

# The Political Strategy and Tactics of the Russian Communists

## *Synopsis of a Pamphlet*

*July, 1921*

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Source : *Works*, Vol. 5, 1921 - 1923

Publisher : Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954

Transcription/Markup : Salil Sen for MIA, 2008

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## I

### Definition of Terms and Subject of Investigation

- 1) *The limits of operation of political strategy and tactics, their field of application.* If it is granted that the proletarian movement has two sides, objective and subjective, then the field of operation of strategy and tactics is undoubtedly limited to the subjective side of the movement. The *objective* side comprises the processes of development which take place outside of and around the proletariat independently of its will and of the will of its party, *processes* which, in the final analysis, determine the development of the whole of society. The *subjective* side comprises the processes which take place within the proletariat as the reflection in the consciousness of the proletariat of the objective processes, accelerating or retarding the latter, but not determining them.
- 2) The Marxist *theory*, which primarily studies objective processes in their development and decline, defines the trend of development and points to the class or classes which are inevitably rising to power, or are inevitably falling, which must fall.
- 3) The Marxist *programme*, based on deductions from the theory, defines the aim of the movement of the rising class, in the present case the proletariat, during a certain period in the development of capitalism, or during the whole of the capitalist period (the minimum programme and the maximum programme).
- 4) *Strategy*, guided by the programme, and based on a calculation of the contending forces, internal (national) and international, defines the *general route*, the *general direction*, in which the revolutionary proletarian movement must be guided with a view to achieving the greatest results under the incipient and developing relation of forces. In conformity with this it outlines a plan of the disposition of the forces of the proletariat and of its allies on the social front (*general disposition*). "Outlining a plan of the disposition of forces" must not be confused with the actual (concrete and practical) operation of disposing, allocating the forces, which is carried out jointly by tactics and strategy. That does not mean that strategy is limited to defining the route and outlining a plan of the disposition of the fighting forces in the proletarian camp; on the contrary, it directs the struggle and introduces corrections in current tactics during the whole period of a turn, making skilful use of the available reserves, and manoeuvring with the object of supporting the tactics.
- 5) *Tactics*, guided by strategy and by the experience of the revolutionary movement at home and in neighbouring countries, taking into account at every given moment the state of forces within the proletariat and its allies

(higher or lower level of culture, higher or lower degree of organisation and political consciousness, existing traditions, forms of the movement, forms of organisation, *main* and *auxiliary*), and also in the enemy's camp, taking advantage of disharmony or any confusion in the enemy's camp—indicate such *definite ways* of winning the broad masses to the side of the revolutionary proletariat and of placing them in their fighting positions on the social front (in fulfilment of the plan for the disposition of forces outlined in the strategic plan) as will most surely prepare the success of strategy. In conformity with this, they issue or change the Party's slogans and directives.

6) *Strategy* alters at turns, radical changes, in history; it embraces the period from one turn (radical change) to another. Hence, it directs the movement towards the general objective that covers the interests of the proletariat during the whole of this period. Its aim is to *win the war* of classes that is waged during the whole of this period and, therefore, it remains unchanged during this period.

*Tactics*, on the other hand, are determined by the flows and ebbs on the basis of the given turn, the given strategic period, by the relation of the contending forces, by the forms of the struggle (movement), by the *tempo* of the movement, by the arena of the struggle at each given moment, in each given district. And since these factors change in conformity with the conditions of place and time during the period from one turn to another, tactics, which do not cover the whole war, but only individual battles, that lead to the winning or loss of the war, change (may change) several times in the course of the strategic period. A strategic period is longer than a tactical period. Tactics are subordinate to the interests of strategy. Speaking generally, tactical successes prepare for strategic successes. The function of tactics is to lead the masses into the struggle in such a way, to issue such slogans, to lead the masses to new positions in such a way, that the struggle should, in sum, result in the winning of the war, i.e., in strategic success. But cases occur when a tactical success frustrates, or postpones, strategic success. In view of this, it is necessary, in such cases, to forgo tactical successes.

Example. The agitation against the war that we conducted among the workers and soldiers at the beginning of 1917, under Kerensky, undoubtedly resulted in a tactical setback, for the masses dragged our speakers off the platforms, beat them up, and sometimes tore them limb from limb; instead of the masses being drawn into the Party, they drew away from it. But in spite of the tactical setback, this agitation brought nearer a big strategic success, for the masses soon realised that we were right in agitating against the war, and later this hastened and facilitated their going over to the side of the Party. Or again. The Comintern's demand for a dissociation from the Reformists and Centrists in conformity with the twenty-one conditions, <sup>1</sup> undoubtedly involves a certain tactical setback for it deliberately reduces the number of "supporters" of the Comintern and temporarily weakens the latter; but it leads to a big strategic gain by ridding the Comintern of unreliable elements, which will undoubtedly strengthen the Comintern, will weld its ranks more closely, i.e., will enhance its power generally.

7) *Agitation slogan* and *action slogan*. These must not be confused. It is dangerous to do so. In the period from April to October 1917, the slogan "All power to the Soviets" was an *agitation* slogan; in October it became an *action* slogan—after the Central Committee of the Party, at the beginning of October (October 10), adopted the decision on the "seizure of power." In its action in Petrograd in April, the Bagdatyev group was guilty of such a confusion of slogans.

8) *Directive* (general) is a direct call for action, at a *certain time* and in a *certain place*, binding upon the Party. The slogan "All power to the Soviets" was a propaganda slogan at the beginning of April (the "theses" <sup>2</sup>); in June it became an *agitation* slogan; in October (October 10) it became an *action* slogan; but at the end of October it became an immediate *directive*. I am speaking of a general directive for the whole Party, having in mind that there must also be local directives detailing the general directive.

9) *Vacillation of the petty bourgeoisie* especially during intensification of political crises (in Germany during the Reichstag elections, in Russia under Kerensky in April, in June and in August, and again in Russia during the Kronstadt events, 1921 <sup>3</sup>); this must be carefully studied, taken advantage of, taken into account, but to yield to it would be dangerous, fatal to the cause of the proletariat. Agitation slogans must not be changed because of such vacillation, but it is permissible, and sometimes necessary, to change or postpone a particular *directive*, and, perhaps, also a slogan (*of action*). Changing tactics "overnight" means precisely changing a *directive*, or even an

*action slogan*, but not an agitation slogan. (Cf. the calling off of the demonstration on June 9, 1917, and similar facts.)

10) The art of the *strategist* and *tactician* lies in skilfully and opportunely transforming an agitation slogan into an action slogan, and in moulding, also opportunely and skilfully, an action slogan into definite, concrete, *directives*.

## II Historic Turns in the Development of Russia

1) *The turn in 1904-05* (the Russo-Japanese war revealed the utter instability of the autocracy on the one hand, and the might of the proletarian and peasant movement, on the other) and Lenin's book *Two Tactics* <sup>4</sup> as the strategic plan of the Marxists corresponding to this turn. A turn towards the bourgeois-democratic revolution (*this was the essence of the turn*). Not a bourgeois-liberal deal with tsarism under the hegemony of the Cadets, but a bourgeois-democratic revolution under the hegemony of the proletariat. (*This was the essence of the strategic plan.*) This plan took as its starting point that the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia would give an impetus to the socialist movement in the West, would unleash revolution there and help Russia to pass from the bourgeois to the socialist revolution (see also Minutes of the Third Party Congress, Lenin's speeches at the congress, <sup>5</sup> and also his analysis of the concept of dictatorship both at the congress and in the pamphlet *The Victory of the Cadets* <sup>6</sup>). *A calculation of the contending forces, internal and international, and, in general, an analysis of the economics and politics of the period of the turn are essential.* The February Revolution marked the culmination of this period by carrying out at least two-thirds of the strategic plan outlined in *Two Tactics*.

2) *The turn in February-March 1917 towards the Soviet revolution* (the imperialist war, which swept away the autocratic regime, revealed the utter bankruptcy of capitalism and showed that a socialist revolution was absolutely inevitable as the only way out of the crisis).

Difference between the "glorious" *February* Revolution brought about by the people, the bourgeoisie and Anglo-French capital (*this* revolution, since it transferred power to the Cadets, caused no changes of any importance in the international situation, for it was a continuation of the policy of Anglo-French capital), and the October Revolution, which overturned everything.

*Lenin's "Theses"*—as the strategic plan corresponding to the new turn. Dictatorship of the proletariat as the way out. This plan took as its starting point that *"we shall begin the socialist revolution in Russia, overthrow our own bourgeoisie and in this way unleash the revolution in the West, and then the Western comrades will help us to complete our revolution."* It is essential to analyse the internal and international economics and politics of this turning-point period (the period of "dual power," coalition combinations, the Kornilov revolt as a symptom of the death of the Kerensky regime, unrest in Western countries due to discontent with the war).

3) *The turn in October 1917* (a turn not only in Russian, but in *world* history), establishment of the proletarian dictatorship in Russia (October-November-December 1917, and first half of 1918), *as a breach of the international social front, against world imperialism, which caused a turn towards the liquidation of capitalism and the establishment of the socialist order on a world scale*, and as opening the era of civil war in place of imperialist war (the Decree on Peace, the Decree on Land, the Decree on the Nationalities, publication of the secret treaties, programme of construction, Lenin's speeches at the Second Congress of Soviets, <sup>7</sup> Lenin's pamphlet *The Tasks of the Soviet Power*, <sup>8</sup> economic construction).

Make an all-round analysis of the difference between the strategy and tactics of communism when not in power, when in opposition and the strategy and tactics of communism when in power.

International situation: continuation of the war between the two imperialist cliques as a favourable condition (after the conclusion of the Brest Peace) for the existence and development of Soviet power in Russia.

4) *The course towards military operations against the interventionists (summer of 1918 to end of 1920)*, which began after the brief period of peaceful construction, i.e., after the Brest Peace. This course began after the Brest Peace, which reflected Soviet Russia's military weakness and emphasised the necessity of creating a Red Army in Russia to serve as the chief bulwark of the Soviet revolution. The hostile action of the Czechoslovaks, the occupation of Murmansk, Archangel, Vladivostok and Baku by Entente troops, and the Entente's declaration of war against Soviet Russia — all this definitely marked *the turn from incipient peaceful construction to military operations, to defence of the centre of the world revolution from attacks by internal and external enemies.* (Lenin's speeches on the Brest Peace, etc.) Since the social revolution was a long time coming and we were left to our own resources, especially after the occupation of the above-mentioned districts, which met with no serious protest on the part of the proletarians of the West, we were obliged to conclude the indecent Brest Peace in order to obtain a respite during which to build our Red Army and defend the Soviet Republic by our own efforts.

*"All for the front, all for the defence of the Republic."* Hence, *the setting up of the Council of Defence*, etc. This was the war period, which left its impress upon the whole of Russia's internal and external life.

5) *The course towards peaceful construction from the beginning of 1921*, after the defeat of Wrangel, peace with a number of bourgeois states, the treaty with Britain, etc.

The war is over, but as the Western Socialists are not yet able to help us to restore our economy, we, being economically encircled by industrially more developed bourgeois states, are compelled to grant concessions, to conclude trade agreements with individual bourgeois states and concession agreements with individual capitalist groups; in this (economic) sphere also we are left to our own resources, we are obliged to manoeuvre. *All for the restoration of the national economy.* (See Lenin's well-known speeches and pamphlets.) The Council of Defence is transformed into the Council of Labour and Defence.

6) The stages in the Party's development up to 1917:

a) *Welding of the main core, especially the "Iskra" group*, and so forth. Fight against Economism. The Credo.<sup>9</sup>

b) *Formation of Party cadres* as the basis of the future workers' party on an all-Russian scale (1895-1903). The Second Party Congress.

c) *The expansion of the cadres into a workers' party* and its reinforcement with new Party workers recruited in the course of the proletarian movement (1903-04). The Third Party Congress.

d) *The fight of the Mensheviks against the Party cadres with the object of dissolving the latter among the nonparty masses* (the "Labour Congress") and the fight of the Bolsheviks to preserve the Party cadres as the basis of the Party. The London Congress and defeat of the advocates of a Labour Congress.

e) *Liquidators and Party Supporters.* Defeat of the Liquidators (1908-10).

f) 1908-16 inclusive. *The period of the combination of illegal and legal forms* of activity and the growth of the Party organisations in all spheres of activity.

7) The Communist Party as a sort of *Order of Knights of the Sword* within the Soviet state, directing the organs of the latter and inspiring their activities.

The importance of the *old guard* within this powerful Order. *Reinforcement of the old guard* with new forces who have been steeled during the past three or four years.

Was Lenin right in waging an *uncompromising struggle against the conciliators*? Yes, for had he not done so, the Party would have been diluted and would have been not an organism, but a conglomeration of heterogeneous elements; it would not have been so welded and united internally; it would not have possessed that unexampled discipline and unprecedented flexibility without which it, and the Soviet state which it guides, could not have

withstood world imperialism. "The *Party becomes strong by purging itself*," rightly said Lassalle. Quality first and then quantity.

8) The question whether a proletarian party is needed or not, and of the role of the latter. The Party constitutes the officer corps and general staff of the proletariat, who direct the struggle of the latter in all its forms and in all spheres without exception, and combine the diverse forms of the struggle into one whole. To say that a Communist Party is not needed is equivalent to saying that the proletariat must fight without a general staff, without a leading core, who make a special study of the conditions of the struggle and work out the methods of fighting; it is equivalent to saying that it is better to fight without a general staff than with one, which is stupid.

### III Questions

1) *The role of the autocracy before and after the Russo-Japanese war.* The Russo-Japanese war exposed the utter rottenness and weakness of the Russian autocracy. The successful general political strike in October 1905 made this weakness absolutely clear (a colossus with feet of clay). Further, 1905 not only exposed the weakness of the autocracy, the feebleness of the liberal bourgeoisie and the might of the Russian proletariat, but also refuted the formerly current opinion that the Russian autocracy was the gendarme of Europe, that it was *strong enough to be* the gendarme of Europe. The facts showed that the Russian autocracy was unable to cope even with its own working class, without the aid of European capital. The Russian autocracy was, indeed, able to be the gendarme of Europe as long as the working class of Russia was dormant and as long as the Russian peasantry was quiescent, continuing to have faith in the Little Father, the tsar; but 1905, and above all the shooting on January 9, 1905, roused the Russian proletariat; and the agrarian movement in the same year undermined the muzhik's faith in the tsar. The centre of gravity of European counterrevolution shifted from the Russian landlords to the Anglo-French bankers and imperialists. The German Social-Democrats who tried to justify their betrayal of the proletariat in 1914 on the plea that the war was a progressive war against the Russian autocracy as the gendarme of Europe were actually making play with a shadow of the past, and playing dishonestly, of course, for the real gendarmes of Europe, who had sufficient forces and funds at their command to be gendarmes, were not in Petrograd, but in Berlin, Paris and London.

It now became clear to everybody that Europe was introducing into Russia not only socialism, but also counter-revolution in the shape of loans to the tsar, etc., whereas, in addition to political emigres, Russia was introducing revolution into Europe. (At all events, in 1905 Russia introduced the general strike into Europe as a weapon in the proletarian struggle.)

2) *"Ripeness of the fruit."* How is it possible to determine when the moment for revolutionary upheavals has arrived?

When is it possible to say that the "fruit is ripe," that the period of preparation has ended and that action can begin?

— a) When the revolutionary temper of the masses is brimming over and our *action slogans* and *directives* lag behind the movement of the masses (see Lenin's "For Going Into the Duma," the period before October 1905), when we restrain the masses with difficulty and not always successfully, for example, the Putilov workers and machine-gunners at the time of the July demonstrations in 1917 (see *Lenin's book "Left-Wing" Communism...* [10](#));

— b) When uncertainty and confusion, decay and disintegration in the enemy's camp have reached a climax; when the number of deserters and renegades from the enemy's camp grows by leaps and bounds; when the so-called neutral elements, the vast mass of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie, are beginning definitely to turn away from the enemy (from the autocracy or the bourgeoisie) and are seeking an alliance with the proletariat; when, as a result of all this, the enemy's organs of administration, together with the organs of suppression, cease to function, become paralysed and useless, etc., thus leaving the road open for the proletariat to exercise its right to seize power;



c) When both these factors (points a and b) coincide in time, which, actually, is what usually happens. Some people think that it is enough to note the *objective* process of extinction of the class in power in order to launch the attack. But that is wrong. In addition to this, the *subjective* conditions necessary for a successful attack must have been prepared. It is precisely the task of strategy and tactics skilfully and opportunely to make the preparation of the subjective conditions for attacks fit in with the objective processes of the extinction of the power of the ruling class.

3) *Choice of the moment.* Correct choice of the moment, in so far as the moment to strike is really chosen by the Party and not imposed by events, presupposes the existence of two conditions: a) "ripeness of the fruit," and b) some glaring event, action by the government or some spontaneous outburst of a local character that can serve as a *suitable reason*, obvious to the broad masses, for striking the first blow, for beginning the attack. Failure to observe these two conditions may mean that the blow will not only fail to serve as the starting point for general attacks of increasing scale and intensity upon the enemy, will not only fail to grow into a thundering, crushing blow (and that is precisely the meaning and purpose of the proper choice of the moment), but, on the contrary, may degenerate into a ludicrous putsch, which the government, and the enemy generally, will welcome and exploit to raise their prestige, and which may become a pretext and starting point for wrecking the Party, or in any case, for demoralising it. For example, the proposal made by a section of the Central Committee to arrest the Democratic Conference, <sup>11</sup> but rejected by the Central Committee because it failed to comply (*totally* failed to comply) with the second requirement (see above), was inappropriate from the standpoint of choice of the moment.

In general, care must be taken that the first blow (choice of the moment) does not turn into a putsch. To prevent this, it is essential that the two conditions indicated above are strictly observed.

4) *"Trial of strength."* Sometimes the Party, having made preparations for decisive actions and having accumulated, as it thinks, sufficient reserves, considers it expedient to undertake a trial action, to test the enemy's strength and to ascertain whether its own forces are ready for action. Such a trial of strength may be undertaken by the Party deliberately, by its own choice (the demonstration that it was proposed to hold on June 10, 1917, but was later called off and replaced by the demonstration on June 18), or may be forced upon it by circumstances, by premature action by the opposing side, or, in general, by some unforeseen event (the Kornilov revolt in August 1917 and the Communist Party's counteraction which served as a splendid trial of strength). A "trial of strength" must not be regarded merely as a demonstration, like a May Day demonstration; therefore, it must not be described merely as a *calculation of forces*; as regards its importance and possible results it is undoubtedly more than an ordinary demonstration, although less than an uprising—it is something between a demonstration and an uprising or a general strike. Under favourable circumstances it may develop into the first blow (choice of the moment), into an uprising (our Party's action at the end of October); under unfavourable circumstances it may put the Party in immediate danger of being wrecked (the demonstration of July 3-4, 1917). It is therefore most expedient to undertake a trial of strength when the "fruit is ripe," when the enemy's camp is sufficiently demoralised, when the Party has accumulated a certain number of reserves; briefly: when the Party is ready for an offensive, when the Party is not daunted by the possibility that circumstances may cause the trial of strength to become the first blow and then to become a general offensive against the enemy. When undertaking a trial of strength the Party must be ready for all contingencies.

5) *"Calculation of forces."* Calculation of forces is simply a demonstration which can be undertaken in almost any situation (for example, a May Day demonstration, with or without a strike). If a calculation of forces is not undertaken on the eve of an open upheaval, but at a more or less "peaceful" time, it can end at most in a skirmish with the government's police or troops, without involving heavy casualties for the Party or for the enemy. If, however, it is undertaken in the white-hot atmosphere of impending upheavals, it may involve the Party in a premature decisive collision with the enemy, and if the Party is still weak and unready for such collisions, the enemy can take advantage of such a "calculation of forces" to crush the proletarian forces (hence the Party's repeated appeals in September 1917: "don't allow yourselves to be provoked"). Therefore, in applying the method of a calculation of forces in the atmosphere of an already ripe revolutionary crisis, it is necessary to be very careful, and it must be borne in mind that if the Party is weak, the enemy can convert such a calculation into a weapon with which to defeat the proletariat, or at least, to weaken it seriously. And, on the other hand, if the

Party is ready for action, and the enemy's ranks are obviously demoralised, then, having begun a "calculation of forces," the opportunity must not be lost to pass on to a "trial of strength" (assuming that the conditions for this are favourable— "ripeness of fruit," etc.) and then to launch the general assault.

6) *Offensive tactics* (tactics of wars of liberation, when the proletariat has already taken power).

7) *Tactics of orderly retreat*. How skilfully to retreat into the interior in face of obviously superior enemy forces in order to save if not most of the army, then at least its cadres (see *Lenin's book "Left-Wing" Communism . . .*).

How we were the last to retreat, for example, during the boycott of the Witte-Dubasov Duma. The difference between tactics of retreat and "tactics" of flight (compare the Mensheviks).

8) *Defence tactics*, as a necessary means of preserving cadres and accumulating forces in anticipation of future battles. They impose on the Party the duty of taking up positions on all fields of the struggle without exception, of bringing all kinds of weapon, i.e., all forms of organisation, into proper order, not neglecting a single one of them, even the seemingly most insignificant, for nobody can tell in advance which field will be the first arena of battle, or which form of the movement, or form of organisation, will be the starting point and tangible weapon of the proletariat when the decisive battles open. In other words: in the period of defence and accumulation of forces, the Party must make itself fully prepared in anticipation of decisive battles. *In anticipation of battles...*

But this does not mean that the Party must wait with folded arms and become an idle spectator, degenerating from a revolutionary party (if it is in the opposition) into a wait-and-see party—no, in such a period it must avoid battles, not accept battle, *if it* has not yet accumulated the necessary amount of forces or if the situation is unfavourable for it, but *it must not miss a single opportunity*, under favourable conditions, of course, to force a battle upon the enemy when that is to the enemy's disadvantage, to keep the enemy in a constant state of tension, step by step to disorganise and demoralise his forces, step by step to exercise the proletarian forces in battles affecting the everyday interests of the proletariat, and in this way increase its own forces.

Only if this is done can defence be really *active* defence and the Party preserve all the attributes of a real *party of action* and not of a contemplative, wait-and-see party; only then will the Party avoid missing, overlooking, the moment for decisive action, avoid being taken unawares by events. The case of Kautsky and Co. overlooking the moment for the proletarian revolution in the West owing to their "wise" contemplative waiting tactics and still "wiser" passivity is a direct warning. Or again: the case of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries missing the opportunity to take power owing to their tactics of endless waiting on the questions of peace and land should also serve as a warning. On the other hand, it is also obvious that the tactics of active defence, the tactics of action, must not be abused, for that would create the danger of the Communist Party's tactics of revolutionary action being converted into tactics of "revolutionary" gymnastics, i.e., into tactics that lead not to the accumulating the forces of the proletariat and to their increased readiness for action, hence, not to the acceleration of the revolution, but to the dissipation of the proletarian forces, to the deterioration of their readiness for action, and hence, to retarding the cause of the revolution.

9) *The general principles of communist strategy and tactics*. There are three such principles:

a) The adoption, as a basis, of the conclusion, arrived at by Marxist theory and confirmed by revolutionary practice, that in capitalist countries the proletariat is the only completely revolutionary class, which is interested in the complete emancipation of mankind from capitalism and whose mission it is, therefore, to be the leader of all the oppressed and exploited masses in the struggle to overthrow capitalism. Consequently, all work must be directed towards the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

b) The adoption, as a basis, of the conclusion, arrived at by Marxist theory and confirmed by revolutionary practice, that the *strategy and tactics of the Communist Party of any country* can be correct only if they are not confined to the interests of "their own" country, "their own" fatherland, "their own" proletariat, but, on the contrary, if, while taking into account the conditions and situation in their own country, they make the interests of the international proletariat, the interests of the revolution in other countries, the corner-stone, i.e., if, in essence, in spirit, they are internationalist, if they do "the utmost possible in one (their own) country for the development, support and awakening of the revolution *in all countries*" (see *Lenin's book The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* [12](#) ).

c) The adoption, as a starting point, of the repudiation of all doctrinairism (Right and Left) when changing strategy and tactics, when working out new strategic plans and tactical lines (Kautsky, Axelrod, Bogdanov, Bukharin), repudiation of the contemplative method and the method of quoting texts and drawing historical parallels, artificial plans and lifeless formulas (Axelrod, Plekhanov); recognition that it is necessary to stand by the point of view of Marxism, not to "lie down on it," that it is necessary to "change" the world, not "merely to interpret" it, that it is necessary to lead the proletariat and be the conscious expression of the unconscious process, and not "contemplate the proletariat's rear" and drag at the tail of events (see *Lenin's "Spontaneity and Consciousness"* [13](#) and the well-known passage in *Marx's Communist Manifesto* [14](#) to the effect that the Communists are the most far-sighted and advanced section of the proletariat).

Illustrate each of these principles with facts from the revolutionary movement in Russia and in the West, especially the second principle, and the third.

#### 10) Tasks :

- a) *To win the vanguard of the proletariat to the side of communism* (i.e., build up cadres, create a Communist Party, work out the programme, the principles of tactics). Propaganda as the chief form of activity.
- b) *To win the broad masses of the workers and of the toilers generally to the side of the vanguard* (to bring the masses up to the fighting positions). Chief form of activity—practical action by the masses as a prelude to decisive battles.

#### 11) Rules :

- a) *Master all forms of organisation of the proletariat without exception and all forms* (fields) *of the movement, of the struggle.* (Forms of the movement: parliamentary and extra-parliamentary, legal and illegal.)
- b) *Learn to adapt oneself to rapid changes from some forms of the movement to others,* or to supplement some forms with others; learn to combine legal forms with illegal, parliamentary with extra-parliamentary forms (example: the Bolsheviks' rapid transition from legal to illegal forms in July 1917; combination of the extra-parliamentary movement with action in the Duma during the Lena events).

*The Communist Party's strategy and tactics before and after taking power.* Four specific features.

- a) *The most important* feature of the situation that arose in Europe in general, and in Russia in particular, after the October Revolution was the *breach of the international social front* (as a result of the victory over the Russian bourgeoisie) *in the region* of Russia carried out by the Russian proletariat (*rupture* with imperialism, *publication* of the secret treaties, civil war instead of imperialist war, the call to the troops to fraternise, the call to the workers to rise against their governments). That breach marked a *turn in world history*, for it directly menaced the entire edifice of international imperialism and radically changed the relation of the contending forces in the West in favour of the working class of Europe. This meant that the Russian proletariat and its Party changed from a *national* into an *international* force, and their former task of overthrowing their own national bourgeoisie was superseded by the new task of overthrowing the international bourgeoisie. Since the international bourgeoisie, sensing mortal danger, set itself the immediate task of *closing the Russian breach* and concentrated its unengaged forces (reserves) against Soviet Russia, the latter could not, in her turn, refrain from concentrating all her forces for defence, and was obliged to draw the main blow of the international bourgeoisie upon herself. All this greatly facilitated the struggle the Western proletarians were waging against their own bourgeoisie and increased tenfold their sympathy with the Russian proletariat as the *vanguard fighter of the international proletariat*.

Thus, the accomplishment of the task of overthrowing the bourgeoisie in one country led to the new task of fighting on an international scale, of fighting on a different plane—to a fight waged by the proletarian state against hostile capitalist states; and the Russian proletariat, which hitherto had been one of the detachments of the international proletariat, henceforth became the advanced detachment, the vanguard, of the international proletariat.



Thus, the task of unleashing revolution in the West in order to make it easier for her, i.e., Russia, to complete her revolution, was transformed from a wish into a purely practical task of the day. This change in relations (particularly in international relations) brought about by October is *entirely* due to October. The February Revolution did not affect international relations in the least.

b) *The second important feature* of the situation that arose in Russia after October was the change in the position both of the proletariat and its Party within Russia. Formerly, before October, the proletariat's main concern was to organise all the fighting forces for overthrowing the bourgeoisie, i.e., its task was chiefly of a critical and destructive character. Now, after October, when the bourgeoisie is no longer in power, and the state has become proletarian, the old task has dropped out; its place has been taken by *the new task of organising all the working people* of Russia (the peasants, artisans, handicraftsmen, intellectuals, the backward nationalities in the R.S.F.S.R.) *for building the new Soviet Russia*, her economic and military organisations, on the one hand, and for crushing the resistance of the overthrown, but not yet completely crushed, bourgeoisie, on the other hand. [15](#)

c) Corresponding to the change in the proletariat's position within Russia, and in conformity with the new task, *a change has taken place in the policy of the proletariat in relation to the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois groups and strata of the population of Russia*. Formerly (on the eve of the overthrow of the bourgeoisie) the proletariat refused to enter into individual agreements with bourgeois groups, for such a policy would have strengthened the bourgeoisie, which was in power. Now, however, the proletariat is in favour of individual agreements, for they strengthen its power, cause disintegration among the bourgeoisie, help the proletariat to tame, to assimilate, individual groups of the bourgeoisie. The difference between "*reformism*" and *the policy of individual agreements* (the former absolutely rejects the method of revolutionary action, the latter does not, and when revolutionaries do employ it, they base it on the revolutionary method; the former is narrower, the latter is wider in scope). (See "*reformism*" and "*agreements policy*.")

d) Corresponding to the colossal growth of the strength and resources of the proletariat and the Communist Party, *the scope of the Communist Party's strategic activities increased*. Formerly the strategy of the Communist Party was limited to the drawing up of the strategic plan, to manoeuvring between the different forms of the movement and of proletarian organisations, and also between the different demands of the movement (slogans), advancing some, changing others, employing the scanty reserves in the shape of the contradictions between the different classes. As a rule, the scope and possibility of employing these reserves were restricted to narrow limits owing to the weakness of the Party. Now, however, after October, firstly, *the reserves have grown* (contradictions between the social groups in Russia, contradictions between classes and nationalities in the surrounding states, contradictions between the surrounding states, the growing socialist revolution in the West, the growing revolutionary movement in the East and in the colonies generally, etc.); secondly, *the means and possibilities of manoeuvring have increased* (the old means have been supplemented with new ones in the shape, for example, of diplomatic activity, establishment of more effective connections both with the Western socialist movement and with the Eastern revolutionary movement); thirdly, *new and wider possibilities have arisen for employing reserves* owing to the increase of the strength and resources of the proletariat which, in Russia, has become the dominant *political force*, possessing its own armed forces, and in the international field has become the vanguard of the world revolutionary movement.

13) *Special* : a) the question of the *tempo* of the movement and its role in determining strategy and tactics; b) the question of *reformism*, of the policy of *agreements*, and the relation between them.

14) "*Reformism*" ("*compromise*"), "*policy of agreements*" and "*individual agreements*" are *three different things* (write about each separately). *Agreements* as concluded by the Mensheviks are unacceptable because they are based on *reformism*, i.e., on the *repudiation of revolutionary action*, whereas *agreements* as concluded by the Bolsheviks are based on the requirements of revolutionary action. For that very reason agreements as concluded by the Mensheviks become converted into a system, into a *policy of agreements*, whereas the Bolsheviks are only for individual, concrete agreements, and do not make them into a special policy of agreements.

15) *Three periods in the development of the Communist Party of Russia* :

a) *the period of the formation of the vanguard (i.e., the party) of the proletariat, the period of mustering the Party's cadres* (in this period the Party was weak; it had a programme and general principles of tactics, but as a party of mass action it was weak);

b) *the period of revolutionary mass struggle* under the leadership of the Communist Party. In this period the Party was transformed *from an organisation for mass agitation* into an organisation for mass action; the period of *preparation* was superseded by the period of *revolutionary action*;

c) *the period after taking power, after the Communist Party had become the government party.*

16) The political *strength of the Russian proletarian revolution* lies in that the peasant agrarian revolution (overthrow of feudalism) took place here *under the leadership of the proletariat* (and not of the bourgeoisie), and, *as a consequence of this*, the bourgeois-democratic revolution served as the prologue of the proletarian revolution; in that the *connection* between the labouring elements of the peasantry and the proletariat, and the *support* the latter rendered the former, were not only ensured politically, but consolidated organisationally in the Soviets, and this aroused for the proletariat the sympathy of the vast majority of the population (and that is why it does not matter if the proletariat itself does not constitute the majority in the country).

*The weakness of the proletarian revolutions in Europe* (the continent) lies in that there the proletariat lacks *this* connection with and *this* support of the countryside; *there*, the peasants were *emancipated* from feudalism under the leadership of the bourgeoisie and not of the proletariat, which was weak at the time), and this, combined with the indifference Social-Democracy displayed towards the interests of the countryside, for a long time ensured the bourgeoisie the sympathy of the majority of the peasants. \*

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\*. This synopsis was used by the author for his pamphlet *The Foundations of Leninism*, published in 1924, and included in Volume 6 of J. V. Stalin's Works. Part I of the synopsis was used for the article "Concerning the Question of the Strategy and Tactics of the Russian Communists," published in 1923, and included in the present volume. Some of the theses of the synopsis were used by the author for the article "The Party Before and After Taking Power," published in August 1921, and also included in the present volume.— *Ed.*

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### Note

1. This refers to the twenty-one conditions of affiliation to the Communist International laid down by the Second Congress of the Comintern on August 6, 1920.

2. This refers to V. I. Lenin's April Theses on "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution" (see *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 24, pp. 1-7).

3. This refers to the counter-revolutionary mutiny in Kronstadt in March 1921 (see *History of the C.P.S.U.(B.)*, *Short Course*, Moscow 1952, pp. 385-86).

4. V. I. Lenin, *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (see *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 9, pp. 1-119).

5. See V. I. Lenin, *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 8.

6. V. I. Lenin, *The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party* (see *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 10, pp. 175-250).

7. See V. I. Lenin, *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 26, pp. 217-29.

8. This refers to V. I. Lenin's pamphlet *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Power* (see *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 27, pp. 207-46).

- [9.](#) The "Credo"—the manifesto issued by the "Economist" group (see V. I. Lenin, "Protest of the Russian Social-Democrats," *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 4, pp. 149-63).
- [10.](#) V. I. Lenin, "*Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder* (see *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 31, pp. 1-97).
- [11.](#) The Democratic Conference was held in Petrograd, September 14-22, 1917. It was convened by the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary leaders of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and of the Executive Committee of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, and attended by representatives of the socialist parties, compromising Soviets, trade unions, Zemstvos, commercial and industrial circles and military units. The conference set up a Pre-parliament (The Provisional Council of the Republic) as an advisory body to the Provisional Government. With the assistance of the Pre-parliament the compromisers hoped to halt the revolution and to divert the country from the path of a Soviet revolution to the path of bourgeois constitutional development.
- [12.](#) V. I. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (see *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 28, pp. 207-302).
- [13.](#) This refers to V. I. Lenin's book *What Is To Be Done?* (see *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 5, pp. 319-494).
- [14.](#) See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, Moscow 1951, pp. 40-42.
- [15.](#) Correspondingly, some of the old forms of the movement have dropped out, such as strikes, uprisings, etc., and, correspondingly, the character and forms (functions) of the working-class organisations (the Party, Soviets, trade unions, co-operatives, cultural and educational institutions) have also changed.