The STRUGGLE for POWER

An Answer to Morris Hillquit's
"From Marx to Lenin"

BY

ALBERT VERBLIN

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THE
STRUGGLE FOR POWER
FROM A PROLETARIAN VIEWPOINT

By
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The Struggle for Power
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

THE American bourgeoisie has not yet learned to distinguish between its friends and enemies. Every one who shows the slightest dissatisfaction with the present system and the present conditions, who, in the mildest manner, dares criticize the powers that be is labelled “Bolshevik agitator” and marked for observation. Of all the ruling classes it has the least reason to be frightened, yet in every innocent Liberal weekly it detects the propaganda of the diabolical Bolsheviks and in every safe and sane “socialist” it sees an apostle of the hated Soviets.

Perhaps it is just because the spectre of Communism is so far away, comparatively speaking, from this country that the capitalist class shows such an attack of nerves, and maltreats friend and foe alike. In the European countries where the Communist movement is a real power, the capitalist governments act more shrewdly and enlist, in the cause of preserving the capitalist system, the liberals and “socialists.” No European government would be so foolish as to give a socialist of Victor Berger’s type a twenty-year jail sentence. Rather would it give such a staunch advocate of bourgeois democracy an honorable place in the ministry.

However, the American capitalist class will undoubtedly learn from experience. With the inevitable development of the class struggle and the consequent growth of solidarity and class-consciousness of the American proletariat, it will become more cautious and will cease to be so indiscriminate in the use of the term “Bolshevik.” Besides taking men like Gompers into its confidence it will laud the Bergers and Hillquits as “constructive statesmen” and in case the workers will begin to “speak Russian” then the “socialists” will be just the ones to quiet them.

But while we are not interested in putting the American capitalists on the right track so that they will be able to differentiate friend from foe, we are interested in impressing upon the workers that not everyone who uses honeyed phrases is their friend. It must be constantly dinned into their ears that not those who ask for votes for a seat in Congress with promises of doing wonders for the workers are their friends. Not that we hope to
convince the majority of the proletariat by propaganda alone. Just as in the case of the bourgeoisie, experience will be the best teacher. The Russian workers were convinced that the Kerenskys and Tseretellis would not and could not represent their class interests when they were actually in power. The German workers were convinced that Scheidemann and Noske were traitors to their class when they seized the reigns of government. Only when the Labor Party will actually come into power will the English workers see the futility of its temporizing policies and be convinced that MacDonald and Henderson will not better their condition one whit. And unless the process of evolution is disturbed by some unforeseen event, the American workers will, by experiencing the benign rule of the laborites and “socialists,” learn to distinguish between friend and foe.

But, while it is true that the majority of the workers will learn only from experience, it is none the less incumbent upon every class-conscious proletarian to denounce the “socialist” leaders before the masses, to point to the experiences of other countries, to show how those who called themselves socialists betrayed the workers in the moments of crisis and in all ways to wean the workers away from the influence of these “socialists.” We must not wait for experience to prove to the workers that the promises of the opportunists are but empty words; we must disprove their arguments and refute their theories clothed in fine language; the workers must be shown that, from a revolutionary standpoint, the theories of the opportunists are false and can not serve as a guide in the struggle of the proletariat for power. Especially is this work necessary in the case of that element of the working-class that is just awakening into political consciousness. The revolutionary proletarian instincts of the vanguard are proof against the sophistries of the opportunists, but those upon whom consciousness of the class-struggle has just dawned can be won over by the fine phrases of the “socialists” and we must counteract their influence. Every soldier won for the revolution means so much the greater chance for ultimate victory.

In the task of discrediting the socialists of the right and center, the revolutionary workers have a most powerful argument in the greatest event of all times—the Russian Proletarian Revolution. The miserable role played by the Right Social-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks of Russia furnishes effective material in the attack upon their spiritual brothers of every other country. The splendid leadership of the Bolsheviks, due to which the Russian proletariat was able to seize and to hold political power, tends
to make the masses look with favor upon those who advocate Bolshevik tactics to achieve power in other lands.

And the exploited masses of the whole world, in ever greater numbers, turn their eyes to Russia for leadership in their struggle against the material and spiritual yoke of capitalism. At first, hailed only by the vanguard of the proletariat, the Russian Revolution became a source of inspiration for millions of the oppressed; at first almost unnoticed by the proletariat of other countries, it finally became the hope of a vast army of workers and it is in no small degree due to the help of the workers of the Western European countries that the capitalist attacks upon the Russian Revolution failed.

The extent to which the Russian Revolution succeeded in gaining the sympathies of the workers can be judged by the venomous attacks levelled against it by the capitalist press. Unwittingly the capitalist class by its very attacks did a great service to the Russian Revolution. The masses, instinctively sensing that what the capitalist press attacks must of necessity be good for them, turned their eyes to Russia and became interested in the Revolution.

The attacks of the capitalist press were not left unanswered. The defense of the Russian Revolution was gladly taken up by the revolutionary workers. And to defend the Russian Revolution, in the widest sense, means to advocate the adoption of those very tactics which brought success to the Russian workers, to learn from their experiences, and to accept those fundamental revolutionary principles and tactics, brought to light by the Revolution, as applicable the world over.

In this respect the revolutionary workers were forced to defend the Russian Revolution not only against the capitalists but also against the socialists of the right and center. For those "socialists" defended the Russian Revolution in the abstract, either condemning the tactics of the Bolsheviks or asserting that they were peculiar to Russia. The petty-bourgeois lawyers who call themselves socialists ostensibly defended the Russian Revolution but rejected the principles and tactics brought to light by the Revolution and proclaimed by its leaders to be universally applicable and necessary to achieve the World Revolution. The revolutionary workers, however, made no such distinction and eagerly accepted the principles and tactics of the Russian Revolution, convinced that the proletarian revolution could be successful in no country unless it adopted those very principles and tactics.

Under the guise of Marxian analysis, the leaders of the official Socialist Parties of every country began a concerted attack
upon the Bolsheviks of Russia and of all other lands. The leaders of the Socialist Party of this country were no exception. Loudly proclaiming their enthusiasm for and adherence to the Russian Revolution they balked when the crucial test came. When the question arose: are you for making the revolution a reality by accepting the fundamental principles and tactics of the Russian Revolution, they showed quite plainly that by rejecting them they never were for the revolution and they never intend to be for it, except in words.

But merely to reject those principles and tactics would not do. They had to justify their rejection and to do that they went to the writings of the one man who strove, all through his life, to make the proletarian revolution a reality, namely, to Karl Marx.

The book “From Marx to Lenin” by “Comrade” Hillquit is an attempt to justify the rejection of revolutionary Marxism by appealing to Marx himself. “For Marxism,” he says, “is still the avowed (yes, merely “avowed”) creed of all contending Socialist camps, each claiming strict adherence to the doctrine and spirit of the theoretical founder of the modern Socialist movement and charging its opponents with a palpable departure from them (page 6).

“The devil can cite Scriptures for his own purposes,” and Hillquit as the best Marxian phraseologist amongst the lawyers of the Socialist Party has a row of Marxian quotations at his disposal to prove (to his own satisfaction, at least) that the Russian Revolution is not in conformity with Marxism, that the degree of capitalist development of the Western European and American countries does not warrant the adoption of the fundamental principles and tactics of the Russian Revolution, and that Lenin, in advocating their adoption by the workers of every country, is an anti-Marxist. He proves all this by picking out quotations from the writings of Marx. That in doing this he only succeeds in proving that he is not a revolutionary Marxist but an ordinary Eclectic; that he cuts the very heart out of Marxism and completely emasculates it is evident to all who are in the least acquainted with the writings of Karl Marx.

The “theoretical Marxism” of Hillquit certainly had and will have no effect upon the class-conscious workers of America. The condition of the Socialist Party is proof to that effect. None but petty-bourgeois professionals and workers who have not yet gotten rid of their petty-bourgeois leanings are found in its ranks. The revolutionary workers of this country, like those of every other country, have rallied around the banner of the Communist
International, born of the Russian Revolution and advocating the fundamental principles and tactics of that revolution as the principles and tactics of the World Revolution.

Hillquit does not like the Communist International. He does not like its "disruptive activities." He would not like any revolutionary International that is so "disruptive" as to exclude him and his like from its ranks. He wants freedom enough to be allowed to follow his opportunist tactics. (And here it is well to mention that in his daily activities he is far more to the right than innocent readers of his book would imagine.) The Communist International insists upon taking into its fold only those who are for the revolution, and not in words alone. Therefore, in the opinion of Hillquit, it "sacrifices all realities to a doctrinaire scheme."

That the Russian Revolution was in conformity with the theory of revolutionary Marxism; that the ideas of dictatorship of the proletariat, of Soviets, of armed struggle against the capitalists—ideas that were brought into life by the struggle and victory of the Russian proletariat—must be accepted and used by the workers of all countries if they wish to achieve the victory; that the Communist International is the only International that can lead the workers of the world to ultimate victory in the fight against World Imperialism, will be the burden of the following pages.

It is said that most people are not generally convinced by arguments. Well, for those people there will be one argument that will be indisputable, an argument that will, in a conclusive manner, hurl the lie at Hillquit, Kautsky, Macdonald, Vanderwelde, Hyndman and all the rest of them, and that is the World Revolution itself.

CHAPTER II

PREREQUISITES TO A PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

A REVOLUTION is not made to order; it does not come at the command of a party or produced in accordance with a definite prescription; it comes as a result of a long process of economic evolution and is accomplished by a class struggling to overthrow the social order that oppresses it.

The oppressed class is a product of the economic conditions; it struggles on the basis of its economic interests. Hence it can be said that a revolution is the result of economic factors, but that would be only half of the truth. It would make the revolution entirely dependent upon the passive element and leave out of consideration the element of class-struggle, the active, dynamic factor.
To say, as Hillquit does, that “the Marxian theory of social growth and change is essentially economic and evolutionary” (page 10) is to utter the merest half-truth and to distort Marxism in a manner pleasing to the bourgeoisie. It would be difficult to explain the hatred and fear of the bourgeoisie for Marxism on the ground that it is “essentially economic and evolutionary.” The bourgeoisie can reconcile itself to any doctrine of evolution, even if that doctrine asserted that their wealth would be taken away from them at some time in the far-distant future. And if the proletariat would only wait and watch the process of evolution, the bourgeoisie would even subscribe to the doctrine. The Russian bourgeoisie had nothing against that “Marxism” which declared that the Russian Revolution must be a bourgeois revolution and the Russian proletariat must wait till the bourgeoisie had developed the forces of production before gaining power. In fact the Russian bourgeoisie championed that kind of “Marxism.”

Anyone in the least acquainted with the writings of Karl Marx, and who does not wish to distort him, knows full well that Marx conceived of social development as a series of evolution culminating in a social upheaval called revolution. Emphasis is laid on the struggle between classes and revolution occurs when the oppressed class destroys those relations of production which hinder the development of the forces of production.

Viewing the process of social development as a whole one can say that it is evolutionary. But revolution plays a most important part in the process. Revolution is the broom of history which sweeps away all the old relations and gives the new a chance to develop. This thought is well brought out by Achille Loria who, although not a complete Marxist, has accepted the idea of historical materialism. He refers to Marx as “the first to introduce the evolutionary concept into the domain of sociology, the first to introduce it in the only form appropriate to social phenomena and institutions; not as the unceasing and gradual upward movement outlined by Spencer but as the succession of age-long cycles rhythmically interrupted by revolutionary explosions.”

We can say that Marxism considers two factors as fundamental in the process of social development, namely, economic evolution and the struggle of classes resulting in revolution.

Taking this as a basis we can proceed further and analyze the conditions which make a proletarian revolution inevitable. In other words we can discuss the prerequisites of a proletarian revolution. These prerequisites are the following:

1. Concentration of industry.

*“Karl Marx” by Achille Loria, p. 145-6.
2. A revolutionary situation.
3. A numerous and determined proletariat.
4. A revolutionary political party (a Communist Party).

The first two can be termed the objective, the second two the subjective factors.

The concentration of industry represents the material basis for communism. Without it and a high technical development, it is absurd to speak of the possibility of communism. But what degree of concentration must industrial development reach before the proletariat can seize power? Must it wait until all industries are so concentrated that they are owned by a small group of capitalists with the vast majority of the population reduced to proletarians? It is of course theoretically conceivable that in the process of industrial concentration, say in a few centuries or so, the population would ultimately divide itself into a few dozen or hundred capitalists and all the rest proletarians. Merely to state the proposition, however, is to show its absurdity. The working class would hardly be willing to wait and endure the sufferings of imperialist wars, of crises due to over-production and of other such capitalist blessings for the sake of seeing a higher concentration of industry than that which exists at present. If the capitalist class succeeds in weathering the economic crisis due to the World War, the further concentration of industry would undoubtedly proceed apace. Therefore, according to Hillquit, the proletariat should refrain from all attempts to destroy capitalism because "no social order can give birth to a new society before it is fully matured and has exhausted all its possibilities of growth and expansion." (Italics mine, page 11.)

The class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie begins with the beginning of capitalism. It is very difficult to say at exactly what point of the development of capitalism the proletariat is in a position to seize power and introduce socialism. Karl Marx hoped for a proletarian revolution in Germany during the revolutionary period of 1848. Surely capitalism was almost in its infancy at that time, and far from "exhausting all its possibilities of growth and expansion" was just beginning to develop. Had Hillquit been living at that time he undoubtedly would have accused Marx of being an anti-Marxian.

In general it is safe to assert that when the vital industries are concentrated the material basis for the introduction of socialism is at hand.

But concentration of industry as an objective factor, in and of itself, is not sufficient. A victorious proletarian revolution will not come about merely because industry has reached a high degree
of concentration. A revolutionary situation must exist before the working-class will at all attempt a seizure of power.

Lenin mentions three signs of a revolutionary situation.*

1. "A political crisis of the ruling class"—instability of the bourgeois governments creating "a breach through which the indignation and dissatisfaction of the masses bursts through."

2. A crisis that results in an intensified misery of the masses.


"Without these objective changes," Lenin continues, "independent of the will not only of separate groups and parties but of separate classes as well, revolution, according to general conceptions, is impossible. The conjunction of all these objective changes is what is called a revolutionary situation."

The working masses will not put up a determined fight to destroy the capitalist system unless they find themselves in a desperate situation. Millions of proletarians who see nothing before them but miserable suffering furnish the hosts that will crush capitalism. So long as the masses have something to eat and a place to sleep in the possibilities of revolution are remote.

A crisis can be precipitated by various causes. An acute and lengthy economic crisis, a defeat in some imperialist war, a revolt of subject colonies or some unforeseen event can create a revolutionary situation.

It does not, however, follow inevitably that a revolutionary situation gives rise to a revolution. There was a revolutionary situation all over Europe after the Imperialist War but no revolution followed, "because not from every revolutionary situation arises a revolution—but only from such in which there is joined with the objective changes a subjective change as well, viz., the capacity of the revolutionary class to effect revolutionary mass action, sufficiently powerful to break down or undermine the old government which will never 'fall,' not even in periods of crises, if it is not 'overthrown'."†

There must be a willingness and a determination on the part of the proletariat to struggle and to sacrifice. No war can be won without some enthusiasm on the part of the army. The class war, the fiercest of all wars, can be won by the proletariat only if it is inspired with the spirit of combat, only if it knows in a general way what it wants and is determined to get what it wants at any cost.

But when we say that a numerous and determined proletariat

*"Socialism and the War" by Lenin.
†Idid.
is necessary before a revolutionary situation can be turned to advantage, the question naturally comes to one's mind as to how numerous the proletariat must be. Must there exist "a large industrial working class, constituting the majority of the population and suitably disciplined, united and organized"? (p. 18) Hillquit, of course, would advise the proletariat to wait until it forms fifty-one per cent. of the population. It would not do were it to compose but forty-nine per cent. of the population.

By making the off-hand assertion that one of the indispensable conditions of a socialist revolution is the existence of an "industrial working class constituting the majority of the population," Hillquit shows that he is far from being a Marxist. A Marxist is not one who can quote Marx the most but one who assiduously studies the facts and realities of the present. "A Marxist must take into consideration the true facts and living reality of today and not continue clinging to the theory of yesterday which, like every other theory, at its best, only outlines the fundamental and the general, only approaches a conception of the complexity of life."* Had Hillquit first explained what he means by proletariat, had he shown by figures that it constituted a majority of the population in an advanced capitalist country, had he discussed the problem of the majority, he could then have laid claim to being a Marxist. But by merely making an assertion and supporting it by a quotation "he sacrifices living Marxism to a dead letter."

In attempting to ascertain the proportion of the proletariat to the population as a whole it is first necessary to state what we mean by proletariat. It is of course a difficult proposition to say exactly when a man is or when he is not a proletarian. Taking advantage of the footnote in the Communist Manifesto which defines the proletariat as "the class of modern wage-laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor power in order to live," the opportunists include all salaried employees, brain-workers and even owners of small farms in the term proletariat. That is, of course, nonsense. By proletariat the revolutionary Marxist means those wage-workers of average skill who are employed in large-scale machine-industry, who by their mode of living and habits of thought are directly opposed to the capitalists. It is only the unskilled and semi-skilled industrial workers who can be considered proletarians.

In the United States (and Hillquit will grant that the United States has reached a high degree of industrial development) there were in 1910 (the occupational classification of the 1920 census

*"Problem in Tactics" by Lenin.
was not available at the time of writing) 14,556,979 industrial wage-workers or 38.2 per cent. of all those who are occupied in gainful occupations.* Reckoning in the farm-laborers, we would not be very far from the truth were we to put the proletariat at forty-five per cent. of the population at the present time. The proletariat does not then form an absolute majority of the population. Hence, Hillquit should say, the socialist revolution can not come in this country until there is a further concentration of industry and an increase in the industrial wage-working class.

In speaking of the numerical size of the proletariat, however, one must keep in mind that the power which the proletariat wields in industry and consequently in social life gives it a far greater influence than its numbers would warrant. Its strategic position in the economic life of the community makes it the most important factor of the community regardless of numbers. In machinery the bourgeoisie has very obedient and submissive servants, but in the workers it has human beings who can, if they want to, bring all the machinery to a dead stop and bring the whole community to their feet.

A Marxian should not put the question, is the proletariat a majority of the population? Rather should the question be, can the proletariat get the majority of the population to support it? The petty-bourgeoisie, or the majority of the population, due to its economic position wavers between the capitalists and the proletariat. At times it leans to the side of one; at times to the side of the other. It is possible for the proletarian vanguard, by following correct tactics, if not to gain the active support of all who are under the domination of capital, at least to put a great number of them in a neutral position. After the conquest of power by the proletariat it will be an easy matter, especially in the advanced countries to gain the active support of the majority of the population, that is, of all the exploited, because “if the power of government is in the hands of a class whose interests coincide with the interests of the majority, the administration of government can then be, in reality, identical with the will of the majority.”† The majority of the population will quickly perceive that the proletariat is interested only in ameliorating the conditions of all who are willing to work and therefore the majority will come over to the side of the proletariat.

Thus we can say that one who, like Hillquit, claims that one of the indispensable conditions for a proletarian revolution is the

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**"Industrial Class Alignments in the United States" by A. H. Hansen, American Statistical Association, vol. xvii, Dec., 1920.**

†"Constitutional Illusions" by Lenin.
existence of an “industrial working class constituting the majority of the population” is not a revolutionary Marxist but a petty-bourgeois democrat who expects to change conditions through a majority in parliament.

But even with an industry that is concentrated and a situation that is revolutionary and a proletariat that is numerous and determined a revolution is not inevitable. In Germany, right after the war, there was a revolutionary situation. The proletariat, while not experienced in actual class war could be led to a determined attempt to destroy the capitalist state. And yet there was no revolution. The trouble was that there was no one to do the leading, to show the proletariat its tasks and to inspire it with a revolutionary zeal. The Socialist Party betrayed the workers and created confusion amongst them. The group of real proletarian revolutionists was too insignificant to have a great influence. Consequently the workers were defeated. The same thing happened in Italy at the time of the seizure of the metal factories when a determined and experienced party could have led the proletariat to a complete victory over the bourgeoisie.

The existence of a proletarian vanguard organized into a disciplined political party, able to gain the confidence of the majority of the proletariat, is an essential prerequisite to a proletarian revolution. Without a group of the most class-conscious workers to act as the leaders of the whole proletariat and consequently of all the exploited, without such a group to show the proletariat what to do at the right moment the workers will waste their energies in desperate revolts without being able to dislodge the bourgeoisie from power.

The above four mentioned conditions are essential prerequisites to a proletarian revolution. The absence of one of them, while it might not prevent an attempt at revolution, would certainly preclude the possibility of a successful revolution. And whether a proletarian revolution is or is not in conformity with the Marxian theory of social development can be ascertained by the presence or absence of those conditions.

CHAPTER III
THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

How did it happen that the proletarian revolution occurred first in that country which is the most backward in economic development? Only capitalism can give birth to socialism. That is strictly Marxian. And since Russia has a backward capitalist development, does it follow, as Hillquit would have it, that
"the Russian Revolution defied the generally accepted Marxian law of social evolution?" (p. 28).

If, for instance, during the French Revolution, when capitalism was in its very infancy, the Parisian proletariat, whatever there was of it, would have seized political power and tried to introduce socialism it would have been contrary to all Marxian conceptions. The Parisian proletariat did play a most important role in the Revolution but it was only to put the bourgeoisie into power. In fact it had to fight the bourgeoisie to make the bourgeois revolution a success. It could not have been possible for the proletariat to assume power. The bourgeoisie had not completed its historic mission.

Russia, however, was in a far different situation. Of course, if Russia were an island, cut off from all communication with the capitalist countries, a proletarian revolution would have been an impossibility. But it is in the midst of a capitalist environment, having constant relations with capitalist countries and it was unavoidable that it be influenced by such factors. It was in a position to learn from its capitalist neighbors without having to pass through the actual development.

And it must be remembered that while it is true that capitalism was, in comparison to western countries, developed to a very small degree in Russia, yet there was capitalism. Petrograd was probably the center of the most concentrated industry of the world. Whatever industry there was, such as railroad, mining and textile was concentrated to a very high degree. While capitalist development did not go far enough to give Russia an exclusively industrial character, yet it went far enough to create a proletariat which was a most important factor in Russian politics.

And strange to say the revolutionary consciousness of the Russian proletariat was in inverse ratio to the concentration of industry. The Russian proletariat entered upon the stage of history as a full grown adult more revolutionary than the proletariat of any other country. This can be explained by the law that the later capitalism arises in a country, in comparison with other countries, the more bitter the character of the class-struggle. The proletariat of a newly risen capitalism, convinced of the futility of compromise because it sees that such a policy brought no amelioration worth mentioning to the workers of any other country, resolves to carry the struggle to its logical conclusion. Kautsky formulated this law as follows: "when new classes and new class antagonisms and with that new social problems, arise in a country at an earlier date than elsewhere, the new classes only
attain a small degree of class consciousness, and still remain to a large degree imprisoned in the old methods of thought, so that the class antagonisms only appear in a very undeveloped form. Thus in such a land it does not at once come to a final and decisive struggle in the class war, it comes to no decisive overthrow of the old classes.

"So that it seems to be a general law of social development, that countries which are pioneers in the economic development are tempted to put compromise in place of radical solutions."*

It would appear then, in spite of Hillquit's "Marxism," that in a country of backward development but where capitalism appeared later on the scene, the proletariat would gain the victory before the proletariat of more developed countries. Trotzky, discussing this very question, concludes as follows: "The proletariat grows and gains strength with the growth of capitalism. From this viewpoint the development of capitalism is the development of the proletariat for dictatorship. The day and the hour, however, when political power should pass into the hands of the working class is determined not directly by the degree of capitalistic development of economic forces but by the relations of class struggle, by the international situation, by a number of subjective elements, such as tradition, initiative, readiness to fight, etc.

"It is therefore not excluded that in a backward country with a lesser degree of capitalistic development, the proletariat should sooner reach political supremacy than in a highly developed capitalist state. To imagine that there is an automatic dependence between a dictatorship of the proletariat and the technical and productive resources of a country, is to understand economic determinism in a very primitive way. Such a conception would have nothing to do with Marxism."†

It is interesting here to quote Kautsky because of his present attitude to the Russian Revolution. When he was a revolutionary Marxist (and a very good one we must admit) he saw things in quite a different light. Hillquit, of course, is a disciple of Kautsky the opportunist and not of Kautsky the revolutionist. No one better than Kautsky showed that the acuteness of the class struggle has no direct relation to the degree of capitalistic development. "Here are two countries," he says, "diametrically opposed to each other: in one of them one of the elements of modern industry is developed out of proportion, i.e., out of keep-

*"Ethics and the Materialist Conception of History" by Karl Kautsky, p. 32.
†"Our Revolution" by Trotzky. p. 86.
ing with the stage of capitalistic development; in the other, another; in America it is the class of capitalists; in Russia, the class of labor. In America there is more ground than elsewhere to speak of the dictatorship of capital while nowhere has labor gained as much influence as in Russia and this influence is bound to grow as Russia has only recently entered the period of the modern class struggle.

"It is strange to think that it is the Russian proletariat which shows us (Germans) our future as far as, not the organization of capital, but the protest of the working class is concerned. Russia is the most backward of all the great states of the capitalist world. This may seem to be in contradiction with the economic interpretation of history which considers economic strength the basis of political development. This is, however, not true. It contradicts only that kind of economic interpretation of history which is being painted by our opponents and critics who see in it not a method of analysis (italics mine) but a ready pattern."* We might add that it also contradicts that kind of Marxism, which like Hillquit's, is an exegesis of texts and not a method of analyzing existing social relations.

The Russian proletariat was the most revolutionary proletariat of the world. The struggle of 1905 imbued it with a revolutionary consciousness and gave it a wealth of revolutionary experience. And since history has placed the mission of introducing socialism upon the revolutionary proletariat, it can be readily seen that Russia, of all nations, in that respect at least, was prepared for the socialist revolution.

But is it not a Marxian law that the bourgeoisie must first capture political power before the proletariat in its turn can achieve that power? "Yes," exultingly exclaims Hillquit, and "the Russian 'experiment' thus contradicts the accepted Marxian theory of political evolution" (p. 36). Hillquit quotes Marx's "Revolution and Counter-Revolution" to confirm his assertion. "The practical revolutionary experience of 1848-1849 confirmed the reasonings of theory which led to the conclusion that the Democracy of the small trader must first have its turn, before the Communist working class could hope to permanently establish itself in power and destroy the system of wage-slavery which keeps it under the yoke of the bourgeoisie."

The same argument, in a different form, was made by Kautsky in his "Dictatorship of the Proletariat." Lenin, in his answer in "The Proletarian Revolution" conclusively refutes Kautsky's

*As quoted by Trotzky in "Our Revolution," p. 89.
argument. He shows that no political step was skipped over in Russia. The March Revolution placed the bourgeoisie into power through the activities of the proletariat and the peasantry as a whole. The Soviets composed of all the peasants and the workers were led by the petty-bourgeois Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries. The Soviets were in reality the main power, but controlled by the petty-bourgeoisie, they refused to exercise that power. Under the leadership of the Bolsheviks the Soviets took over all power to themselves. This was the November Revolution. It meant that the proletariat completed the bourgeois democratic revolution and then by allying itself with the poorest peasantry against the village exploiters went on to the proletarian revolution. That the proletariat should complete a bourgeois revolution in spite of the petty-bourgeoisie is not a new thing in history. The sans-culottes, through the Red Terror, completed the French Revolution in spite of the bourgeois Girondins.

Hillquit confidently states that “it surely cannot be seriously contended that the Lvoff-Kerenski government compressed within the eight months of its troubled existence a completed cycle of middle-class revolution” (p. 36). He forgets completely that during a revolutionary period, when life is at a boiling point and events succeed one another with unbelievable rapidity, eight months is as good as a half-century of peaceful evolution. He forgets completely that under certain conditions a bourgeois revolution can be the signal for a proletarian revolution. At the time of the writing of the Communist Manifesto Marx and Engels foresaw that very thing. They stated: “The Communists turn their attention chiefly to Germany, because that country is on the eve of a bourgeois revolution, that is bound to be carried out under more advanced conditions of European civilization, and with a more developed proletariat, than that of England was in the seventeenth and of France in the eighteenth century, and because the bourgeois revolution in Germany will be but the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution.” Marx and Engels did not not expect to jump over the bourgeois revolution but neither did they expect the bourgeoisie to hold power for a few centuries. The bourgeois revolution, they expected would be but “a prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution.” Marx and Engels were mistaken but the mere fact that they made the mistake shows that they did not think in the same way that Hillquit does. Whereas in Germany in 1848 events did not turn out as expected, in Russia in 1917 they took that very course which was predicted by Marx and Engels for Germany. The Russian Revolution no more skipped over the
bourgeois democratic regime than would have the German Revo-
lation had it occurred in 1848.

The situation that existed in Russia in November 1917, was
an extremely revolutionary one. The destruction of the monarchy
left a breach through which the proletariat could launch its at-
tack. The bourgeoisie was unable to hold the reins of govern-
ment with a steady hand. It lacked confidence in itself and in
its various governments. It had almost no regular armed forces
to lean on. The terrible defeat of the Russian army in the July
offensive completely disorganized the army and killed its morale.
This offered a favorable opportunity for revolutionary propa-
ganda among the soldiers. The conviction dawned upon them
that the fact that the "socialist" Kerensky was in power did not
alter the character of the war. So long as the bourgeoisie was
in power the war remained an imperialist one and to die in battle
was not to die for the Revolution but for the bourgeoisie. The
result was that about half of the army went over to the side of
the Bolsheviks and a revolution armed is a revolution invincible.

The intense misery of the population created a spontaneous
activity of the masses. Even without any leadership they staged
demonstrations. They expected the March Revolution to bring
them peace and bread and instead they got more war and more
hunger. They were disillusioned and a terrible anger took pos-
session of them. On May 2nd and 3rd and on July 16th and
17th the masses rose in spite of the fact that even the Bolsheviks
counselled against an uprising at that time. The uprisings were
put down in blood, which incensed the proletariat still more.
They were ready to destroy the bourgeois government and take
power into their own hands.

And fortunately for the workers there existed a revolutionary
party to lead them—a party composed of the most class conscious
workers and most intrepid revolutionists. The revolutionary
movement of Russia, due to terrible persecution, produced the
most courageous and most self-sacrificing revolutionists that ever
existed. The best amongst them were in the Bolshevik Party.
The leaders of that party were revolutionary Marxists able to
analyze a given situation and to use tactics in accordance with the
demands of that situation. Under the slogan of "peace, bread
and land" the Bolsheviks gained the majority of the proletariat to
their side and seized the power of government in Petrograd and
Moscow. And in a revolution, especially in a proletarian revo-
lution, the seizure of the industrial centers means practically the
conquest of government all over the country. The large indus-
trial centers give the signal and the whole country falls into line.
Thus all of the four prerequisites to a proletarian revolution, namely, concentration of industry, revolutionary situation, numerous and determined proletariat, and a revolutionary party were present and the revolution was bound to come. In addition the international situation was favorable to the Russian proletariat. The Bolsheviks always went on the theory that a workers’ revolution in Russia could not endure for a long time unless it was followed by proletarian uprisings all over Europe. They depended upon the victorious workers of the western countries to help the Russian proletariat develop the industries of the backward country. Alone the Russian proletariat, handicapped by a backward country, could not expect to withstand the onslaughts of the capitalists of the whole world.

And when the November Revolution came, the Bolsheviks tried their utmost to rouse the western proletariat especially the German and Austrian. But the hoped-for revolution did not materialize and the future of the Russian proletariat seemed dark. It was only due to the international situation that the Revolution was saved. The struggle between the imperialist powers gave the Russian workers a breathing spell in which they could gather their forces and prepare for the inevitable struggle with the counter-revolutionists. And by the time the capitalist countries were ready to attack the Workers’ and Peasants’ Republic the workers of those capitalist countries had seen the significance of the Russian Revolution, had perceived that the struggle of the Russian proletariat was intimately bound up with their own struggles and they prevented their governments from launching direct attacks upon the Russian Revolution.

The Russian Revolution came as a result of economic and historic conditions plus the element of class struggle and it is because of this that we can say that the Russian Revolution, far from being a refutation of the Marxian theory of social development is a veritable confirmation of that theory.

CHAPTER IV

THE TACTICS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THEIR INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Before the Russian Revolution the tactics and principles which the Socialist revolution would follow could be a matter only of theoretical discussion. The future held them hidden in its bosom. True the Paris Commune showed in a general way the principles of a proletarian revolution. Marx and Engels drew valuable lessons from it. But the Paris Commune
was on a comparatively small scale, and its tactics and principles were not sufficiently clarified in action to serve as a guide to future proletarian revolutions.

As a result various conceptions as to how the Revolution would take place arose amongst the socialists. The opportunists declared that the socialist revolution would come when the proletariat, constituting a majority of the population, would elect a socialist majority to parliament, who would then introduce socialism. Therefore the proletariat must advocate the freest democracy. Otherwise the Revolution could not occur. The revolutionary socialists, taking into consideration the lesson that Marx drew from the Commune, that “the working-class can not simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes,” saw that parliament could not be used as an instrument for the introduction of socialism. In fact they realized that parliament was an instrument expressly suited for the domination of the workers by the capitalists and therefore would have to be destroyed. What would take its place, however, was not clear.

The syndicalists conceived of the revolution as being ushered in by a general strike decreed by the unions who would destroy the state, expropriate the capitalists, and take over the industries to be run by the unions.

It was left for the Russian Revolution, the proletarian revolution in action to forge, in the fire of its own struggles, the fundamental principles and tactics of the socialist revolution. No more theories, based on no actual historical experience, are necessary. The real revolution showed how even the best of theories can only approximate reality. We can now be true to historical dialectics and base our reasoning on the facts of history.

A careful study of the Russian revolution reveals to us its three fundamental characteristics. First, the proletariat did not achieve state power through legal means. The Tsarist monarchy was destroyed by the revolutionary mass-action of the masses. Through demonstrations, riots, and armed uprisings the masses destroyed, without any difficulty, the absolute monarchy. The mass action of the masses was irresistible. It was too colossal to be stopped and the government crumbled beneath its attacks. During the Lvoff-Kerensky regime, also, the workers declared strikes and went out upon the streets in huge demonstrations. The bourgeois state tottered but it was only in November when the proletariat led by the Bolsheviks, by means of an armed insurrection, destroyed the bourgeois apparatus of government and took the power to itself.

Power was not conquered by the Russian proletariat by gain-
ing a majority in a Constituent Assembly but was achieved by the masses destroying the bourgeois state by means of armed uprisings.

The second characteristic of the Russian Revolution is the fact that during the revolutionary period, the workers created their own organizations, namely, the Soviets. These soviets were the instruments of the proletarian revolution. Both organized and unorganized workers were represented in them. They were at first under the leadership of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. Consequently they served but as an adjunct to the rule of the bourgeoisie. But as soon as the workers reached a higher degree of class-consciousness they threw the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries out and placed the Bolsheviks into control. Under the guidance of the Bolsheviks, the Soviets assumed all power of government, and became the form of proletarian state. The Bolsheviks, in their program, had advocated the assumption of all power by the Soviets and that was realized when they came into control.

The assumption of power by the Soviets meant the bringing into realization of the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The proletariat on assuming power was faced by the bitter hostility of the possessing classes. It had to struggle in order to keep power. On all sides the Revolution was attacked and it had to answer blow for blow. Civil war ensued. The proletariat had to create red guards, extraordinary commissions, and proletarian armies to crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie. At times the Red Terror was utilized to terrify counter-revolutionary individuals. No opposition to the Workers' Government was tolerated and it was only due to this "ruthless" dictatorship that the Revolution finally conquered.

The proletarian revolution of Russia showed the advanced workers of the world three fundamental tactics and principles of a Socialist Revolution—without which the Revolution can not attain success in any country. They are: the destruction of the bourgeois state through the mass action of the workers culminating in an armed uprising, the substitution for the parliamentary regime, of the Soviet power, and the suppression of the bourgeoisie through the dictatorship.

It is argued by the opportunists, however, that the Russian Revolution must be considered as a peculiar product of Russia, that the difference in the economic conditions of the western countries and Russia precludes the possibility of the adoption of the principles and tactics of the Russian Revolution by the proletariat of those countries. They are peculiar to Russia and can not
act as a guide for the proletarian revolution of more advanced countries.

Surely it is not denied that many features of the Russian Revolution are due to the conditions prevailing in Russia. The relation between the proletariat and peasantry, for instance, is a product of Russian conditions. The opportunists wish to make it appear that the Communists of the western countries desire to carry the Russian Revolution in toto over to their respective countries. They try to make it appear that the communists of other countries would copy every law and decree of the Russian Bolsheviks and transfer them to their own countries during the revolution.

That, of course, is utterly false. We speak here of fundamental aspects of the Russian Revolution—aspects that are of international significance and will be characteristic of all proletarian revolutions. The destruction of the bourgeois state by force, the establishing of a dictatorship of the proletariat in the form of soviets—these are the fundamental features of the Russian Revolution and true to its revolutionary instinct, the proletarian advance guard of the whole world accepted those tactics of the Russian Revolution as necessary methods of struggle in every country. And it is not only because of the experiences of the Russian Revolution that the advance guard has accepted the methods of that revolution as applicable to all countries. "During the first months, after the Russian proletariat had conquered political power," says Lenin, "it might have seemed that the proletarian revolutions in other countries would be very little like ours, because of the tremendous differences between backward Russia and the advanced countries of Western Europe. But we have now considerable experience of an international scope, which pretty definitely establishes the fact that some fundamental features of our revolution are not local, not peculiarly national, not Russian only but that they are of international significance."

"One Nation can and should learn from another," says Karl Marx, and to refuse to learn from the Russian Revolution under the pretext that it is a backward country is far from Marxian.

We shall proceed to analyze the fundamental features of the Russian Revolution in greater detail and see whether the differences in the economic development of Russia and the western countries would warrant the assertion that the fundamental principles and tactics of the Russian Revolution can not be applied by the proletariat of other countries in their struggle for power.

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"Left Wing Communism—An Infantile Disorder."
A class that enjoys great privileges will not willingly surrender those privileges; even if their surrender is demanded by a majority of the population. No oppressed class ever succeeded in freeing itself without a violent effort, and the proletariat can be no exception to this historical rule.

The Russian Revolution showed approximately how the proletariat will destroy the power of the bourgeoisie. The spontaneous action of the armed masses destroyed the monarchy and the same action destroyed the bourgeois state. After the Bolsheviks seized power through an armed insurrection, the civil war began in earnest. The bourgeoisie gathering whatever forces it could muster savagely launched attack after attack upon the proletariat and the latter due to its armed force was victorious.

In the violent character of the Russian Revolution, we see the accuracy of the statement of Marx and Engels that "the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat." Hillquit can not deny that Marx expressly stated that "violence is the midwife of every old society when it is pregnant with a new one," so he remarks with complacency, "but the midwife is entirely impotent to bring a healthy child into the light of the world before it has been conceived and fully developed within the mothers' womb" (p. 96). Hillquit forgets, in the apt phrase of Lenin, that "the shell of imperialism is made of the finest steel and therefore unbreakable by any kind of chicken," whether fully developed or not.

"Furthermore," says Hillquit, "Marx and Engels were confined almost entirely to aprioristic reasoning on the subject." Marx and Engels argued both from historical instances and from the very composition of capitalist society.

The French Revolution was an example par excellence of a class struggle. It showed that the final overthrow of the dominant class can not be accomplished except through violent revolution. Of course, one can argue (if he is an opportunist), that the French Revolution was a bourgeois revolution and therefore can not be compared to a proletarian revolution. The essential thing, however, is that both are class struggles and in both instances an oppressed class is trying to overthrow an oppressing class. And if a bourgeois revolution had to be violent, it follows that all the more will a proletarian revolution, of necessity, be violent. In the former the class that had to be expelled from power was not so powerful; it had not so many privileges and so
much wealth as the bourgeoisie has at present. And in addition the members of the feudal aristocracy had the consolation to know that even if they were thrown out of political power they could (and as a matter of fact they did) turn bourgeois and help extract surplus profits from the workers. The bourgeoisie know, that if they are defeated by the proletariat, they would have no other recourse but to go to work or starve. Hence their opposition will be a hundred-fold more bitter and violent than the opposition offered by the feudal aristocracy to the bourgeoisie.

In a previous chapter it was shown that even in a country of such a high degree of capitalist development as the United States, the proletariat does not form an absolute majority of the population. That, in itself, would prevent its gaining a majority in the bourgeois parliament. But it can be said that all the exploited are in a majority. Undoubtedly they are in the vast majority. And here we come to a very important point not mentioned by Hillquit. Under capitalism, the workers are not only enslaved physically but also spiritually and intellectually. To hope that all the workers would free themselves from the spiritual bondage of capitalism under the capitalist system is nothing less than utopian. At best only a minority of the workers can be expected to become class-conscious.

Revolutions are always made by determined minorities who drag the majority after them. This is not a Blanquist conception of a conspiratorial minority seizing power in the midst of turmoil. The proletarian revolution can not come in that way. It can come only through the activity of the masses pressed by unbearable misery. Nevertheless the active, vital, dynamic force of the revolution will be a minority of the workers, the class-conscious vanguard.

Naturally a revolution does not come in ordinary times. It comes when passion runs high both on the capitalist and proletarian side. In such moments vital issues are not settled by the ballot. In such moments it is vain to tell the workers to wait for the next election and place a majority of socialists in parliament. When the masses begin to move under the stress of circumstances, they are not in a mood to obey bourgeois laws or to confine their activities to constitutional methods. Neither does the bourgeoisie at such times depend upon moral persuasion or upon legal methods. All the forces of the bourgeois state, and if those are not sufficient, the various organizations that the bourgeoisie created just for such an emergency, are brought into action. Both sides believe themselves to be in the right and "between equal rights force decides."
Hillquit divides the Socialist movement into three stages: "the preparation for the struggle to achieve power, the seizure of power, and defending the conquest of power" (p. 92). "During the first period," he says, "the propaganda of violence as a present method or even as a prospective necessity under such conditions... has always and rightly been rejected by Marxian Socialists" (p. 94) — he should have added of Hillquit's type. It is just in this that the opportunist is distinguished from the proletarian revolutionist. The latter believes in telling the proletariat at every stage of the struggle exactly what means it will have to use to achieve its emancipation. This is absolutely necessary. Otherwise, when the moment for action comes there will be confusion and hesitation amongst the proletarian forces and confusion and hesitation mean inevitable defeat. In the spirit of Marx and Engels the proletarian revolutionist says: "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions."*

It is true that the question of the use of force assumes greater significance in a country that is on the verge of revolution. Systematically to acquaint the proletariat with the inevitability of the use of violence in the revolution does not mean that upon every occasion the proletariat should be called upon to use force. In the United States, for instance, only a fool or something worse would call upon the workers to take up arms. It would only mean, if the call would be heard, the leading of a few enthusiasts into the jaws of death without accomplishing any good. Hillquit lets us infer that this is exactly what Lenin and the other Bolsheviks intend doing. He erects a man of straw in order to be able to knock it down.

In discussing the second stage of the Socialist cycle, Hillquit says: "To assert the absolute inevitability of violence in the seizure of political power by the working class in the face of all historical experience is at least somewhat rash." He bases this assertion on an analysis of the revolutionary movements of recent years. As a matter of fact in only one, out of all the revolutions he mentions, did the Socialists get a majority in Parliament. That was in Finland and this can be considered as an historical exception not to be taken as a criterion. In not one country that Hillquit mentions, outside of Finland, did the seizure of power come as a result of a majority in Parliament.

Hillquit cannot but admit the necessity of force to hold

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*Communist Manifesto, p. 58.
political power. It is characteristic of the opportunist to accept a revolutionary doctrine in words and interpret it away. Force is necessary, but after the seizure of political power. It is, of course, unreal to make such a hard and fast distinction between seizure of power and holding of power. Whether civil war and violence comes before, during or after the seizure of power is a hypothetical question. To “wrest power” from the bourgeoisie must not be construed in the narrow sense of the actual seizure of power which might be accomplished in an hour. It must be understood in the sense of destroying whatever power the bourgeoisie possesses, whatever armies it might succeed in forming. And this can be accomplished only through force. The real point is that the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat will finally culminate in civil war. In all cases mentioned by Hillquit not even excluding Finland there was civil war on a larger or smaller scale. Thus history teaches that the conquest of political power by the proletariat was never, except in an isolated case, achieved through a majority in parliament and that civil war inevitably followed in all cases.

The more advanced a capitalist country is, the more difficult for the proletariat to seize state power, which is the pivot of a revolution. The Russian proletariat was fortunate in being opposed by a weak and inexperienced bourgeoisie. Thrice harder will it be for the workers of the western countries to dislodge the bourgeoisie from power. The difference in conditions between the western countries and Russia does not mean that a different method of seizing and holding power will have to be used. It only means that the conquest of power will be more difficult for the proletariat of the more developed countries and therefore the same method will have to be used only on a much larger scale. The bloody combats between the Fascisti and the workers in Italy should be a lesson to all pacifists who believe in a peaceful revolution, and that lesson is, that the more advanced a country is the bloodier will be the civil war.

CHAPTER VI

PROLETARIAN DICTATORSHIP

NO IDEAS have been so popularized by the Russian Revolution as the ideas of dictatorship of proletariat and of Soviets. The proletarian advance guard of every country accepted these ideas or principles without hesitation. The revolutionary workers felt that a proletarian revolution could not be successful except through instituting a dictatorship in the form of Soviets.
The socialists of the right completely rejected the ideas of dictatorship and Soviets, depending upon democracy and parliament to usher in the socialist regime. The socialists of the center accepted those ideas but insisted on interpreting and modifying them "to suit conditions peculiar to their own countries." They mean to suit their opportunist tastes.

The chapter in Hillquit's book dealing with the dictatorship of the proletariat is typical of the centrist attitude—that wavering, hesitating, evasive attitude. Nowhere is dictatorship specifically rejected but it is so interpreted as not to leave a trace of the original.

As soon as history saw society divided into classes, into property-owners and propertyless, into exploiters and exploited, it also saw the appearance of the state. For the ruling class, in order to preserve its supremacy, had to create some instrument which would suppress any possible revolt of the exploited. This instrument was the state, and while in times of peace it appeared as if the state acted as a mediator between the classes, its real nature as an engine of oppression became apparent whenever the exploited attempted to throw off the yoke of the exploiters. Whatever outward differences there might have been in the form of the state, its essential nature was alike in every case. Whether it was the Athenan democracy of Pericles or the Roman Republic in the times of the Gracchi or the Roman Empire in the time of Nero or Diocletian, the state was the means whereby the ruling class kept the slaves in subjection.

When the ancient ruling class gave way to the feudal nobility, and when the slaves were supplanted by the serfs, the state still remained but now in the hands of the feudal aristocracy. And when economic development and a change in the mode of production created a new class, namely, the bourgeoisie, that class began the struggle for the state power and during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it completely wrested the power from the hands of the feudal ruling class. The French Revolution is the classical example of a bourgeois revolution, where the bourgeoisie by a determined effort gained control of the state.

In the struggle against the feudal nobility the bourgeoisie had to depend upon the masses of the people. The bourgeoisie struggled in the name of the nation—"What is the Third Estate?" asked Sieyes in his famous pamphlet, "Qu'est-ce que le tiers etat?" And he answered: "The nation, that is the Third Estate." And in order to give a semblance of reality to that assertion, the bourgeoisie ostensibly fought for democracy or the rule of the people.
Universal suffrage became the slogan of the most radical element of the bourgeoisie. The state, where universal suffrage would exist, would be not the tool of a certain class but would represent the interests of the whole people.

That was what was promised. In reality, however, while the bourgeoisie, the owners of the means of production, gained control of the state in the name of the people they used it in the same way as every other ruling class before it did, i.e., to hold the exploited class in subjection. The June days of 1848 in France, the suppression of the Chartist Movement in England, the slaughter of the workers after the defeat of the Paris Commune gave the proletariat object-lessons of what use the state was to the bourgeoisie and of how much democracy and universal suffrage really meant to the workers.

It was readily seen that the democracy which the bourgeoisie boasted of was democracy for them and not for the working masses. It served as a good means with which to cool the revolutionary ardor of the masses and turn their activities into peaceful channels which could not in the least threaten the rule of the bourgeoisie. But such are the inherent contradictions of the capitalist system that no matter which way the capitalist class turns it is faced with certain danger. To allow the workers a certain amount of freedom means to give them the opportunity of organizing for the struggle against the capitalists; not to give them any freedom means to convince the workers that the path of revolution is the only one open to them. The capitalist class uses both methods at different times but in a period of crisis it throws away all pretense of democracy and comes out in the open with its state to crush the workers.

To intelligent workers the boasted democracy and equality of the bourgeois order is a sham and a hypocrisy. How can there be any equality in a social system characterized by so many striking contrasts—between the misery and sufferings of the poor and the excessive luxury of the rich? How can there be democracy when all the forces that mould public opinion are in the hands of the capitalists—when the press, the school, the church, the buildings for meeting places belong to the master class? All the freedom which the exploiters allow to the exploited is the freedom to choose their masters from amongst the exploiters. The neutrality of the capitalist state in the struggle between capital and labor is a fiction assiduously fostered amongst the masses. Any worker who has ever been on strike knows very well on whose side the army, the police, the judges fight. They are always on the side of
the capitalist because they are hired by him to protect his economic interests.

Thus from their every day experiences the workers can see that the bourgeois state protects the interests of the capitalists and oppresses the workers. Hence what must the workers do first in order to achieve emancipation? They must first seize political power and destroy that which is their enemy, the bourgeois state.

But is it sufficient merely to destroy the bourgeois state. No, for the capitalists will offer resistance to the workers’ government at any and every opportunity. They will not willingly surrender their ill-gotten gains. It must be understood that the workers will not get into power through “constitutional means.” Therefore the capitalists will claim that they have a right to use all means to regain their power. Not that they would not do the same thing were a miracle to occur and the workers would gain the power through constitutional means. Constitutional or unconstitutional, it would hardly worry the capitalists. But they will take advantage of the “unconstitutional” seizure of power and try to rally as many people as they can to expel the “usurping Communists.”

The workers, once they seize power, will naturally fight to retain it. The revolutionary workers are not like the Mensheviks of Russia, who, when they had a majority of the people behind them, surrendered the reins of government to the capitalists. Once the workers seize political power, that is, once they become the ruling class they will do exactly what every other ruling class did, namely try to preserve their rule. But there is an essential difference between the proletariat as a ruling class and all other previous ruling classes. All previous ruling classes suppressed the exploited masses while the proletariat suppresses the exploiters.

The workers, then, will use the same means to suppress the bourgeoisie as the latter used to suppress them. The workers will have an army, a police force and whatever else is necessary to crush the resistance of the exploiters. In other words, the workers will have a state, “a special apparatus for compulsion.” The proletarian state, the engine of oppression which the proletariat uses in mercilessly crushing the resistance of the capitalists, is known as the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The capitalist rule is also a dictatorship but the capitalists can not come out openly and say so. They try to hide their dictatorship with democratic camouflage. This is a fundamental distinction between the capitalist and proletarian dictatorship. While the former is hypocritical, the latter is frank and open. The capitalists can not afford openly to declare their dictatorship
because that would disillusion the workers. They have to keep up the fiction of democracy. The workers, having no one to exploit, can come out and declare openly that they are for dictatorship, that they intend to crush by force any attempt at resistance, that they believe in democracy only for the workers, and that they will grant no rights to the exploiters. It is by the dictatorship of the proletariat that the capitalist is deprived of his industries, his press, his schools, his churches. Everything that he possesses, which enslaves the worker is taken away from him without any compensation whatsoever.

But not only is the state necessary for the proletariat in order to crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie; it is necessary also for the proletariat to introduce communism. Communism does not come full-grown out of capitalism. Communism can exist only when production is at the highest degree of efficiency, when so much can be produced that the principle “to each according to his wants and from each according to his abilities” can be actually realized. Furthermore, the workers are spiritually so enslaved by capitalism that they are not the right kind of human material for a communist society. A generation of workers will have to be trained under proletarian rule, far away from capitalist influence, who will grow up under a different environment and be trained in the spirit of communism. This will be done under the dictatorship.

The proletarian state, however, is not an eternal institution. Nor do the advanced workers conceive of it as such. The state, existing because of the existence of classes, it naturally follows that once classes are abolished the state will also be abolished. And the rule of the proletariat means the ultimate abolition of classes, for “it cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class-distinctions and class struggles.” The Anarchists wish to destroy the bourgeois state without substituting for it the proletarian dictatorship. But how can the proletariat destroy the bourgeois state without armies and police forces of its own? And that is exactly what the state is composed of—armies, police forces, jails, etc. The proletarian dictatorship is an evil, say the Anarchists. If it is an evil it certainly is an exceedingly necessary evil.

Thus we can see, that proletarian dictatorship is necessary both to crush the resistance of the capitalists and to introduce communism. No one who does not fully accept the principle of proletarian dictatorship can claim to be a revolutionary Marxist.
The socialists of the right reject that principle and thus automatically exclude themselves from the proletarian ranks. The centrists, like Hillquit, sometimes accept, sometimes reject the principle and even when they do accept it they interpret it to suit their own tastes and the tastes of the bourgeoisie.

After analyzing the definitions of the dictatorship of the proletariat given by Kautsky and Lenin, Hillquit makes the profoundly inane remark that the term dictatorship can not be technically applied to the rule of the proletariat because in defining it both Kautsky and Lenin used the phrase “not bound by any laws.” If dictatorship is not bound by any laws, Hillquit argues, it can not be applied to the rule of the proletariat because the proletariat is bound by laws of its own making. Of course if the Communists in their program, advocate the dictatorship of the proletariat, the word can not be applied to the rule of the proletariat because it is contained in the program. This is the reductio ad absurdum of Hillquit’s argument. Then he adds that any class in power is not bound by any laws, hence the term is applicable to the rule of any other class. Yes, “Comrade” Hillquit, the rule of every class is essentially a dictatorship and in a crisis no class is bound by any laws even of its own making.

Then again, says Hillquit, the dictatorship was necessary in Russia because the proletariat formed a minority of the population. In western countries where the proletariat forms a majority of the population the dictatorship will not be so severe. First of all Hillquit did not show that the proletariat formed a majority of the population in any country and second the dictatorship does not depend upon majority or minority but is necessary because of the inevitable resistance by the capitalists to the proletariat. The proletariat needs to crush the bourgeoisie regardless of its numbers. An organized minority is always stronger than a disorganized majority and the bourgeoisie certainly have organizing ability. In fact if in Russia there is necessary such a severe dictatorship, it will be far more necessary in more developed countries where the bourgeoisie is much more powerful and experienced and have much more to lose and consequently will offer greater resistance to the proletariat. And again the proletariat of Russia was fortunate in having as an ally a suffering and land-hungry peasantry while the agricultural population of more developed countries are the most reactionary element and will probably form the bulk of the white guards. There is only one thing that would tend to make the dictatorship in an advanced country like the United States less stringent than in Russia. The revolution in the United States will come, in all probability, after the European
workers have already gained the power. Hence instead of being compelled to face a hostile international capitalist class, the American workers would be aided by the European workers and thus be able to crush its own bourgeoisie the more easily.

One of the methods of crushing the bourgeoisie by the proletarian dictatorship is by taking away its freedom of the press and association. Is it not foolish, remarks Hillquit facetiously, to expect the capitalists to grant workers that which they will take away from them after the workers conquer power? And Hillquit has a strange authority in Bukharin to back up his assertion. As a matter of fact when Bukharin speaks of not mentioning the depriving the bourgeoisie of the right to vote and of the right of a free press, he refers to immediate demands. Surely when the workers demand of the capitalist state the right of free association they can not insist upon excluding the bourgeoisie from that right. Therefore they must demand that right for everybody. But it is a different matter when we are drawing up a program dealing with proletarian tactics during and after the seizure of power. The program must be clear, definite and exact so as to avoid all hesitation and wavering. Furthermore the proletarian revolutionists say to the capitalists: "You, exploiters and murderers, claim that your rule is democratic. Very well, furnish the proof by giving us the right of free press and free association. We tell you plainly that when we are in power we shall give you no democracy, that our democracy will be confined only to workers and from you we shall take away every right." And the capitalists are confronted by a dilemma. To grant the workers "democracy" is to allow them to organize; not to grant them is to drive them towards revolution.

Hillquit is afraid that by stressing the point of dictatorship in the program, the capitalists will not allow him to get elected to Congress. The class-conscious worker, caring more for the revolution than for a seat in parliament, stresses that very point which is vital to the success of a proletarian revolution.

"But," say the opportunists voicing the sentiments of the bourgeoisie, "the dictatorship of the proletariat is not really a dictatorship of the proletariat but over the proletariat. It is a dictatorship of a political party, in the case of Russia of the Communist Party. There can be no such thing as the dictatorship of a class." The opportunists would be satisfied only when every individual proletarian would constitute himself a dictator.

There is such a thing as dictatorship of a class. In capitalist countries there is a dictatorship of the capitalist class. That does not mean, however, that the whole class of capitalists consciously
does the dictating. It is the government of the capitalists that represents the dictatorship of the capitalist class. The same is true of the working class. The proletariat is an amorphous mass incapable of exercising dictatorship except through a head, through a political party.

But there is a vital distinction between the proletariat and the capitalists in the method of exercising dictatorship. The actual dictators of the bourgeoisie are the powerful bankers and industrial magnates who are behind the scenes, so to speak. The government in a capitalist country does the bidding of the financial barons upon whose support the government depends. The dictatorship in a country where the proletariat has the power is actually exercised by the government, by the political party that represents the proletariat.

And what is this political party of the proletariat? It is an organization composed of the most conscious workers, those workers who understand the significance and the aim of the class struggle and who are ready to sacrifice their all for the proletarian cause. It is this organization, this political party that exercises the iron dictatorship of the proletariat.

The political party of the working class, the Communist Party, is naturally composed of a small minority of the proletariat. This is unavoidable. As has been pointed out before in this pamphlet capitalism demoralizes the workers so that only a minority who are above the average free themselves from capitalist illusions. This minority leads the whole working class both before, during and after the seizure of power. A proletarian revolution is impossible without a trained and experienced Communist Party. It is one of the essential prerequisites to a proletarian revolution.

Hillquit makes the ridiculous statement that the “vital difference between the modern working-class party in the West and the Communist Party of Russia is that while the former is often practically synonymous with the working class and is always open to all of it, the Communist Party is a closed corporation, a class within a class” (p. 67). The modern working-class party is practically synonymous with the working class! The largest Socialist Party prior to the war was the German Socialist Party with a million members. There are at least over twelve million proletarians in Germany. The Communist Party, according to Hillquit, is a “closed corporation.” It is not “open” to all the workers. He makes it appear that the Communist Party intentionally excludes all the workers. The Communist Party is open to all workers but only a minority of the workers go into the
party because only a minority are class-conscious. The real difference between the Communist Party and the "modern working class party" is while the latter is led by lawyers and petty-bourgeois democrats and composed of workers who are not sufficiently class-conscious, the former represents the vanguard of the proletariat, the most class-conscious and most revolutionary workers.

CHAPTER VII

SOVIETS

Through what political institution can the dictatorship of the proletariat function? The principle of proletarian dictatorship can be actually applied through some concrete form of state. What is that form? We have had sufficient historical experience to say that the type of state by means of which the proletariat will exercise its dictatorship is the Soviet type.

The revolutionary bourgeoisie always clamored for a parliamentary regime, for a Constituent Assembly. Wherever it obtained power, be it Italy, France, England or Russia, some kind of parliament was the inevitable result. It found in parliament an institution which best served its class interests. It was adapted for the rule of the bourgeoisie.

As early as the French Revolution, however, the masses, in their revolutionary struggles, organized themselves outside of the bourgeois Assembly. The Parisian sans-culottes had their sections and commune and while the bourgeoisie tried to limit the Revolution to parliamentary channels and to the gaining of bourgeois democracy, the masses, organized in the sections, carried the Revolution forward and made social as well as political demands. The sections were the heart and life of the Revolution. It was the sections that organized the insurrection of August 10th; it was the sections that created the revolutionary army that drove the Austrians from France; it was the sections that drove the Girondins from the Convention and thus gave new life to the Revolution.

And the Paris Commune is another example of how the masses create their own organs best suited for the struggle and rule of the proletariat. It is from the Paris Commune that Marx drew the famous lesson that the proletariat can not simply lay hold of the machinery of the bourgeois state and use it for its own purposes.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 brought the new form of proletarian organization into existence. Spontaneously the workers created Workers' Councils or Soviets to direct the struggle against the monarchy. The Soviets were not invented in any
one's mind. They were the spontaneous product of the proletariat in revolt.

In 1917 during the March Revolution the Soviets again came into being and existed side by side with the bourgeois Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks in April, 1917, demanded that the Soviets take over all state power but due to the fact that the Mensheviks and the Social-Revolutionaries were in control, the Soviets supported the bourgeois government. When the Bolsheviks came into power in November, the Soviets took over all functions of the state.

At that time it could not be claimed that the Soviets were destined to become the form of proletarian dictatorship in every country. The difference in economic development between Russia and the western countries was so great that no one thought that the proletarian dictatorship in the western countries would assume the same form as in Russia. In 1918 Lenin wrote that "the Soviets were the Russian form of proletarian democracy." It was only after the revolutionary upheavals of Western Europe that he saw that the Workers' Councils or Soviets were not peculiar to Russia but that they were the product of the proletarian revolution everywhere and then it was possible to say that the proletarian dictatorship would be exercised in every country through the Soviets. "The February and October revolutions of 1917 brought the Soviets to complete development on a national scale, and subsequently to their victory in the proletarian Socialist revolution. And less than two years after, the international character of the Soviets revealed itself in the spread of this form of organization over the world-wide struggle of the working class. It became apparent that the historical mission of the Soviets was to be the grave-digger, the heir and successor of bourgeois parliamentarism and bourgeois democracy generally."*

The Soviets are born in the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. During a revolutionary period the great mass of workers become politically conscious and the organizations, such as unions, which the proletariat created in times of peace are inadequate to direct the struggle. Consequently new forms of organization are born, better suited to direct the struggle. And the Soviets are that new form, representing all the workers, organized as well as unorganized.

And not only are the Soviets best adapted for the struggle. They are also best suited to serve as the form of proletarian rule, of proletarian democracy. Just as parliament is the class

*"Left-Wing Communism" by Lenin.
institution of the bourgeoisie so the Soviets best serve the class interests of the proletariat. All the features of parliament which are but devices to keep the workers in subjection, such as division into legislative, executive and judicial functions, elections at rare intervals, election of representatives instead of delegates, lack of recall—all these features are absent in the Soviets. They have no use for the clever schemes of checks and balances because they are not interested in keeping the masses out of power as the parliament is. On the contrary the Soviets are interested in attracting the masses for without the conscious activity of the masses they are powerless.

In the Soviets there is no division of executive and legislative functions, elections are held at frequent intervals, the delegates are instructed on the main issues and the workers have the right to recall their delegates at any time. Hillquit says that these features are “not incompatible with parliamentary institutions” citing as proof that they have been advocated by middle-class reformers and exist in Switzerland and in some parts of the United States. The question whether they are or are not incompatible with parliamentary institutions is after all hypothetical. The historic fact is that no parliament of any considerable importance ever had those features while a proletarian state immediately introduces them. The Paris Commune introduced those features long before the middle-class reformers ever thought of them. From this point of view it can be said that these features are fundamental distinctions between bourgeois and proletarian democracy.

The Soviets in Russia excluded the capitalists from the franchise. Bukharin considers the exclusion of the bourgeoisie from the franchise to be a fundamental characteristic of the Soviets. Hillquit quotes Lenin’s “Proletarian Revolution” to show that Lenin considered the disfranchisement of the bourgeoisie to be necessitated by Russian conditions. Lenin, however, adds that after the war and after the experience of the Russian Revolution there will probably be a restriction of the franchise even in western countries. It must be remembered that Lenin wrote the “Proletarian Revolution” before the war ended and before the proletarian uprisings occurred in Germany, Austria, Hungary, etc. Taking those into consideration Bukharin is undoubtedly right when he considers the disfranchisement of the bourgeoisie as a fundamental feature of the Soviets.

Hillquit considers the determining feature of the Soviets to be “its indirect and elaborate system of voting which operates to give the industrial working class minority political preponderance
over the peasant majority’’ (p. 85). Hillquit takes that characteristic of the Russian Soviets which is peculiar to Russia and calls it the determining feature of Soviets in general. He does that to show that the Soviets are a product of Russian conditions and will arise only in such countries where the proletariat is in a minority and the peasants in a great majority.

The indirect system of voting is one of the features of the Soviets. It allows the calling of conferences at frequent intervals. To ask a local soviet to send a delegate to a conference is much easier than to arrange for the election of delegates by the people as a whole. Contrary to the howlings of the bourgeoisie and of the opportunists that the indirect system of elections prevents the majority of the people from controlling the government that very system gives the people an opportunity to influence the government. A bourgeois parliamentary government is never subject to the will of the people. An election occurs every once in a while, a fake issue is raised to blind the masses, the government is placed into power on that issue and that is all the people have to say until another election comes when the same process is repeated. Frequent conferences with the peoples’ delegates, even if the capitalist government would want it, is of course impossible where the machinery of election is so complicated. In a soviet regime, by means of the indirect system of voting, conferences of delegates who are in constant touch with the life of the masses can be called frequently and thus the Soviets reflect the will of the majority to a far greater extent than parliament does.

The indirect system of voting in Russia, as Hillquit says, operates also in giving the proletariat a political preponderance over the peasantry. A proletarian state must see that the ruling class must receive a majority. The degree of favor shown the proletariat must be in inverse ratio to its numerical inferiority. But it is not so much the indirect system of voting that gives the proletariat the advantage as is the provision in the Soviet Constitution which gives a fewer number of proletarian voters the same number of delegates as a larger number of the peasantry has. The vote of the proletarian counts for more than the vote of the peasant.

In more advanced countries the indirect system of voting will, in all probability, be a feature of the Soviets, but since the proletariat is numerically larger in those countries than the peasantry it will not be necessary to make such provisions to assure a proletarian majority as the Russian Soviets have taken. Thus the very characteristic which can be said to be peculiar to the
Russian Soviets, Hillquit has made the determining feature of Soviets in general.

And Hillquit concludes that "it is obvious that the Soviet Constitution was thus formulated in response to the special exigencies of the Russian Revolution" (p. 89). But the Soviets existed before the Soviet Constitution was made and if certain features of the Soviet Constitution were "formulated in response to the special exigencies of the Russian Revolution" does that prove that the Soviets themselves are peculiar to Russia? No one would be foolish enough to advocate the adoption of the Soviet Constitution of Russia, word for word, and apply it to more advanced countries.

The bourgeois Parliament is essentially the same in every capitalist country. In every country it is a class institution functioning to suppress the proletariat. But that does not mean that the parliaments of every country are identical in every detail. In one country there is universal suffrage, in another there is a property qualification; in one country there is an election at a stated time, in another, parliament is dissolved whenever the Premier does not have the confidence of the lower chamber; one country is a constitutional monarchy, the other a democratic republic and so forth and so on. Nevertheless, despite all the variations due to differences in the historic conditions the essential nature of parliament is the same everywhere.

Undoubtedly the Soviets will assume a different character in different countries, those differences depending on degree of economic development and on historic conditions. But there will be Soviets in all countries where the proletariat has achieved power and the fundamental features of the Soviets will be the same everywhere.

Hillquit states that in a country where the parliamentary regime exists, the proletariat, after getting political power can adapt parliament to serve its needs—can introduce the recall, frequent elections, etc. He forgets that the Soviets spring up in a period of revolution, that in a revolutionary crisis the Soviets and Parliament are locked in mortal combat. The proletariat has not the time, even if it should want to, to take Parliament and patch it up. Either the Soviets destroy Parliament completely or else they become impotent and cease to exist.

The Soviets are not a peculiar product of Russia. They are created by the proletariat to serve its class interests. They are a product of the proletarian revolution and since the proletarian revolution must come in every country so must the Soviets be the form of proletarian dictatorship in all lands where the proletariat is victorious.
CHAPTER VIII
THE WORLD REVOLUTION

THE Imperialist War was fundamentally a result of the incompatibility of the capitalist relations of property with the already developed forces of production. The competition between the imperialist powers for markets for their surplus products and for colonies for their surplus capital reached such a stage that a decision in the form of war, as to which one of the imperialist powers should have the right of way, was inevitable.

But such are the contradictions of capitalism that the struggle for supremacy between the capitalist classes of the belligerent countries resulted in the awakening of the class which is destined by history to be destroyer of the capitalist system itself and as a necessary consequence of the whole capitalist class.

The intolerable misery and suffering of the masses during the war showed the exploited peoples, as nothing else could, the necessity of destroying the capitalist system root and branch. The situation created by the war was filled with revolutionary explosives which might at any moment hurl the ruling classes into oblivion. History had placed the World Revolution on the order of the day.

The explosion first came in that country which possessed the most revolutionary proletariat and whose government was the weakest and most inefficient, and therefore least able to offer resistance. A conjunction of circumstances resulted in the appearance of the Proletarian Revolution first of all in Russia. But the Russian proletariat, conscious of the fact that its country was in backward state of capitalist development did not expect to hold its power unless the workers of the Western European countries would rise in revolt and thus save the Russian Revolution. It was due to this fact that the Bolsheviks utilized the Brest-Litovsk conferences to rouse the German and Austrian workers. The fiery speeches of Trotzky found an echo in a series of tremendous strikes in Germany and Austria but due partly to the betrayal of the official Socialist Parties of those countries and partly to the strength of the capitalist governments the strikes ended in nothing tangible and as a result the Bolsheviks were forced to accept the onerous terms of the Brest Litovsk Treaty, with the hope that a victorious proletarian revolution in the western countries would automatically nullify the treaty.

The hoped-for revolutions did not materialize. The betrayal of the German and Austrian workers by the "socialist" leaders resulted in the establishment of bourgeois republics in those
countries. The attacks of the Entente crushed the Hungarian Soviet Republic and Russia was left to fight its battles alone. But by that time the Russian proletariat had collected sufficient forces to defeat the attacks of the Counter-Revolution and the capitalist countries were unable to crush the first Socialist Republic.

The unexpected had happened. The proletarian revolution in Russia retained power in spite of the lack of support by a victorious proletariat of the European countries. This was of course due, as was pointed out in a previous chapter, to the fact that the capitalist countries, after the Brest Litovsk Treaty, were too much occupied fighting amongst themselves to pay any attention to the Russian Revolution, and when the capitalists of the victorious Allies were in a position to attack the Russian Revolution it was already too late.

The years 1919-1920, years when Europe was sitting on a revolutionary volcano, passed by without any victorious proletarian revolution. The World Revolution received a setback. The failure of the German proletariat, betrayed by the "socialist" leaders, to eject the bourgeoisie from power, the defeat of the Red Army at Warsaw, the collapse of the seizure of factories by the Italian Workers—all this meant that the World Revolution would have to wait for another favorable opportunity.

That this opportunity is not so far distant can be seen by a careful observation of present conditions in every capitalist country. The bourgeoisie shows not the least ability to put the economic system into running order after it was so disarranged by the Imperialist War. The suffering of the masses in the European countries is intense. The United States and Japan, the only countries who gained by the war, are flooded by unemployed workers. In the former country there are approximately six million workers out of a job.

Furthermore the relations between the capitalist countries are such that one can expect another imperialist war on a larger scale in the near future. The many small countries created by the war are ready to jump at each other's throats. England and France are not on the best of terms and above all the clouds of war hanging over England and the United States and Japan are of the most ominous character. Between the unsuccessful Russian revolution of 1905 and the successful proletarian revolution of 1917 there was an interval of twelve years. Between the unsuccessful proletarian uprisings of Western Europe and the victorious proletarian revolutions there might be a shorter or longer period, but
one must remember that ten, fifteen, or twenty years is but a drop in the bucket in comparison with the history of mankind.

Then again, the colonies of the imperialist nations will play a very important part in furthering the process of World Revolution. The capitalist countries have reached such a degree of development that subject colonies, where they can get rid of their surplus capital, are absolutely essential for them. Take away the colonies from a capitalist country and the industries of that country become demoralized. That is why the present revolutionary movement amongst the different colonies is of so much significance to the World Revolution.

The Russian Revolution completely refuted the theory of the opportunists that a proletarian revolution can come only in such a country where capitalism has reached a high degree of development. Basing his conclusion not on quotations but on a Marxian analysis of facts Lenin stated that "we must abandon scientific prejudices that each country must absolutely pass through capitalist exploitation. The regime of Soviets, when there is a powerful proletarian uprising on a world scale, can be established in those countries in which the capitalist development has not attained any serious proportions." Of course, to Hillquit such a conclusion "marks a clear departure from one of the fundamental tenets of Marxian historical science" (p. 116). We can say, however, that it is only a departure of that kind of "Marxian historical science" that depends solely upon isolated quotations. There is no doubt but that a victorious proletarian revolution in several capitalist countries would do away with the necessity of the colonies passing through a period of capitalism. That does not mean that Communism can be reached without large-scale industry, but it does mean that instead of the capitalist class building up that industry with resulting suffering and misery to the masses, the proletariat of the advanced countries would build it up. With the support of the Russian proletariat such backward countries as Turkestan, Azerbaijan, and Armenia became Soviet Republics, because, as Lenin says the Soviet idea is so simple that it can be grasped not only by the proletariat but also by the broader non-proletarian masses.

At the present moment the World Revolution hinges upon events in Germany. A successful proletarian revolution in Germany would mean a tremendous impetus to the World Revolution. It would mean an alliance between the Russian Soviet Republic and the German Soviet Republic and since a proletarian revolution in Germany would be followed almost immediately by proletarian uprisings in Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Yugo-Slavia, Italy,
Rumania and Hungary, it would mean that Eastern and Central Europe would offer a solid revolutionary front to the western countries.

And the German proletariat is receiving a training in the fire of revolutionary struggles, which means ultimate success. The various struggles through which the German proletariat has passed—beginning with the revolution in November 1918 and ending with the last proletarian revolt in March 1921, means that it is receiving a course of training not only by propaganda but in action. And a month of revolutionary action is worth more than ten years of propaganda. Without the Russian Revolution of 1905 when the Russian proletariat passed through its revolutionary apprenticeship the November Revolution could not have occurred. The western proletariat will also have to pass through a period of revolutionary apprenticeship.

And the workers of the western countries have a far more difficult task before them than the Russian workers. There are bound to be differences between a proletarian revolution of an advanced country and one in a backward country, but these differences are not the kind that Hillquit speaks of. It was a comparatively easy affair for the Russian proletariat to seize power. The rotten government of the Tsar, the lack of a middle class in the cities, the inability of the bourgeoisie to consolidate its power between March and November gave the Russian workers a most favorable opportunity. Not so with the workers of the western countries. They are faced by a powerful and experienced class and they will have to put forth tremendous efforts to crush that class.

But nothing is without its compensation. While it will be much more difficult for the workers of the western countries to seize power, yet after the power is in their hands they will have a much easier task than the Russian proletariat. Due to the high degree of industrial concentration, Communism will be reached much sooner in the western countries than in Russia. The difficulties which the Russian proletariat experienced due to its backward development will not be faced by the proletariat of the western countries.

It must not be imagined, however, with Hillquit, "that the problem of the proletarian revolutions in the West will be to transfer the industries into common ownership with little or no damage to their highly organized and finely adjusted mechanism and functions." That is conceiving the proletarian revolution in the peaceful form of a tea-party. Hillquit himself states that the possibility of a peaceful surrender of its possessions by
the capitalist class is improbable and yet he asserts that the industries must be taken over with no damage.

The disorganization of the industries during a time of revolution is unavoidable. The resistance of the capitalists and the inevitable sabotage of the technical staffs are bound to cause some disorganization until the proletariat will either compel or persuade the technical staffs to return to their work. Bukharin, in a lecture on The New Economic Policies of Soviet Russia to the delegate of the Third World Congress of the Communist International says: "The experience of the Russian Revolution has proven that our former notions of the revolutionary process were rather naive . . . It proved that during the proletarian dictatorship the complete dissolution of the old capitalist apparatus is a necessary stage in the revolutionary development. Perhaps some will object that this experience does not give us a theoretical proof and that the development in other countries may assume a different character from that of Russia. They may say that Russia is backward, her proletariat is not numerous, and big industry constitutes a small proportion of the economy of Russia. In Western Europe and in America, however, the development will take quite a different direction. This idea can be refuted not only by Russian experience—we are convinced of the absolute inevitability of an economic disorganization generally during the revolutionary process.

"Every revolution is a process of organization of social relations." He goes on to show that even in a bourgeois revolution there was necessary a process of reorganization. "In a proletarian revolution," he continues, "the same thing takes place on a much larger scale. During a proletarian revolution we must not only destroy the state machine, but completely reorganize the industrial relations. That is the most important point.

. . . "The working class can not win the army in time of Revolution if the soldiers obey their officers. It is equally necessary to bring about a breakdown in industrial discipline if the proletariat is to gain a hold over the economic apparatus.

. . . "When the workers strike or fight on the barricades no work can be done. When there is sabotage on the part of the technical intelligentsia, the whole process of production is interrupted. Only when the proletariat is fully in possession of the whole government machine can it put down such attempts. Until that time the process of production will be paralyzed. Kautsky and Otto Bauer were talking utter rubbish when they spoke of the continuity of the process of production and wish to connect it with the revolution . . . Either the revolution will win and
then there is an inevitable disorganization of the process of production or discipline will be maintained and then there will be no revolution at all. Every revolution is paid for by certain attending evils, and it is only at that price that we can bring about the transition to higher forms of economic life of the revolutionary proletariat."

The degree of disorganization of the processes of production depends a great deal upon historic conditions. In Russia not only the civil war after the Revolution but the imperialist war before the Revolution disorganized the process of production. In western countries the disorganization might or might not be so great as in Russia but that the industries will be delivered into the hands of the proletariat without damage is utterly absurd.

The later the proletarian revolution occurs in a country the easier will be its victory. The Russian Revolution, as the first proletarian revolution roused the bitter hostility of the whole capitalist world. There was no one to aid the Russian proletariat. Even the workers of the capitalist countries were late in offering their help. A proletarian revolution in the United States, however, will have the support of a victorious European proletariat. The opposition that it will meet in foreign invasion will be very slight and its success therefore after the seizure of power will be assured.

The Russian Revolution was but the prelude of the coming World Revolution. True it was not immediately followed by the World Revolution. Through various causes the World Revolution failed to develop. But it must come. The masters are unable to feed the slaves and the slaves in desperation must raise the standard of revolt. Either the World Revolution or imperialist wars that will destroy civilization.

CHAPTER IX

THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

THE end of the Imperialist War was the beginning of an acute class war in Europe. The two classes arms in hand were facing each other ready for the mortal combat. The proletariat was armed and its chances of victory were very great. All it needed to gain the victory was the leadership of a revolutionary party. The Socialist Parties failed miserably. Their betrayal of the workers was so great as to be unimaginable. They delivered the workers right into the hands of the bourgeoisie and those who were unwilling to be betrayed were ordered shot down by "socialist" ministers. What suffering and privation the proletariat would
have been spread had there been disciplined, trained Communist Parties to lead it to victory at the time when the chances for victory were most favorable!

But the betrayal of the workers by the Socialist Parties after the war was no surprise to those who were acquainted with the parties that composed the Second International. They had already betrayed the workers on that memorable August of 1914 when they rallied around the banner of their respective bourgeoisies. That betrayal was more noticeable and more base because such resolutions as those of Basel (1912) and Stuttgart (1907) were adopted by the leaders of those parties.

Hillquit tries to excuse the betrayal by saying that "the vast organizations of Socialism and labor were adjusted to peace-time activities and when the crisis came a number of the leaders and large portions of the masses were unable to adapt themselves to the situation. They were passed over by the active revolutionary struggles just as peace-time generals are discarded and peace-time armies reorganized upon the outbreak of actual hostilities. What a pitiful excuse! As if because of a change in conditions the betrayal of the leaders is justified!

And let no one imagine that the betrayal of leaders is a very small matter. It is characteristic of opportunists to sneer at those who accuse certain individuals of betraying the workers. This is not Marxian, they say. (Of course they quote Marx. They have a Marxian quotation to justify every kind of opportunism.)

No one would assert that the failure of a revolution is absolutely due to the actions of certain individuals. There are fundamental social conditions that perhaps more adequately explain the defeat of a class than betrayal by leaders. True enough if every proletarian were sufficiently class-conscious and determined they would, in all probability, not allow themselves to be betrayed.

But that does not in the least justify any betrayal. Opportunists generally lay the blame upon the backwardness of the masses. Therein they show that they do not grasp the essential function of proletarian leaders, that is, always to try and raise the masses to a higher standard rather than be dragged down to the standard of the backward masses.

The quality of leadership in a revolution is of very great importance. It is viewing the class-struggle in a mechanical and un-Marxian manner indeed to suppose that the masses, driven by social conditions, will automatically and spontaneously rise and without any leadership and guidance do exactly the right thing
at the right time. This is a utopian Anarchist conception and far removed from Marxism. The masses are composed of human beings who can be encouraged and discouraged, who are influenced by those whom they consider their leaders. And if in a moment of crisis the leaders hesitate, the confusion sown among the masses is bound to cost very dear.

How to prevent the recurrence of such a betrayal as the Socialist Parties of the Second International were guilty of was a question uppermost in the minds of the revolutionary socialists who clung to their principles. The Imperialist War introduced the era of social revolution all over the world, and the need of a closer union between the revolutionary workers of the whole world to lead the world proletariat to victory was immediately felt. The period of the struggle of the workers for the dictatorship of the proletariat demanded a different kind of party from the period when capitalism was still in a state of peaceful development. The growing bitterness of the class struggle signified the need of a strong centralized disciplined party in every country, and that those parties should be united into a close union capable of leading the world proletariat.

This need was satisfied by the birth of the Communist International. And what could be more natural and almost inevitable that the Bolsheviks of Russia should be the ones to bring such an International into existence? Never swerving from the principles of revolutionary socialism, they were the first to perceive the necessity of transforming the Imperialist War into a war between the classes, and when the opportunity came in Russia they did that very thing and led the Russian proletariat to a glorious victory. True internationalists that they are, the Bolsheviks, no sooner did they seize power in Russia, than they began to work for the World Revolution. And to quicken the progress of the World Revolution they organized the Communist International. Far from having "lamentably failed," as Hillquit would have it, to establish an International of Socialism, the Russian Communists succeeded in creating an International that has aroused the enthusiasm of every revolutionary worker and that has struck terror in the hearts of the bourgeois statemen.

The Communist International was begotten of the Russian Revolution and its fundamental principles and tactics are based upon the Russian Revolution. Those principles and tactics which brought victory to the Russian proletariat must be adopted by the proletariat of every other country regardless of the degree of capitalist development. The dictatorship of the proletariat in the form of Soviets might assume somewhat different forms in
different countries but essentially it will be the same everywhere. No matter what degree of development a country has reached the proletariat will not be able to achieve power by winning a parliamentary majority, nor will it be able to hold the power except through exercising its dictatorship through the Soviets. And this is not “sacrificing all realities to a doctrinaire scheme.” On the contrary it is a true application of the principles of revolutionary Marxism.

The first thought of the New International was to exclude all the opportunists from its ranks. The new era demanded an uncompromising revolutionary party and to allow opportunists in such a party would be to invite a betrayal of the workers in a crisis and that is exactly what the Communist International was determined to avoid. And to do that the Communist International must be composed only of those elements who accept the fundamental principles and tactics of the proletarian revolution and not only accept them in words but be prepared to carry them out in action.

“To the Socialist Movement of the World,” says Hillquit, “the Communist International has brought not peace but the sword.” He would have been absolutely right had he said to “socialist leaders like himself, Kautsky, Scheidemann Vandervelde, Hyndman, etc. The Communist International has brought the sword to the bourgeoisie and together with the bourgeoisie may be reckoned in all these “socialist” leaders. The Communist International is interested only in uniting the proletarian revolutionists and for others who claim to represent the workers it has nothing but contempt and hatred.

The idea that the opportunists try to spread that the Communist International does not take into consideration differences between countries is absolutely false. The fundamental principles and tactics of the proletarian revolution must be accepted in every country but it is incumbent upon all parties belonging to the Communist International to adapt those principles and tactics to existing conditions. “The party must reckon with conditions . . . These theses are not static and eternal,” says Bukharin. In a speech before the Third Congress of the Communist International Trotzky said: “We must analyze our tactics thoroughly in order to adapt them to existing conditions in each country separately.” “Tactics,” says Lenin, “should be constructed on a sober and strictly objective consideration of forces of a given country (and of the countries surrounding it, and of
all countries, on a world scale), as well as on an evaluation of
the experience of other revolutionary movements.”*

And again: “The national and state differences, now existing
between peoples and countries, will continue to exist for a very
long time even after the realization of the proletarian dictatorship
on a world scale. Unity of international tactics in the Communist
Labor Movement everywhere—demand not the elimination of
variety, not the abolition of the national peculiarities (this at the
present moment is a foolish dream), but such an application of
the fundamental principles of Communism—Soviet power and the
Dictatorship of the Proletariat—as will admit of the right modi-
fication of these principles in their adaptation and application to
national and individual state differences.”†

The Communist International taking the specific conditions of
the various countries into consideration has worked out tactics
which in a general way are applicable to every country. Such
tactics as working within the reactionary trade unions, participa-
tion in elections for bourgeois parliaments, support of revolu-
tionary national movements, necessity of a centralized party
and of illegal work—such tactics can be applied in all countries
but the method of their application must be decided in accordance
with the special conditions prevailing in a country.

The willingness of a party to conduct illegal work is a cri-
terion of its revolutionary character. Wherever the class struggle
has reached a high degree of intensity, a real revolutionary party
can not do all the necessary work for the preparation of the
struggle in the open, and wherever the White Terror rages, regard-
less of degree of intensity of class struggle, as in the United
States, the Communist Party must of necessity become illegal,
unless it is willing to adapt its program to the requirements of
the bourgeois government. The program of a revolutionry party
must be very exact, not only to show the proletariat the right
path to take but to train its own membership in a revolutionary
manner.

For a party to become illegal, however, is not to reduce it to
“the position of conspiratory organizations, and turn them back
to the days of Blanquism,” as Hillquit avers (p. 138). An illegal
party has a thousand different ways of reaching the masses in the
open. The stipulation of carrying on illegal work is absolutely
necessary because once let a party adapt itself to bourgeois legal-
ity and opportunism is inevitable. That the Communist Inter-

*“Left Wing Communism—Should We Participate in Bourgeois Par-
liaments,” by Lenin.
†“Left Wing Communism”—“Some conclusions,’ by Lenin.
national would transform a party into a Blanquist conspiratory organization is absurd. It is continually striving for the formation of mass Communist Parties.

Hillquit charges "that the Communist International represents little more than the international dictatorship of the Communist Party of Russia" (p. 146). If we take into consideration the success of the Russian Communists in leading the Russian proletariat, and the fact that they were the originators of the Communist International and that at the head of the Russian Communists stand the most scientific revolutionary Marxists of the world and above all the fact that Soviet Russia is the only stronghold of the world-revolution, the great influence of the Russian Communists in the Communist International is easily explained. Furthermore it must be remembered that the Communist party of Russia does not have a majority in the Executive Committee or in the Congresses of the Communist International, and to speak of the dictatorship of the Communist Party of Russia is ridiculous. A revolutionary worker cares little about the nationality of those who lead the movement. So long as they are real revolutionists and are capable of leading, then they may be Russian, German or any other nationality. It is only a petty-bourgeois lawyer that could use such an argument.

Hillquit's hope that "the Communist re-orientation inside of Russia is in the long run bound to reflect itself upon the international Socialist Movement" is vain. The Communist International was born in the midst of class war and to live, it must continue advocating the uncompromising class war. And if it continues to do so there is no hope that it will ever unite with the opportunists of all shades and degrees.

It is the general staff of the World Revolution. Upon its shoulders falls the duty of marshaling and training the proletarian cohorts so that, when the decisive moment of battle comes, the proletariat, purged of all the opportunist leaders, will advance to the attack, confident that the capitalist class with all its lackeys will be crushed by its onslaughts.
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