetition of the same formulae, according to which the right line should be sought not in the essence of each question, not in the methods of posing and solving this question, but in information...of a biographical character.

### ECONOMISM & SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

Published in Stuttgart in March 1902, *What is to be Done?* remains a very useful book for revolutionaries, perhaps at this period in Britain more useful than *Left Wing Communism*. It was written four years after the foundation of the Social Democratic Party in Russia and contains a development of Lenin's ideas on the way forward as expressed in an article in *Iskra* in 1901 called "Where to Begin". It is also part polemic, since at this time there was a split in the Social Democratic movement. The two factions found their expression in *Iskra*, Lenin's newspaper and *Rabocheye Dyelo* ("Workers' Cause") which was the newspaper of the Economists. The Union of Russian Social Democrats abroad was split and the name was under the control of the Economists. An attempt at unity was made in 1901 and, although a preliminary agreement on principles had been made in June, *Rabocheye Dyelo* no. 10 dispelled any hopes there may have been in this direction. Its editorial turned clearly to Economism and it ensured the failure of the Unity conference at the end of the year—the *Iskra* delegates saw the paper just before the opening of the conference. It was against this background that Lenin produced *What is to be Done?*. It is a book still well worth studying, because here in Britain we have not resolved all of the debates that agitated the Social Democratic movement in Russia at that time. It also presents the opportunity to deal en route with some criticisms of Leninism, which claim that conditions such as "the democratic society we live in" or "the advanced nature of the proletariat in western democratic society" make Leninism no longer applicable or which outrightly reject Leninism as inherently anti-democratic.

### TRADE UNION CONSCIOUSNESS & REVOLUTIONARY CONSCIOUSNESS

The late 1890s was a period of great upsurge for the working-class movement in Russia. Everywhere the workers were on the move. What, however, would this spontaneous upsurge produce by itself? Lenin gave the answer: trade union consciousness. Not entirely economic consciousness, since even trade union politics must occasionally spill over into the political field in defence of trade union rights. It would produce essentially defensive politics, however; politics which were capable of being encompassed by the bourgeoisie. In Britain we can see that the Labour Party was such a structure; a product of the realisation by the working class that they had to intervene at times in the political field to defend their industrial rights. But this type of political intervention is a far cry from revolutionary politics and from the independent politics of the proletariat. What was necessary in Russia at the turn of the century was to shake the working class out of the rut of narrow trade union politics. It could not accomplish this change under its own auspices, however, for the narrow confines of its daily experience restricted it to trade unionism. An outside agency was required, and Lenin discovered this agency in the revolutionary intelligentsia, traditional bearer and progenitor of socialist ideas. It was the duty of this intelligentsia to assist the proletariat by fusing the ideas of Marxism with the movement of the working class to produce a revolutionary party capable of harnessing the elemental spontaneous destructive power of the class to the task of revolution.

The adherents of *Rabocheye Dyelo* were thus quite wrong to be proud of their nearness to the concrete, to the drab ongoing economic struggle, and to deride *Iskra* for its abstractness and its intellectuality. Instead of being close to the masses, what they were in effect doing was adjusting themselves to the most sluggish sectors

of the masses, tailing the working class movement instead of being in its vanguard. They were in fact renouncing socialism and embracing reformist unionist politics. There were of course quarrels between themselves and Lenin on the question of organisation, for an emphasis on the economic struggle did not need a strong party. Lenin argued that it was necessary for the intelligentsia not to merge itself with the union struggle, but to broaden rather than narrow its activities, to combat Tsarism in all its aspects. Lenin wanted a broad political struggle, "inasmuch as this oppression affects the most diverse classes of society, inasmuch as it manifests itself in the most varied spheres of life and action—vocational, civic, personal, family, religious, scientific, etc. etc.—is it not evident that we shall not be fulfilling our task of developing the political consciousness of the workers if we do not undertake the organisation of the political exposure of the autocracy in all its aspects?"

There are many parallels to be drawn between Lenin's analysis here and present-day politics in Britain. One can see that to be an intellectual has its own role in the class struggle and that workerism, far from being a healthy transformation of the bourgeois into the proletariat, is in fact an evasion, an abandonment of the struggle's prime tasks. The workers have no need of "super-militants" imported from the "superior human material" of the bourgeoisie. They are quite capable of organising their day-to-day economic defence themselves. What is needed is a qualitative break with reformist politics, to build an organisation capable of raising its nose above the grim daily struggle to confront the theoretical tasks of taking power; and it's in helping to build this revolutionary organisation that the tasks of the intelligentsia lie. A structure has its own logic, which is why it is inane to talk of the betrayal of socialism by the Labour Party, for it wasn't constructed with the aim of taking power.

### THE COLLECTIVE ORGANISER

The closing sections of *What is to be Done?* concern the question of building an all-Russian revolutionary newspaper, which would be a collective organiser. The debate took place against a background where there were many small study circles, whose activities were badly in need of coordination. Often for them all to produce newspapers was costly in labour time and hazardous since it was relatively easy for the Tsarist police to track down the producers. Lenin argued for an all-Russian newspaper, which would be secretly organised and which could provide continuity and coordination to local isolated groups. The section is interesting since there is relatively little available on the relationship of an organisation and its press. It is important not to transfer this debate artificially from the context in which it originated. It is worth noting, however, the reaction of the advocates of local newspapers, who argued that what the working class needed was details of what was happening in their locality because this is what would be of interest to them. This approach accorded well with the Economists' perspective of being totally involved in the ongoing economic

struggle. They compared their own concrete approach favourably with *Iskra's* abstractions. Lenin argued that just the opposite was true. The working class did not need to be distracted by trivialities but needed a picture of the most significant and most typical events nationally and internationally.

### THE VANGUARD PARTY

Lenin insisted on the need to build a professional organisation, including full-time trained cadres. It had to be a vanguard organisation with a strictly controlled membership. This control has led to more objections to Leninism on the grounds that it is undemocratic and even sectarian to practise this control. It is, however, control not for abstract reasons but for the very reason of the structure of the working class itself. That class is not a homogenous whole in consciousness but contains widely differing layers. This unevenness makes it necessary to build the vanguard party, whose membership is strictly controlled. To build an organisation with a loose membership policy would result in an organisation which was not able to take clear theoretical decisions through its containing within its ranks too many diverse strands of consciousness. It would in fact be unable to achieve unity in action, which is one of the prerequisites of proletarian politics under all conditions clandestine and open. To make revolution the organisation must be a union at the highest level, a Bolshevik organisation, of a lifetime and total commitment to making revolution. It will not be undemocratic so long as it is responsive to the real changes in consciousness of the working class and changes in the vanguard sectors. Indeed one of the methods by which the bureaucratic decay in the Soviet Union was accomplished was not by the restriction of membership of the Communist Party but by a flooding of that party with new recruits by Stalin, which altered the nature of the party.

### ORGANISATION & LEGALITY

In the autocratic conditions prevailing in Russia the need for a highly-disciplined party was particularly obvious. The working life of a revolutionary in the loosely-organised study circles was only a matter of months before being swept off to prison or exile. Lenin railed against the supporters of *Workers' Cause* for their failure to draw the necessary conclusions from these arrests and the consequent disruption of political work. One could question the need for such a party in the climate of bourgeois democracy. There are a great number of examples of what has happened to a party which has not been organised as a combat party, however—the Indonesian and Japanese Communist Parties to name two more recent examples. The bourgeoisie will adopt whatever means necessary to defend its dictatorship over the proletariat. "Western democracy" far from being the essence of its rule is just a form. The revolutionary party must be prepared to counter the worst that the capitalists can offer and must be organised as a combat party to counter any throwing aside of the veil of democracy to reveal naked bourgeois repressive power.

### LENINISM & DEMOCRACY

Lenin's ideas on organisation were not limited to operating clandestinely, however. The whole organisation of the bourgeoisie in the age of imperialism made it an essential for the working class to build a democratic centralist, internationalist, selective revolutionary organisation. Even under conditions where open activity has been possible, making it easy to observe the forms as well as the spirit of democratic centralism, objections have been raised to Leninist forms of organisation as anti-democratic. In part this represents a pessimistic view of the possibilities of a class working together for a common end. The bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie may have individual interests as well as their class interest, which have to be defended within institutions constructed for this purpose. For the proletariat, however, the forms of democracy become less important when faced by the prospect of real

democracy, of real political trust within the context of a common political purpose. Bourgeois and proletarian ideas of democracy are poles apart. The rule of the proletariat is soviet democracy, not parliamentary democracy or executive bureaucracy. It represents freedom to argue and discuss any issue, but having decided on a course then unity in action. These different ideas on democracy reflect the differing needs of the classes who practise them. The bourgeoisie's idea of democracy concerns agreement on only a framework within which the war of capital against capital can be conducted and the war of Capital *per se* against labour; the proletariat's agreement however is a total agreement affecting every sphere of its existence. It is true therefore that Leninist organisational forms are not democratic in the bourgeois sense. They were never intended to be, for the interests of the class they were designed to serve are quite different from those of the bourgeoisie. Democracy is not an end in itself, a moral value. Proletarian democracy is simply the best method for the proletariat to organise itself. It has no interest in being undemocratic, for it has no class to oppress. Indeed it must be democratic, for the vanguard of the class must work toward solidarity with the widest layers of the class, which it could not do if the interests of those layers were suppressed and stifled.

The other objection to Leninist forms of organisation is superficially an optimistic one, although in fact it springs from much the same roots as the first objection. This is that the proletariat has no need of such organisation. It can liberate itself by its own spontaneous efforts in a primeval force thrust against the regime. The first parts of *What is to be Done?* contain a part answer to this objection. The uneven nature of working-class consciousness makes it essential for the revolutionary intelligentsia and the most conscious layers of the class to build a party to serve the class, to help bring the class to a revolutionary consciousness. Without the preparation such an organisation will be able to make and without the coordination it will be able to give, spontaneous upsurges are likely to fail in the face of coordinated repression. The bourgeoisie has a universal strategy, coordinates its actions, has an organised military force at its disposal, and collaborates with other bourgeoisies. To combat the power of this class the proletariat must match and beat its coordination. The proletariat has to take its right to become a new ruling class. It cannot be given it. It actually has to build a new ruling structure within the womb of the old, capable of smashing through the shell at the decisive historical moment. What the objection to Leninism represents is an artificial lumpen bourgeois ideology foisted up upon the working class as undifferentiated. Bureaucracy is of course an ever-present danger, in the same way as defeat by the forces of reaction is a danger. That cannot be an excuse not to struggle, however, or to use the best weapons in the struggle, and one of those is the Leninist form of organisation. It would be quite wrong, too, to paint a picture of that form of organisation leading inevitably to bureaucratic decay. Stalinism, it is true, did follow the Bolshevik Party chronologically, but what that view misses out is that the whole of the leadership bar one either died, disappeared, or were liquidated. The bureaucratic degeneration in the Soviet Union was not at the hands of the Bolshevik Party. It represented the annihilation of that party after the defeat of the Left Opposition. Because of the weakness of the Russian proletariat after the Civil War and because of its own lack of preparedness for such an eventuality, the Bolshevik Party succumbed to the bureaucratic degeneration. This is not an argument for not building a new Bolshevik party, however; it's an argument for building a better one.

### THE ENGLISH PROLETARIAT

In fact the situation today is much more hopeful than in 1917 as far as the dangers of bureaucratic decay are concerned. The proletariat is more literate and more technically skilled. It would not be isolated if it made a revolution. It is not a minority class but on the contrary constitutes the majority of the population. Its sheer size has been the starting point for another rejection of Leninism, the theory that socialism could be achieved by a Parliamentary road. The numerical strength of the proletariat will only reach its full potential, however, when a revolutionary organisation exists to imbue the vanguard of the class with a realisation of the historic role of the class. The structure of Parliament not only does not further this consciousness but actively militates against it. It is in any case nothing when weighed against the bureaucratic and military power of the bourgeoisie.

The situation in Britain offers some hope to revolutionaries. Social democracy can no longer embrace the forward movements of the vanguard of the class. It can no longer even offer protection for the bargaining rights of the class which was its original *raison d'être*. Large sections of militants begin to fall away from the social democratic party to concentrate on defending their economic rights elsewhere. The political barriers of social democracy are falling down. This trade union consciousness will not, however, transcend itself. An organisation will have to be built that will be able to win these militants to revolutionary politics. Leninism, far from being outmoded in Britain is an essential prerequisite of successful political practice.

### LENINISM TODAY?

The early history of the building of the Bolshevik Party in Russia is not an experience which revolutionaries in Britain can afford to ignore. Many of the early struggles of that party represent problems that will have to be faced in Britain in one form or another. The degree of success with which those problems are met will be affected to a large extent by the theoretical preparation which has been made. The British Left has to confront the problem of independent proletarian politics, of building a structure which has one prime political task, to replace the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by the dictatorship of the proletariat. It must build an organisation founded on Leninist principles, an internationalist, democratic centralist political party. The struggle to build this organisation has to be conducted on several fronts, however. Revolutionaries do not only have to face the prospect of harassment by the agents of the bourgeoisie. They have to wage unremitting battle against any backsliding from revolutionary politics into the "drab economic struggle" in the name of concreteness and nearness to the masses. Moreover, they have to contend with the morass of confusion and disillusionment caused by the degeneration of the revolution in the Soviet Union; and the misuse to which the bureaucracy have put the theories and symbols of the revolution.

The bourgeoisie of course has not been slow to make use of the easy identification of socialism and Stalinism to confuse the British working class and make its liberation that much more difficult to attain. That confusion has made its presence felt in the ranks of the revolutionary and would-be revolutionary Left. To make use of spontaneous upsurges of feeling, an organisation must be built strong enough to know how to retreat as well as how to advance, and strong enough to counter disillusion between periods of upsurge. Some strands of the revolutionary Left, especially the student Left, fear this organisation, which would in fact be the solution of many of their problems both political and existential. They play the game of the bourgeoisie by equating organisation with bureaucracy, which if it were a true equation would present a very gloomy picture for the prospect of revolution. The best way to combat these fears and the fears of the working class itself is in practice, by building an organisation, founded on Leninist principles, a democratic centralist organisation, which will give the lie once and for all to the claim that Bolshevism means Stalinism, and give a living example of revolutionary politics in action.

Dave Kendall



WHAT IS TO BE DONE?



# CULTURE UNDER LENIN

## THE FEAST

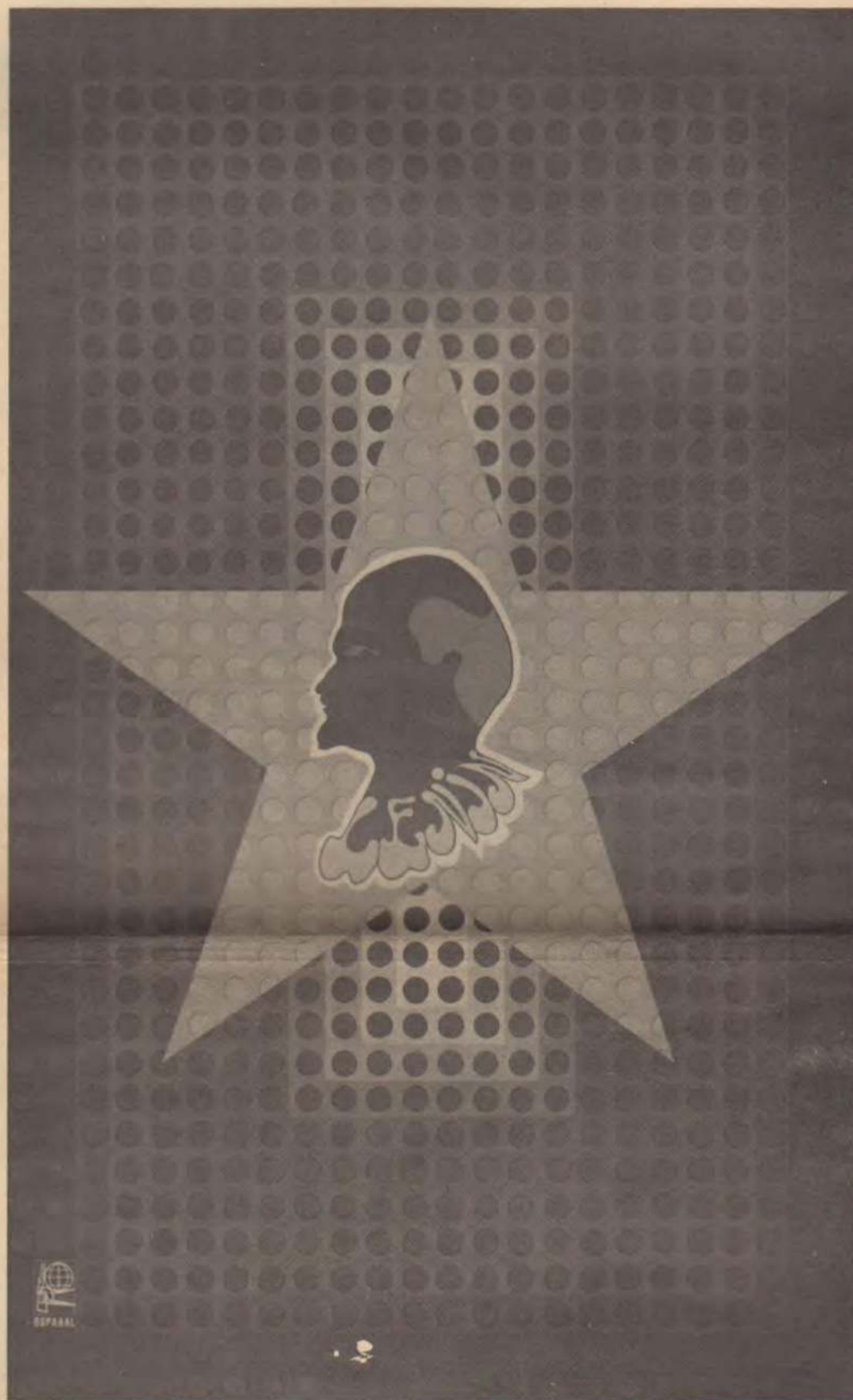
The revolution is a feast. A barbaric feast in which desires for possession and destruction are mixed. The new must be built, and there can be no delays and no compulsion. It is a feast of all or nothing: "What is the objective? To remake everything from the beginning. To make everything new; so that our lying, dirty, dull, ugly life becomes just, clean, gay and beautiful. When ideas such as these, hidden since time began in the hearts of men, in the popular soul, destroy the chains that were paralysing them and hurl themselves into a furious torrent, breaking the dykes, saving what remains of the banks, that is what is called revolution." (Blok).

At the dawn of the revolution the Bolshevik Party declared through its People's Commissar Lunacharsky: "Obviously the state has no intention of imposing revolutionary ideas or tastes by force on the artists. Such violence would only produce a bogus revolutionary art, for the first quality of true art lies in the sincerity of the artist." He categorically stated: "All creative individuals and groups should be allowed to develop freely." Thus it becomes clear that the intellectual movements did not suffer from the revolution. On the contrary, movements such as the Linguistic Circle of Moscow, the Futurists and the adherents of Proletkult benefited from new facilities and liberties.

The freedom given to the artistic movements did not prevent the Bolsheviks from expressing their opinions. Those of Lenin concerning the Proletkult are particularly interesting, for they reveal a whole series of problems. Lunacharsky reports in the following terms what Lenin thought of this cultural movement: "There are quite strong divergences between him and me concerning the Proletkult. One day he criticised me very severely. I must say that Vladimir Ilitch did not all deny the importance of the workers' circles, or of the writers and painters who are emerging from the proletariat. But he was afraid that these organisations would tend to concentrate on the creation of a proletarian science, of a general proletarian culture. Lenin thought that this was, first, completely untimely and beyond their forces; second, that these premature inventions would draw the workers away from study, from acquiring what was already known about science or culture; finally he was afraid, not without reason, that some political deviation might appear in the Proletkult. He was hostile for example to the considerable role A. Bogdanov was playing." In some ways the Proletkult was the logical culmination of A. Bogdanov's idealist theories, against which Lenin had fought between 1905 and 1917. The worship of the proletariat (Proletkult easily reverses itself into "cult of the proletariat") is perceptible in some of the writings of Lunacharsky. Lenin attacked the content of the Proletkult in these terms: "Away with the invention of a proletarian culture. What we need is the *development* of the best models, traditions and results of the *existing* culture from the point of view of the Marxist conception of the world and of the conceptions of the conditions of life and struggle of the proletariat at the time of its dictatorship." But by continuing to use the phrase "proletarian culture", Lenin shows that he is not aware of the ideology implied in the expression itself. Trotsky is more clear-sighted when he says: "The opponents of proletarian culture maintained that the dictatorship of the proletariat is quite definitely transitional; that the proletariat, unlike the bourgeoisie, does not intend to dominate for a long historical period." The phrase "proletarian culture" is part of a theoretical system which would involve the eternalisation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is to say of the State.

## CONSTRUCTION

These criticisms of certain artistic and cultural movements certainly did not mean that the Feast was interrupted. The Bolsheviks destroyed the bourgeois school: "The old school, the official school which you did not like, which you hated and which had no contacts with you, no longer exists." First of all, they abolished the diplomas, those barriers which in fact endorsed nothing more than social differences. They also abolished a sterile and restrictive institution: the Academy. At the same time they allocated all artistic and educational activities to Lunacharsky's Commissariat, which was given a considerable



a "democratically run social and educational commune, a prefiguration of the future classless Republic". In this school the "principle of satisfying all the children's needs by the children themselves" was to be applied. The Russian teachers actively collaborated in creating this new type of school, and recommended that: "the free school should really be free; and it would be free only if it was independent both from bourgeois and from proletarian politics... It should be a school for free and creative human beings." Two official declarations published in 1918 expressed the same general view. Confident in the creativity and natural goodness of children, the educators wanted to have the young generation go through the whole experience of humanity. This gigantic optimism was shared by Krupskaya, Lunacharsky and also by Lenin, who wrote to a scientific populariser: "This is good work! This is an example of the way to educate the ignorant Russian, by *beginning at the beginning*, and teaching him not a half-science, but *science as a whole*." The structure of the Russian school was to allow, not a half-baked ingurgitation of knowledge, but a "creation" of knowledge.

## DEGENERATION

In the feasts of the Middle Ages, the clown and the bishop changed places, but for only one day; the next day everything was the same as before. What if, in Russia after 1917, everything was to be the same as before...

that followed from the war made the rebuilding of the country necessary. Slowly the Bolshevik Party had taken over the levers of the state. The proletarian dictatorship turned out to be the dictatorship of a party. Yet the task that the Bolsheviks had set themselves to was to turn each worker into the leader of his own revolution: "We have to raise systematically the level of popular culture in order progressively to bring everyone into the common task of government." Cultural backwardness was all the more disturbing as the peasants, now owners of their land, were becoming a political force which could be used by the counter-revolutionaries. The gap between the vanguard and the peasant masses constituted the weak point of the Russian revolution. Profiting by this weakness, a layer of civil servants could monopolise the key posts of the State apparatus and give birth to an oppressive bureaucracy. From the beginning of the soviet era, the Bolsheviks were preoccupied by this question. For them it was of course the result of "an insufficient culture of the masses, the ignorance and timidity of the backward elements in the towns and especially in the country."

Thus, it was as a result of this practical situation that the Soviet authorities appealed to the intellectuals and the artists. Their tasks were propaganda, political agitation and the education of the masses. Lenin proposed "to paint revolutionary slogans on buildings, fences and all places generally used for posters." Art

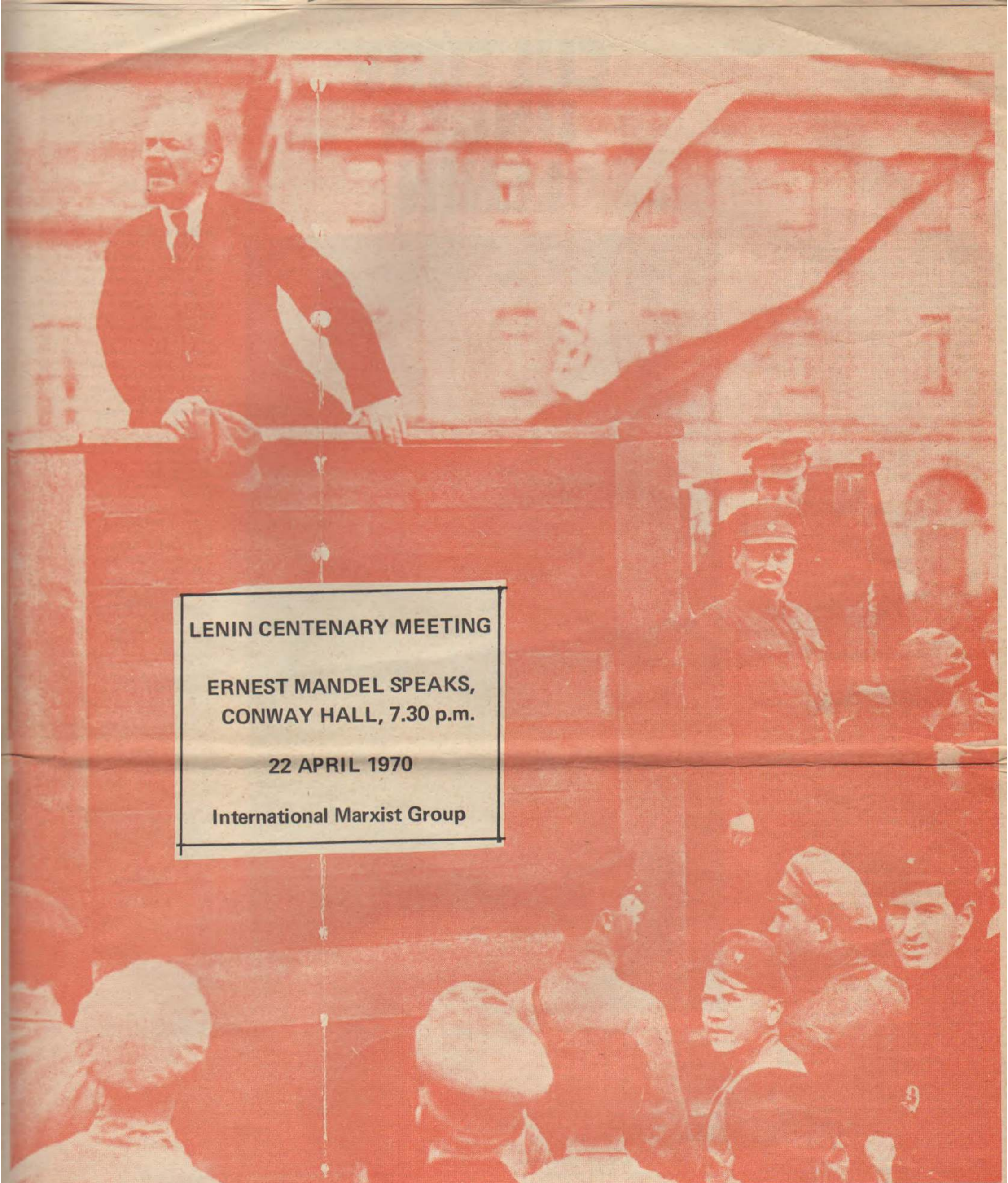
imposed on the artists. In 1908 when the question of Gorki working for *Proletarian* made clear to Lunacharsky: "If he is occupied with important and serious work, and that would suffer from being interrupted for the paper, for journalism, it would be foolish and criminal to disturb and distract him!" But after 1917 journalism was no longer a trifle; its role was considerable. Painter-poets became journalists, and waged the ideological and economic battle; Maiakovski worked on Rosta (the predecessor of *Tass*) and urged his colleagues to do likewise, in order to inform the workers of the state of the campaign. Some poets, like Essenine, did not participate in the work of reconstruction but were perhaps regretting the Feast.

The Soviet schools also suffered from the consequences of the political and economic situation. Considerable financial efforts were made for them, and the number of primary schools increased from 52,274 in 1917/18 to 62,238 in 1918/19. Through the schools the masses acquired culture and thus were able to govern the country and develop its productive forces: "Thus, all the products of science and art which were created through the exploitation of the working class, are returned back, return gradually to their real owners." Lenin, addressing the Praesidium of the Conference of the Proletarian Organisation for Education and Culture (17th September 1918) stated: "The workers have not yet sufficient culture, and they are often far too ignorant for the question of pushing the workers to take over the state for themselves. Fight for the comrades! The proletarian organisations for education and culture must contribute to this."

But Russian industrial backwardness prevented the Bolsheviks to adopt highly specialised methods of work (Taylorism). It was not until 1920 that this policy was adopted. He wrote in 1919: "The Republic must, at all costs, make the most precious conquests of science and technology. We will be able to achieve this only to the extent that we succeed in concentrating the power of the soviets and the soviet system of administration with the latest progress of capitalism. We must organise the study and teaching of Taylor's system in Russia." At the Session of the Executive Central Committee (April 29th, 1918), Lenin's line met with opposition on this point, but still triumphed. His line ran counter to much of the educational system being elaborated in the schools. The introduction of these politics in the schools, the illusion of their becoming immediately a communist micro-society vanished: "During the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat that is to say during the period when conditions are being created which will make the realisation of communism possible, the means must be not only a means for propagating communist principles in general, but also a means for the proletariat to spread its educational moral influence." In spite of this, Lenin attempted to combine the introduction of these school policies and Taylorism with the principle of the school as a communist micro-society, and with the education of the total man. In some notes on Nadejda Krupskaya's thesis, he said, "We should pay attention to carpenters... who will know their job well and will be able to become skilled workers, and have been trained for that, but *do it in such a way that they will have a broad general education* and possess a minimum of basic knowledge in a number of sciences... He should be a communist. He should have access to different skills and techniques." The social situation in Russia forced a modification and bending of the principles worked out in the enthusiasm of the victory. Socialism had to be built slowly and the Party must safeguard the interests of the people.

## END OF THE STORY

The Bolshevik Party engaged the Revolution on a slippery slope of contradictions which forced it into very dangerous tactics. These tactics meant that the Party dominated everything, in particular the schools, and through the schools culture. When the Party degenerated, culture was reduced to being only the periphery of bourgeois culture, for academics substituted socialist realism. Original talents were denounced as "formalist". In 1925 Essenine became the first in a line of poets committed suicide. In 1926 his example was followed by Andre M. Sobol, poet and commissar.



**LENIN CENTENARY MEETING**

**ERNEST MANDEL SPEAKS,  
CONWAY HALL, 7.30 p.m.**

**22 APRIL 1970**

**International Marxist Group**

**subscribe or die**

Please send me THE RED MOLE for the next 6/12 months.  
I enclose P.O./cheque/cash for £1/£2.

Name .....

Address .....

Occupation .....

THE RED MOLE, 182 Pentonville Road, London N1.  
Telephone: 01-837 6954, 01-278 2616

Foreign subs: Asia/Africa/Australia/N.&S. America: £5 per  
year (airmail); £3 per year (ordinary).

W. Europe: £3 per year.

"WE RECOGNISE OUR OLD FRIEND, OUR OLD MOLE,  
WHO KNOWS SO WELL HOW TO WORK UNDERGROUND,  
SUDDENLY TO APPEAR: THE REVOLUTION."—MARX

EDITORIAL BOARD

