

A Letter from Kutais ¹

September-October 1904

Source : *Works*, Vol. 1, November 1901 - April 1907

Publisher : Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954

Transcription/Markup : Salil Sen for MIA, 2008

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What we need here now is *Iskra* ² (although it has no sparks, we need it: at all events it contains news, the devil take it, and we must thoroughly know the enemy), beginning with No. 63. We very much need Bonch-Bruyevich's ³ publications: *The Fight for the Congress*, *To the Party* (isn't this the Declaration of the 22? ⁴), *Our Misunderstandings*, on the *quintessence of socialism* and on *strikes* by Ryadovoi (if issued), Lenin's pamphlet against Rosa and Kautsky, ⁵ *Minutes of the Congress of the League*, ⁶ *One Step Forward* ⁷ (this can be put aside if you can't send it now). We need everything new that's published, from simple declarations to large pamphlets, which in any way deals with the struggle now going on within the Party.

I have read Galyorka's pamphlet *Down With Bona-partism*. It's not bad. It would have been better had he struck harder and deeper with his hammer. His jocular tone and pleas for mercy" rob his blows of strength and weight, and spoil the reader's impression. These defects are all the more glaring for the reason that the author evidently understands our position well, and explains and elaborates certain questions excellently. A man who takes up our position must speak with a firm and determined voice. In this respect Lenin is a real mountain eagle.

I have also read Plekhanov's articles in which he analyses *What Is To Be Done?* ⁸ This man has either gone quite off his head, or else is moved by hatred and enmity. I think both causes operate. I think that Plekhanov has fallen behind the *new problems*. He imagines he has the old opponents before him, and he goes on repeating in the old way: "social consciousness is determined by social being," "ideas do not drop from the skies." As if Lenin said that Marx's socialism would have been possible under slavery and serfdom. Even schoolboys know now that "ideas do not drop from the skies." The point is, however, that we are now faced with quite a different issue. We assimilated this general formula long ago and the time has now come to analyse this general problem. What interests us now is how separate ideas are worked up into a system of ideas (the theory of socialism), how separate ideas, and hints of ideas, link up into one harmonious system—the theory of socialism, and who works and links them up. Do the masses give their leaders a programme and the principles underlying the programme, or do the leaders give these to the masses? If the masses themselves and their spontaneous movement give us the theory of socialism, then there is no need to take the trouble to safeguard the masses from the pernicious influence of revisionism, terrorism, Zubatovism and anarchism: "the spontaneous movement engenders socialism *from itself*." If the spontaneous movement does not engender the theory of socialism from itself (don't forget that Lenin is discussing the theory of socialism), then the latter is engendered outside of the spontaneous movement, from the observations and study of the spontaneous movement by men who are equipped with up-to-date knowledge. Hence, the theory of socialism is worked out "quite independently of the growth of the spontaneous movement," in spite of that movement in fact, and is then *introduced* into that movement *from outside*, *correcting* it in conformity with its content, i.e., in conformity with the objective requirements of the proletarian class struggle.

The conclusion (practical deduction) to be drawn from this is as follows: we must raise the proletariat to a consciousness of its true class interests, to a consciousness of the socialist ideal, and not break this ideal up into small change, or adjust it to the spontaneous movement. Lenin has laid down the theoretical basis on which this practical deduction is built. It is enough to accept this theoretical premise and no opportunism will get anywhere near you. Herein lies the significance of Lenin's idea. I call it Lenin's, because nobody in Russian literature has expressed it with such clarity as Lenin. Plekhanov believes that he is still living in the nineties, and he goes on chewing what has already been chewed eighteen times over—twice two make four. And he is not ashamed of having talked himself into repeating Martynov's ideas. . . .

You are no doubt familiar with the Declaration of the 22. . . . There was a comrade here from your parts who took with him the resolutions of the Caucasian Committees in favour of calling a special congress of the Party.

You are wrong in thinking that the situation is hopeless — only the Kutais Committee wavered, but I succeeded in convincing them, and after that they began to swear by Bolshevism. It was not difficult to convince them: the two-faced policy of the Central Committee became obvious thanks to the Declaration, and after fresh news was received, there could be no further doubt about it. It (the C.C.) will break its neck, the local and Russian comrades will see to that. It has got everybody's back up.

Notes

1. J. V. Stalin's two letters from Kutais were found among the correspondence of V. I. Lenin and N. K. Krupskaya with the Bolshevik organisations in Russia. He wrote these letters while he was in Kutais in September-October 1904, and they were addressed to his comrade in revolutionary activity in Transcaucasia, M. Davitashvili, who at that time lived in Leipzig, Germany, and was a member of the Leipzig group of Bolsheviks. In his reminiscences, D. Suliashvili, another member of the Leipzig group of Bolsheviks, wrote the following about one of these letters: "Soon after, Mikhail Davitashvili received a letter from Joseph Stalin who was in Siberia. In the letter he spoke enthusiastically and admiringly of Lenin and the revolutionary Bolshevik theses Lenin advanced; he wished Lenin success and good health and called him a 'mountain eagle.' We forwarded the letter to Lenin. Soon we received an answer from him to be forwarded to Stalin. In his letter he called Stalin a 'fiery Colchian'" (see D. Suliashvili, *Reminiscences About Stalin. Magazine Mnatobi*, No. 9, 1935, p. 163, in Georgian). The Georgian originals of J. V. Stalin's letters have not been found.

2. This refers to the new, *Menshevik Iskra* (The Spark). After the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P., the Mensheviks, with the assistance of Plekhanov, seized *Iskra* and utilised it in their struggle against V. I. Lenin and the Bolsheviks. In its columns they began openly to advocate their opportunist views. The *Menshevik Iskra* ceased publication in October 1905.

3. In the autumn of 1904, after the Mensheviks had seized *Iskra*, V. D. Bonch-Bruyevich, on V. I. Lenin's instructions, organised a publishing house with the object of publishing "Party literature, particularly literature in defence of the principles of the majority at the Second Party Congress." The Party Council and the Central Committee, which at that time were controlled by the Mensheviks, did all in their power to hinder the publication and distribution of Bolshevik literature. In this connection a conference of Caucasian Bolshevik Committees held in November 1904 adopted a resolution "On the Literature of the Majority" which said: "The conference calls upon the Central Committee to supply the Party Committees with the literature issued by the Bonch-Bruyevich and Lenin group together with other Party literature explaining the disagreements in the Party." At the end of December 1904 these publishing activities passed to the newspaper *Vperyod* (*Forward*), organised by V. I. Lenin.

4. The Declaration of the 22 was the appeal "To the Party," written by V. I. Lenin. It was adopted at the conference of Bolsheviks held under Lenin's guidance in Switzerland in August 1904. The pamphlet *To the Party* which is mentioned in J. V. Stalin's letter contained, in addition to the appeal "To the Party," the resolutions of the Riga and Moscow committees, and also of the Geneva group of Bolsheviks, associating themselves with the decisions of the conference of the twenty-two Bolsheviks. The appeal "To the Party" became the Bolsheviks'

programme of struggle for the convocation of the Third Congress. Most of the committees of the R.S.D.L.P. expressed solidarity with the decisions of the Bolshevik conference. In September 1904 the Caucasian Union Committee, and the Tiflis and Imeretia-Mingrelia Committees, associated themselves with the Declaration of the 22 and launched a campaign for the immediate convocation of the Third Congress of the Party.

5. V. I. Lenin's article "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back" was written in September 1904 in answer to an article by Rosa Luxemburg entitled "The Organisational Problems of Russian Social-Democracy," published in *Iskra*, No. 69, and in *Neue Zeit*, Nos. 42, 43, and also in *reply to a letter by K. Kautsky* published in *Iskra*, No. 66. Lenin intended to have his article published in *Neue Zeit*, but the editors of that magazine sympathised with the Mensheviks and refused to publish it.

6. The *Minutes of the Second Ordinary Congress of the League of Russian Revolutionary Social-Democrats Abroad*, published by the League in Geneva, in 1904.

7. V. I. Lenin's book *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* was written in February-May 1904 and appeared on May 6 (19) in that year (see *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 7, pp. 185-392).

8. This refers to V. I. Lenin's book *What Is To Be Done?* (see *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 5, pp. 319-494).

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