

Lenin's Report on the Russian Revolution to the 4th Congress of the C.I.

We present here the most important extracts from Lenin's speech.

Lenin: Comrades, I was put down as principal speaker on the list, but you will understand that after my prolonged illness I am not in a position to make a lengthy report. I can only give the introduction to some of the more important questions. My remarks will have to be quite brief. The theme of "Five Years of the Russian Revolution, and the Perspectives of World Revolution" is altogether too comprehensive and too big for one speaker to exhaust in one speech. I therefore will pick out only a small part of the subject, namely, the question of the New Economic Policy. I choose solely this small part, in order to introduce this matter, which is—at least to me—the most important of all, because I am engaged on it just now. I will therefore speak on the subject of how we started the New Economic Policy and what results we have achieved by it, by confining myself to this question I hope to be in a position to give you a general survey and a general conception of the subject.

To begin the story of how we started the New Economic Policy, I must recall to you an article written by me in 1918. In that year, in discussing the subject, I touched upon the question of how we would have to tackle the problem of State Capitalism. I wrote then:

"Compared with the present economic policy of the Soviet Republic—i. e. the economic situation of that time, State Capitalism represents a step forward. If we could, for instance, introduce State Capitalism here in the course of half a year, it would be a tremendous success and the best guarantee that within a year socialism will be strong and invincible in this country."

This was said at a time, of course when we were much more foolish than now, but not so foolish as to be unable to tackle such problems.

In a word, in 1918 I was of the opinion that State Capitalism represented a step forward in comparison with the economic situation of the Soviet Republic at the time. This sounds rather strange, and perhaps contradictory, for at that time our Republic was a Socialist Republic, at that time we carried out day by day, in rapid succession—perhaps in far too rapid succession—all kinds of new economic measures which we could not term otherwise than socialist. And yet I declared at that time that State Capitalism would be a step forward compared with the then prevailing situation of the Soviet Republic. I therefore found it necessary to illustrate my point by enumerating the elements of the economic structure of Russia. These elements I represented then as follows: (1) A patriarchal system of land tenure (2) Petty production of commodities. To this group belonged the majority of the peasants who deal in grain. (3) Private capitalism. (4) State Capitalism. (5) Socialism. All these economic elements were represented in Russia at that time. I took the trouble of explaining the correlation between these elements, suggesting that we might perhaps put a higher value on the non-socialist element, namely on State Capitalism, than on socialism. I repeat that it sounds rather strange to declare a non-socialist element of greater value than socialism in a Republic which had declared itself socialist. But it becomes quite conceivable, if we bear in mind, that the economic situation in Russia at that time could only by no means be considered as uniform and of high standing. On the contrary we were quite aware of the fact that in Russia we had a patriarchal system of agriculture, i. e., the most primitive form and parallel with it a socialist form of agriculture. What part was State capitalism to play under these circumstances? I asked myself again, which of these elements predominates. It is clear that in a petty bourgeois environment the petty bourgeois element would be on top. The question as I put it then—it was in connection with special discussion that has nothing to do with the present question—was this: What is our attitude towards State capitalism? And I promptly replied: State capitalism, although not a socialist form, would be more favorable for us and for Russia than the present form. What does it mean? It means that we do not overestimate the basis and structure of socialist economy, although we have already accomplished the social revolution. Already at that time we had, to a certain degree, come to the conclusion that it would be better for us to establish first State capitalism and through it to march on to socialism.

At all events there was already a general and vague idea of the retreat. And I believe that also we, as a Communist International, and not only as a country that was and has remained backward by its economic structure, must take that into consideration, particularly the comrades in the advanced countries of Western Europe. Just now, for instance, we are busy with the construction of a program. I for one believe that it would be the wisest action on our part if we discuss all these programs in a general way, if we take something like a first reading of them and have them all printed, but not in order to have the programme finally established this year. Why? First of all, because I think that we have hardly examined them all. Secondly, because we have as yet given almost no consideration to the idea of the retreat and making the retreat secure. Yet this is a question which merits our utmost attention in dealing with so great a change of the world as the overthrow of capitalism and the building up of the socialist system. It is not enough for us to be merely conscious of how we are to assume the offensive in order to be victorious. In revolutionary times this is not at all

difficult. In the course of the revolution there will always be moments when the enemy loses his head. If we attack him at such moments, we may score an easy victory. But such a victory would not be decisive, because the enemy after calm consideration, after due concentration of his forces, etc., may very easily provoke us into a premature attack in order to throw us back for many years to come. I therefore think the idea of the necessity of preparing for the emergency of a retreat to be of supreme importance, and that not only from the theoretical standpoint. From a practical standpoint also all the parties that are contemplating an offensive against capitalism in the near future, should right now think of how to make the retreat secure. I believe that this lesson, in conjunction with all the other lessons of our revolution, will surely do us no harm and most probably a vast amount of good in many instances.

Having thus emphasized that already in 1918 we considered State Capitalism as a possible way of retreat, I will pass to a review the results of our New Economic Policy. I repeat at that time it was still a very vague idea. Yet in 1921, after having emerged victoriously from the most important stages of the civil war, Soviet Russia came face to face with a great—I believe the greatest—internal political crisis which caused disaffection not only of the huge masses of the peasantry, but also of large numbers of workers. It was the first, and I hope the last, time in the history of Soviet Russia that we had the great masses of the peasantry arrayed against us, not consciously, but instinctively, as a sort of political mood. What was the cause of this unique, and for us, naturally disagreeable situation? It was caused by the fact that we had gone too far with our economic measures, that we had not made our base secure, that the masses were already sensing what we had not yet properly formulated although we had to acknowledge it a few weeks afterwards: namely that the direct transition to pure socialist economy, to pure socialist distribution of wealth, was far beyond our resources; and that if we could not make a successful and timely retreat, if we could not confine ourselves to easier tasks, we would go under. I believe that the crisis set in February, 1921. Already in the spring of that year we unanimously resolved—we had no considerable differences on that score,—to pass to the New Economic Policy. Today, after a lapse of a year and a half, at the end of 1922, we are in a position to draw comparisons. What are the results. Has the retreat benefited and really saved us, or has it failed, and the results indefinite. This is the principal question I put to myself, and I believe that this question is also of supreme importance to all the Communist parties, because if the answer should be in the negative, then we shall all go under. I believe that we can in good conscience give the answer to the question in the affirmative, namely in the sense that in the course of eighteen months that have elapsed we have

positively and absolutely demonstrated that we have successfully passed the examination....

Now as to the heavy industries. Here I must say that the situation is still difficult. Nevertheless some small improvement has taken place between 1921 and 1922. This entitles us to the hope of improvement in the near future. The means to that end we partly possess already. In a capitalist country the improvement of the situation of the heavy industries would absolutely necessitate the borrowing of hundreds of millions without which no improvement could be thought of. The economic history of capitalist countries tells us that the upbuilding of heavy industries in a backward country can be accomplished only by means of long-term loans of hundreds of millions of dollars or gold roubles. So far we have received no loans of this kind. All that has been written so far about concessions and such like remains almost entirely on paper. Much has been written about these things lately, particularly about the Urquhart concession. Nevertheless it seems to me that our concession policy is an excellent one. At the same time it ought to be taken into consideration that we have not yet arranged for any real big concession. Hence the situation of the heavy industries is for our backward country a really very difficult question, since we cannot count on any loans from the wealthy states. In spite of all this, we see perceptible improvement. We also find that our trading activity has already brought us some capital. This also is of rather modest dimensions amounting to no more than twenty million gold roubles, but a start has been made. Our trading yields us the means which we can apply to the upbuilding of the heavy industries.

At the present moment, however, our heavy industries are still in a very difficult position. But I believe that we can already afford to spare something for this purpose, and this we will continue to do even if we have to do it frequently at the expense of the population. We must be thrifty now. We are endeavouring to cut down State expenditure by curtailing the machinery of the State. As to that I will say a few words later on. At all events we must diminish State expenditure, and affect economy as far as possible. Thus we are saving on every thing, even on schools. This has to be done, because we know that without the saving and reconstruction of the heavy industries we cannot hope to upbuild any industry, and without them we cannot hope to exist as a self-sustaining country. This we know quite well. The salvation of Russia lies not only in a good harvest for her peasantry, nor in the good condition of light industries which cater for the requirements of the peasantry, but we need also the heavy industries. But the reconstruction of the heavy industries will require the work of many years.

Heavy industry requires subsidies from the State. Unless we have them, then, merely as a civilized country (to say nothing of a socialist country) we are

foredoomed to perish. In this matter we have now taken the decisive step. We have obtained the means requisite for putting heavy industry upon its own feet. The sum that we have hitherto obtained is, indeed, less than 20 million gold roubles—but we have it; it will be definitely applied to raising the level of our heavy industry....

Herein consisted the most important question for us, the economic preparation of the socialist economy. We could not prepare this in direct fashion, but we had to do it indirectly. The State capitalism we have established is a peculiar form of State Capitalism. It does not correspond to the ordinary conception of State Capitalism. We have all authority in our hands; we have the land, which belongs to the state. This is of immense importance, although our opponents are apt to declare, falsely, that it is of no importance at all. From the economic outlook, the ownership of the land by the State is of great importance; it has immense practical significance from the economic point of view. We have achieved this, and I must emphasize that our further activities must lie within this framework. We have already ensured that the peasants are satisfied with us, and that industry and commerce are on the upgrade.

I have already pointed out that our State capitalism is distinguished from State capitalism in the literal sense of the term, inasmuch as we not only have all the land in the hands of the Proletarian State, but also the important departments of industry. Above all: while we have farmed out a certain amount of small-scale and medium-scale industry, the rest of the industry remains in our hands. Regarding commerce, I should like to insist upon the point that we are endeavoring to establish, and indeed have already established, mixed companies, that is to say, companies in which part of the capital belongs to private (foreign) capitalists, while the rest belongs to us. In the first place we learn in this way how to carry on commerce and retain the possibility of dissolving the company whenever we think it necessary, so that we may be said to incur practically no risk. But from the private capitalists we are learning, and we are seeing how we are to work our way upward and what mistakes we are making. I think I have said enough about these matters....

I have said that we have committed a large number of follies. But I must in this connection say something concerning our opponents. When these read a lecture, saying: Lenin himself recognizes that the Bolsheviks have committed an enormous number of follies! I should like to answer them thus: "But you ought to know that our follies are of an essentially different kind from yours. We have just begun to learn, and we are learning systematically that we are satisfied with our progress. When our opponents, I mean the capitalists and the heroes of the 2nd International, insist that we have committed follies, I should like to make a comparison, mod-

ifying slightly the words of a celebrated Russian writer so as to give them the following aspect: When the Bolsheviks commit follies, this amounts to saying that the Bolsheviks say 2 and 2 equals 5; but when our opponents i. e. the capitalists and the heroes of the Second International, commit follies, this amounts to saying that they declare 2 and 2 equals a wax candle. That is not difficult to prove....

Here is another example, an even more telling one, that of the Versailles Treaty. What have the victorious powers done? How can they find any issue for the present confusion? I do not think that I exaggerate when I repeat that our follies are as nothing in comparison with the follies committed by the capitalist States, the capitalist world, and the Second International in conjunction. That is why I think that the prospects of the world revolution (this is a theme upon which I propose to touch briefly) are good, and in certain conditions are likely to become even better. It is upon these conditions that I propose to say a few words.

At the Third Congress of 1921, we adopted a resolution concerning the organizational upbuilding of the Communist parties, and concerning the method and the substance of their work. It was a good resolution. But the resolution is almost exclusively Russian: it was wholly derived from a study of Russian developments. That is the good side of the resolution, but it is also the bad side. It is the bad side of the resolution because hardly any foreigner (I have read the resolution over again before expressing my conviction), is able to read it. In the first place, it is too long, for it contains 50 or more paragraphs. Foreigners are apt to find it impossible to read anything of this sort. In the next place, even if a foreigner should manage to read it through, it is too Russian. I do not mean because it was written in the Russian language, for there are excellent translations into the various tongues, but because it is permeated with the Russian spirit. Thirdly, if by a rare chance a foreigner could understand it, he could not possibly carry it out. That is the third defect.

I have talked matters over with some of the delegates, and I hope that in the later course of the Congress I shall find it possible (not at the Congress itself, for in that I am unfortunately not able to participate) to talk matters over in full detail with a larger number of delegates from various lands. My impression is that we made a great mistake in the matter of this resolution, thereby blocking our own advance.

Let me repeat, it is an excellent resolution. I myself endorse every one of its 50 or more paragraphs. But we did not really know what we were about when we turned to foreigners with our Russian experience. Everything in the resolution has remained a dead letter. If we fail to understand why, we shall make no progress.

I think the most important for us all, Russians and foreigners alike is that

after 5 years of the Russian revolution, we should set ourselves to school. Now for the first time we have the possibility of learning. I do not know how long the capitalist powers will give us the opportunity of learning in peace and quietude. But we must utilize every moment in which we are free from war, that we may learn, and learn from the bottom up.

The whole Party, and Russians at large, show by their hunger for culture, that they are aware of this. The aspiration for culture proves that our most important task consists in this to learn and to go on learning. But foreigners too, must learn, though not in the sense in which we have to learn namely, to read, to write, and to understand what is read. This is our lack. There is much dispute as to whether such things belong to proletarian culture or to bourgeois culture. I leave the question open. This much is certain that our first task must be to learn reading and writing and understanding what is read. In foreign lands this is no longer necessary.

Foreigners need something different. They need something higher. First of all they have to learn how to understand all that we have written about the organizational upbuilding of the Communist parties, which they have subscribed without reading it, or without understanding it. You foreign comrades must make this your first duty. This resolution must be carried into effect: these things cannot be done between one day and the next, it is absolutely impossible. The resolution is too Russian; it is a reflection of Russian experience; that is why it cannot be understood by foreigners, and why foreigners are not content to treat this resolution as a miraculous picture which they are to hang on the wall and to pray to. That sort of attitude will not help us forward. You will have to make a portion of Russian experience your own. How can it be done. I do not know. Perhaps the Fascists in Italy will do us a good turn by showing the Italians how, after all, they are not so highly cultured that the development of Black Hundreds in Italy has become impossible. This may have a good effect. We Russians must also look for means of explaining to foreigners the elements of this reason. Otherwise it will be absolutely impossible for them to carry it out.

I am confident that in this sense (we have to say, not only for the Russians, but for foreigners as well), that the most important thing for us all in the period now opening, is to learn. We Russians have to learn in the general sense. You have to learn in the special sense that you may gain a genuine understanding of the organization, structure, method, and substance of revolutionary work. If you do this, I am confident that the prospects for the world revolution are not merely favourable, but splendid.

(Loud and long-continued applause. A general acclamation, "Long Live Comrade Lenin!").

The Fight in the Party for a Bolshevik Government and the Lenin-Trotsky Line

(Continued from page 3)

ernov mean? It does not mean: to speak frankly with him once and stop there. No, it means: to line up according to Tchernov. This would be treason for which we would all deserve to be shot immediately.

I have heard here with bitterness the applause given (Lunatcharsky) a propos of the phrase on the dictatorship of a single person. Why, for what reason, do they want to decapitate the party by removing Lenin, this party which has taken possession of the power in the battle where blood was spilled? Milukov was driven from the government, for example, but when? When the proletariat put its foot on the belly of the Cadets. And now? Who is walking on our belly? Nobody. It is only eight days that we are in power. We establish our tactics by basing them on the revolutionary vanguard of the masses. We were told in defense of collaborationism that without it the Baltic fleet will not give the smallest of its vessels. This has not been verified. We were frightened with the assertion that no worker would march. Nevertheless the Red Guard is dying valiantly. No, there is no longer any return to the intermediate policy, to collaborationism. We will introduce the dictatorship of the proletariat in reality. We will compel people to work. How does it happen that society existed, that the masses worked under the former terror of the minority? Here, it is no longer such a terror, it is the organization of the class violence of the workers against the bourgeoisie.

How do they want to scare us now? In the same way that the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists sought to scare us yesterday. They said that as we approach the socialist revolution, we shall see the Junkers fire, the blood flow, the bourgeoisie conspire, the functionaries sabotage, the army committees resist. Naturally! But all this is what happens at the top. If the bourgeoisie was with us, there would not be a civil war, it is even superfluous to say it.

The army committees are hated by the mass of the soldiers, but frequently they cannot yet do anything against them. Still, in a whole series of units, Revolutionary Military Committees have been elected; the officers, the old committees, all the inferior officers have been arrested. That has been effected in about one-fourth of the army. To fraternize with the army committees would be to raise against us the masses of soldiers. Lunatcharsky's prejudices are a herit-

age of the petty bourgeois psychology. Naturally, that is also, in part, inherent in the masses, it is a residue of their slavery of yesterday. But if the counter-revolution threatens us, the mass, even the backward mass, will take up arms. At the base, they are in such a position that they will come forward with arms in hand. It is otherwise with the Vkhzbel, the army committees, the Social Revolutionists, the Mensheviks and other summits.

Lunatcharsky says: We must stop.... No, we must clear away in order to go forward. (When you come out against us at the moment of the bitter struggle, you are weakening us. An agreement with Tchernov would not give us a thing. We need organization. That is what we should drive for. Tchernov is afraid that the people are pressing the bourgeoisie too much, that they are carrying off money plundered from it. Tchernov is the transmission lever of the bourgeoisie. He will merely weaken us by his petty bourgeois hesitations.)

We must say clearly and plainly to the workers that it is not a coalition with the Mensheviks and others that we want to establish, that it is not a question of that, but rather of a program of action. We already have a coalition: with the peasants, with the soldiers who are now fighting for the power of the Bolsheviks, for the All-Russian Soviet Congress has handed the power to a well-defined party. You forget that.

Should we share the power with the elements who, already before this, sabotaged the Soviets and who now fight the power of the proletariat from without? All those who consent to it forget to ask themselves if those with whom they want to share the power are capable of realizing our program. They do not speak of this. Are the collaborationists capable of conducting a policy of economic terror? No. If we are incapable of realizing our program after having taken the power, we should go to the soldiers and the workers and acknowledge that we have failed. But it will not do any good to leave in the coalition government only a few Bolsheviks. We have taken the power, we must also take the responsibilities.

It is proposed to limit the speaking time to 15 minutes.

NOGIN*.

*The question of knowing what revolu-

*Nogin, old Bolshevik, former textile worker, who played a great role in the party. Died in 1925.

tion we have is settled, and we have no need to talk about it now that our party has arrived in power. But can it be like this, can we shed blood together and govern separately? Can we refuse the power to the soldiers? The civil war will last for years. One can hardly get very far with the peasants by supporting himself upon bayonets. Towards capitalist industry, that's one thing; but another tactic is needed with regard to the peasants.

SLUTSKY.

The word "collaboration" has become too repugnant to the comrades. It is not a question of collaboration, but of resolving the question: how shall we act if we repulse all the other parties? The Social Revolutionists have quit the Soviets after the revolution, the Mensheviks too. But this means that the Soviets are going to break down. Such a situation, given the complete disorganization of the country, will terminate in a short time with the failure of our party. We should not waste our powder and shot. The famine conditions will create a favorable terrain for Kaledin who is now marching against us. In launching the dispatch to the employees of the railroads that we intend to deprive them of bread cards, we would create the basis for a powerful protest.

GLEBOV*.

The situation is serious, not because the shock troops are approaching. The power is in our hands, we can triumph. But there is sabotage which is beginning inside the party, as well as an almost official split. That must not be. The force of sabotage exists in the measure that, by our line of conduct, we are marching towards an agreement with it. As long as I looked for an agreement, the functionaries ridiculed me; but as soon as I took a resolute road, a lot of things were straightened out. From the point of view of Posts and Telegraphs, it is already important that they have pronounced themselves in our favor in their resolution. They must take us into account. At Ivanovo-Voznesensk, the proletariat has adopted a resolute decision. It arrested the saboteurs and put them in prison; they came out like lambs. We should say to the hesitant comrades: "Get out, don't thwart our activity; if not, by hesitating, we shall lose everything."

NOGIN*.

We are told: "The power will be responsible to the parliament." But what will this parliament be? Will it not be made on the model of the Pre-Parliament? No, we are for the Soviets. It is impossible for it to be otherwise. It is not a question of the seats we should reserve for the other parties, but that they would not apply our policy. There is no other way out than to say: "Get out."

BOKY**.

Conference has been spoken of here many times. This name is too high-sounding. It is hard to convoke a general assembly for tomorrow. Let us convoke for tomorrow at seven o'clock, here, a meeting of the committee, enlarged to the representatives of the wards.

TROTSKY.

Before the insurrection, there were in the broad circles of the party, divergences of views reaching a considerable depth. The same thing was said, in the same terms as today, against the insur-

**Glebov-Avilov, former worker, belonged for a long time to the Vpered (Forward) group; after the October revolution, People's Commissar of Posts and Telegraphs. Took part in the Zinoviev Opposition and capitulated with it.

*One of the leaders of the Left Social Revolutionists.

**Old Bolsheviks worked later on in the Cheka.

rection, because it was supposed not to hold out any hope. The old arguments are now reproduced, after the triumph of the uprising, but in favor of the coalition. It is said that there will be no technical apparatus. The darkest colors were used to terrify, to prevent the proletariat from exploiting its success. It is true that the apparatus does not belong to us. It is for this reason that we dabbled so long with Kerensky's pitiable detachments, because we had no technical apparatus. Nevertheless, we created one, superb under the given conditions, and at present we have triumphed here and in Moscow. Petrograd is now guaranteed against any surprises of a military nature.

SLUTSKY.

The question has been sufficiently illuminated by Trotsky and Lenin. During the days of June 3-5, when it seemed that the counter-revolution had beaten us, in reality it was we who had won. The days of the insurrection showed that we were fused with the masses. The peasants and the workers have cohesion.

But the hammer of the revolution, which gave this cohesion to the masses, separated from it the Mensheviks, the defenders of the fatherland, the Social Revolutionists; we have seen that it was the collaborationists who created the lack of cohesion. Now that we have vanquished, they want to lead us into this path of collaborationism. The agreement with them is the masked road to the abandonment of the power. Previously, at the helm of the power were the parties of the agreement with the bourgeoisie; now it is we who are there with-out this agreement. The words of comrade Lunatcharsky, asking what harm there would be in granting the Municipal Dumas fifty seats in the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets appear to me superfluous. What does this mean, to grant fifty seats? It is not to use the furniture that we take them. We are for the power of the Soviets. Then I want to ask: how will the oil flow to us through such taps as Kamkov? How will the doors to fertile places open up before us, thanks to the Social Revolutionists? There is in all this a complete lack of principle: why not sixty seats, why not twenty-five or thirty-five? The revolutionary mass will not follow this appeal.

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The revolution of the October days does not consist in putting the old apparatus into running condition again. Our task is to reconstruct it completely, from top to bottom. In order to carry into life our proletarian tasks, we need an apparatus which is flesh of the flesh of our class. We have created one of this type against Kerensky and Krasnov under Petrograd. You cannot base yourself upon bayonets, we are told once more; but so that we might discuss here with you it was necessary to have bayonets at Tsarskoye Selo.

All power is violence and not agreement. Our power is the violence of the majority of the people against the minority. It is inevitable. It is the alphabet of Marxism. They did not let me communicate to Moscow the news of our success by the telegraphic line belonging to the railroads, and then, they let the shock troops pass. They betray us at the acutest moment of the struggle; when we have triumphed they propose to us to introduce them into the fortress of the power.

Proposal: to limit the speaking time to 10 minutes.

NOGIN.

We Bolsheviks have already recognized that the revolution is ours and not the bourgeoisie's. However, we did not triumph alone, but together with the peasants. There is why what we succeed in getting thanks to the blood of the workers and the soldiers, the power, should be their common wealth. Our party should be the most disciplined.

The session is adjourned.