



Lenin's Struggle Against International Opportunism: 1914-1917

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 was the greatest test yet to face revolutionary Marxists of that time. Within three years, virtually all of the advanced capitalist countries, along with many of their colonies, were embroiled in the war. The imperialists in each country whipped up a tremendous wave of national chauvinism, of uniting with one's own imperialist government under the slogan of "defend the fatherland." In the face of this situation

the Second International crumbled and collapsed.

The overwhelming majority of the leaders of these parties capitulated to their bourgeoisies and deserted the cause of revolution. The overt social-chauvinists directly supported the predatory moves of their governments and called on the workers of their own country to shoot down the workers of other countries as a patriotic duty; while the covert social-chauvinists, like Kaut-

sky (the foremost "socialist" of the time), claimed to be "neutral"—and constructed a myriad of "Marxist" arguments to justify this massive betrayal of the international proletariat and the cause of socialism.

At a time when confusion, panic and demoralization had spread throughout the ranks of socialists around the world, the Russian Bolshevik Party, led by V.I. Lenin, firmly upheld the banner of revolutionary Marxism. In close alliance with left-wing forces in other countries, the Bolsheviks called for a revolutionary struggle against the imperialist governments in all the belligerent countries. They branded the leaders of the Second International as traitors to socialism and called for the formation of a new proletarian International, the Third International. Alone among revolutionaries at war's outbreak, Lenin and the Bolshevik Party raised the slogan "turn the imperialist war into a civil war" and called for genuine socialists in all the imperialist countries to work for the defeat of their own bourgeoisie.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks set out on this difficult course at a time when the situation in what had been previously called the international socialist movement appeared to be very bleak, at a time when, other than the Bolshevik Party, there were only small and scattered forces who rallied to the defense of revolutionary Marxism at first. The Bolsheviks were denounced as "splitters" and were ridiculed as a "sect" that had lost all touch with reality.

Writing in the spring of 1915, Lenin noted trenchantly:

"The war has led to a grave crisis in the whole of international socialism. Like any other crisis, the present crisis of socialism has revealed ever more clearly the inner contradictions lying deep within it; it has torn off many a false and conventional mask, and has shown up in the sharpest light what is outmoded and rotten in socialism, and what its further growth and advance toward victory will depend on."¹

The counter-revolutionary betrayal of the proletariat had not dropped from the sky, Lenin explained to those who thought it might have been a temporary mistake that could soon be rectified. In fact, an abcess of reformism and opportunism had been growing and festering within the main parties of the Second International during the relatively stable and peaceful years preceding the imperialist war, and with the crisis brought on by the war, it had inevitably burst open into full-fledged social-chauvinism and outright desertion to the bourgeoisie.

As Lenin and the Bolshevik Party clearly saw, the ability of socialism to

“advance toward victory” depended first and foremost on rallying all revolutionary Marxists to wage an uncompromising political and ideological struggle on the international level against social-chauvinism and opportunism. The hold of the Second International’s treacherous leaders on honest socialists and the masses of the people had to be broken in order to launch revolutionary agitation and struggle in the course of the war. Without this historic struggle spearheaded by Lenin and the Bolshevik Party, the earth-shaking victory of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia would not have been possible. Furthermore, it was only in the course of waging a common political and ideological struggle against opportunism that it was possible to unite genuine revolutionary forces internationally around the key political questions dividing Marxism and internationalism from revisionism and social chauvinism, and on a basis of principled political unity, to advance as rapidly as possible towards the formation of the Third International. The fruits of the struggle were realized with the successful founding in 1919 of the Communist International, an international center to lead the struggle against imperialism.

In the face of savage repression and extremely difficult conditions, Lenin directed the work of the Bureau of the Bolshevik Central Committee Abroad, which was based in Switzerland from 1914 to early 1917, and tirelessly fought to advance this line on the imperialist war and the urgent revolutionary tasks that were set before the proletariat and genuine Marxists worldwide. They utilized every possible opportunity to do so, including struggling actively within the Zimmerwald anti-war movement that developed in 1915.

In the course of these years Lenin and the Bolsheviks paid closest attention to rallying left-wing forces from various countries and forging the greatest amount of unity among them ideologically, politically and organizationally. The victories that were achieved in that struggle, though they might have seemed to be small and insignificant at the time, in fact paved the way for the greatest advances that had been made by the proletariat and the oppressed people of the world to that date.

This historic struggle waged by the Bolshevik Party during World War I, in alliance with other revolutionary forces, contains important lessons for genuine communists today. Particularly in the wake of the revisionist coup in China and the restoration of capitalism there, the international communist movement is once again facing a grave crisis and major tests and trials. Today, as in

Lenin’s time, the imperialist system worldwide is heading into deeper crisis, world war, and a period of growing turmoil and revolutionary struggle. And the outcome of the current struggle between genuine Marxism and the rotting forces of revisionism around the world will be no less important than in 1914-1917 in determining whether the international proletariat will be able to seize the great revolutionary opportunities that will arise.

I. The Struggle in Russian Social Democracy and the International Socialist Movement Prior to World War I

The shape of the historic struggle that took place within the international socialist movement from 1914-1917 was conditioned to no small degree by the struggle which had broken out between revolutionary Marxism and opportunism prior to World War I. While Lenin and the Bolsheviks (who were at that time the majority of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party) paid primary attention to the development of the class struggle in Russia and to building the party, the ideological struggles they waged during the 1903-1914 period against the Economists, Mensheviks and Liquidators brought them into the thick of the battles that were raging within the European socialist parties of the Second International.

Leading Bolsheviks attended several important international socialist congresses before the war that debated the questions of militarism and war, colonialism, and revolutionary tactics. Lenin himself was a member of the International Socialist Bureau (ISB) of the Second International from 1905 to 1914, where he became well acquainted with its chief leaders.

In Europe, the early 1900’s were a largely peaceful period which provided fertile soil for the development of parliamentary cretinism, reformism and open “revisionism” of the kind championed by Bernstein in Germany and Jaures in France. In the battle to consolidate the RSDLP around the revolutionary *Iskra* line in 1903, Lenin viewed the Economists as the Russian representatives of this international opportunist trend.

As the 1905 Revolution approached and the Bolsheviks split sharply with the Menshevik wing of the RSDLP over questions of Party organization and carrying on all-around social-democratic (communist) political work in the working class and developing its leadership

in the struggle against the Tsarist regime, the Bolsheviks found that most of the leaders of the Second International leaned heavily, and openly at times, in the direction of the Mensheviks’ bourgeois liberal political line—an important part of which were their appeals for unprincipled “unity” in the RSDLP.

Soon after the 1904 international socialist congress, which passed a resolution that there should be only one socialist party in every country, the leaders of the Second International made the first of several attempts to unite the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. The Mensheviks readily accepted a proposal to submit their differences to a court of arbitration, while the Bolsheviks correctly maintained that there would be no purpose in holding unity negotiations unless the Mensheviks repudiated their opportunist lines on key questions. As a result, the Bolshevik wing of the RSDLP led by Lenin entered the 1905 Revolution with a compact organization of professional revolutionaries united around a revolutionary Marxist line.

In the following years, the Bolsheviks played an increasingly active role in the congresses of the Second International and in the work of the ISB, where they were generally viewed as sectarian Russian emigres who didn’t understand the intricacies and delicate questions involved in organizing mass socialist parties in the “more cultured” countries of Europe. In the course of this, Lenin drew attention to the fact that there were “opportunist and revolutionary wings of the international Social-Democratic movement on a number of cardinal issues”²—as he did in his summation of the 1907 Congress held in Stuttgart, Germany.

The Stuttgart Congress was especially significant in view of the formation of rival imperialist blocs among the European “great powers,” accompanied by a rising tide of militarism and sharpening battle for control of the colonies. The majority of the German delegation at Stuttgart, led by Bernstein and David, in league with Dutch and other chauvinists, proposed a “socialist colonial policy.” Though this resolution was rejected, Lenin commented that the debate clearly revealed that full fledged “socialist opportunism” was rearing its head—opportunism which he linked to the development of imperialism in providing “the material and economic basis for infecting the proletariat with colonial chauvinism.” This was a theme Lenin was to return to and develop much more fully when events came to a head in the decade to come.

The questions of militarism and war absorbed an even greater amount of at-

tention at the Stuttgart Congress. The debate in the Anti-Militarism Commission and then in the Congress as a whole centered around the active tasks of the proletariat in relation to militarism and war. The rightwing and center of the German and other delegations were opposed to binding themselves to definite methods of struggle against the imperialist wars of plunder and conquest that had already begun. The proposal made by the veteran German socialist leader August Bebel was purposefully vague on this:

"If a war threatens to break out it is the duty of the workers in the countries involved and of their parliamentary representatives to exert every effort to prevent the outbreak of war by means they consider most effective. In case war breaks out notwithstanding these efforts, it is their duty to intervene in favor of its early termination."³

In response, Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg (who was a leading representative of the growing left opposition inside the German Social Democratic Party) fought to change this resolution by stating specifically that in the event of war, it is the duty of the working class and its socialist leaders "to do all in their power to utilize the economic and political crisis caused by the war to rouse the peoples and thereby to hasten the abolition of capitalist class rule."⁴

Lenin related that the original drafts of his and Luxemburg's resolutions contained much more open statements about revolutionary action and agitation, which were opposed by Bebel and others on the grounds that they could result in the dissolution of their party organizations by the governments.

For the Bolsheviks and other revolutionary Marxists, the essential thing was not merely to prevent unjust, predatory wars but to utilize the crisis created by these wars in order to hasten the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. This was reflected in the resolution "On Militarism and International Conflict" adopted unanimously, and obviously hypocritically on the part of many at the 1907 Congress. In his summation of Stuttgart, Lenin pointed out that it would be possible "to read Bebel's orthodox propositions through opportunist spectacles," pointing to the example of the German chauvinists Vollmar and Noske openly arguing just a year later that, in the event of an "attack" on Germany, "Social-Democrats will not lag behind the bourgeois parties and will shoulder their rifles."⁵

The adoption of this resolution on war at the 1907 Stuttgart Congress was the first significant victory for the small left-wing nucleus forming within the Second International. As it turned out, it

was a significant one, for this resolution that the socialist leaders reaffirmed at Congresses in 1910 and 1912 served as a stark indictment of their foul deeds and treachery upon the outbreak of the First World War.

At both Stuttgart and the 1910 Copenhagen Congress, Lenin worked closely with the leftwing that was beginning to form inside the German party, as well as with Polish social democrats such as Karl Radek who had split away from the reformist and bourgeois nationalist Polish Socialist Party in 1903, and Dutch left-wingers who had been expelled from the officially recognized party in 1909, as well as others. In 1924, G. Zinoviev wrote that Lenin at this time clearly saw the importance of developing ties among the international leftwing elements:

"In his reports and informal talks Comrade Lenin told us how, during the Stuttgart Congress, he and Rosa Luxemburg made the first attempt to assemble an illegal (not in the police sense, but with respect to the leaders of the Second International) conference of Marxists who were inclined to share his and Rosa Luxemburg's point of view. There proved to be only a few of that kind within the Second International, but nevertheless the first basis for the group was laid at that time."^{6*}

Between 1909 and 1912, mass strikes, demonstrations and other signs of sharpening class struggle erupted in Europe and Russia. Bourgeois democratic revolutions were underway in Mexico, China and Persia (as Iran was known at the time). A sharp debate took place around revolutionary tactics in the

German Social-Democratic Party, by far the biggest and most influential in the Second International.

Rosa Luxemburg, joined by Radek, argued for the use of a general strike developing into an armed uprising (citing the use of the general strike in the Russian Revolution of 1905). Kautsky advocated a "strategy of attrition" in direct opposition to the "strategy to overthrow," for which he claimed the German proletariat was not yet prepared. The Russian Mensheviks seized the occasion of this controversy to link together Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg as ultra-leftist phrasemongers and to identify Kautsky's "orthodox" position with their own.

In 1911, when Luxemburg publicly criticized the German party leadership for refusing to take a stand against German intervention in Morocco (then a French colony), Kautsky, Bebel and the right-wing German socialists charged her with "uncomradely" conduct at the September, 1911 meeting of the International Socialist Bureau. Lenin came to Luxemburg's defense, and as Zinoviev described it,

"the thunder and lightning descended upon him as well. Vladimir Ilich (Lenin) appealed to Plekhanov... but Comrade Plekhanov replied that the ear should not grow beyond the forehead... that when we had millions of members as the German Social Democracy had, then we should also be considered... After listening to Plekhanov, Vladimir Ilich slammed the door and left the meeting. Thereupon, Comrade Lenin began to approach more and more the elements which supported Rosa Luxemburg."⁷

* Zinoviev played a valuable role as a close collaborator of Lenin's from 1908 to 1917 in the Leninist battles against various forms of error and opportunism within Russian social democracy and the European social democratic movement. Faced with the more severe tests posed by the revolutionary struggle for power and for the consolidation and extension of the dictatorship of the proletariat, however, Zinoviev committed some serious errors, then later degenerated, was expelled from the Party, and finally tried and executed in 1936.

In October 1917, when the Bolshevik Central Committee voted that the Party should organize and launch an insurrection as soon as possible, Zinoviev and Kamenev argued and voted against the resolution, and then after it had been passed revealed the plan for an insurrection and their disagreement with it in a letter to the Menshevik newspaper *Novaya Zhizn*. After the successful uprising, the same pair (along with some others) demanded a coalition government drawn from all the socialist parties—this at the same time that the other "socialist" parties, the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries were participating in the "Commit-

tees of Public Safety" that had been set up to fight the revolution.

After the civil war Zinoviev was elected Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, and within the Party he helped, along with Stalin and Kamenev, to lead the initial battle against Trotsky's line, thus once again playing a useful role in the revolutionary struggle. After Trotsky's defeat in this first round, though, Zinoviev went on to oppose the line of the Party from the "left" on the peasant question and the New Economic Policy. When his line on these questions was defeated, Zinoviev formed a bloc with Trotsky. Together the two of them attacked the theory of the construction of socialism in one country, called for "primitive socialist accumulation" through the exploitation of the peasantry supposedly for the benefit of the industrial working class, and set up a secret organization with its own underground printing press, etc. The Fifteenth Party Congress, held in December 1927, found that adherence to the Trotsky opposition program was incompatible with membership in the Bolshevik Party, and Trotsky and Zinoviev were expelled along with their active followers.

A year later, after the Balkan Wars had broken out and were threatening to spread further, an Extraordinary International Socialist Congress was called in Basle, Switzerland in November, 1912, for the purpose of issuing a manifesto on the situation in the Balkans and the threatening world war. This document was extremely eclectic, with many high-sounding calls for universal disarmament, international courts of arbitration, and so on that were carried over from earlier congresses. But it also contained the key resolution on war and revolution that Lenin and Luxemburg had fought for at Stuttgart in 1907; it declared that a period of imperialist wars had begun in Europe; and it contained a statement that Lenin would refer to repeatedly in the coming years to brand the leaders of the Second International as traitors to the international working class:

"the proletarians consider it a crime to fire at each other for the benefit of the capitalist profits, the ambitions of dynasties and the greater glory of secret diplomatic treaties."⁸

This same year, the split in the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party was finalized. The Bolshevik Party expelled the Liquidators and Mensheviks, who were working to destroy the illegal underground apparatus of the RSDLP and were promoting the reformist political line of tailing the liberal bourgeoisie in the struggle against the Tsar. Joined by Trotsky's "non-factional" Social Democrats and others, these opportunists called this a "coup d'etat" and accused the Bolsheviks of being "splitters."

As a result of this struggle to defend the vanguard party of the working class and draw clear lines of demarcation with opportunist trends, the Bolshevik Party was in a position to extend its revolutionary influence among the masses of the workers—skillfully combining legal and illegal work—during the 1912-14 years, which were a time of renewed class struggle in Russia. One of the most important fruits of the struggle was the launching of the daily Bolshevik paper *Pravda* in 1912, which trained tens of thousands of workers in revolutionary Marxism and internationalism during these key pre-war years. Writing in 1915 after war had broken out and the Bolsheviks were facing severe repression, Lenin wrote about this class conscious section of the Russian proletariat trained by *Pravda* that had not been swamped in the wave of chauvinism at the beginning of the war:

"Even if war, prison, Siberia, and hard labour should destroy five or even ten times as many—this section of the

workers cannot be annihilated. It is alive. It is imbued with the revolutionary spirit, is anti-chauvinist. It alone stands in the midst of the masses, with deep roots in the latter, as the champion of the internationalism of the toilers, the exploited, and the oppressed. It alone has held its ground in the general debacle."⁹

At this point, the Mensheviks and their opportunist fellow travelers turned once again to the leaders of the Second International to throw its weight behind their continuing efforts to pose as the great "unifiers" of Russian Social-Democracy. A unity conference involving all the Russian and minority nationality social-democratic groups was called for in July, 1914, in Brussels by the International Socialist Bureau (ISB). Just prior to this conference, Vandervelde, chairman of the ISB, made a fact-finding trip to Russia, where he spent most of his time plotting out a joint strategy with the Mensheviks on how to restore "unity" on their terms.

The Bolsheviks knew exactly what was up. Nevertheless, they decided it was necessary to attend the Brussels conference and to take the offensive in clarifying the reasons for the split, both within Russia and in the ranks of international Social Democracy. The newspapers of the German party as well as others had been publishing quite a few articles by Martov, Trotsky and Plekhanov while excluding replies by the Bolsheviks.

At Brussels, the Bolshevik representative, Inessa Armand, read and staunchly defended a report that had been drawn up by Lenin for the Bolshevik Central Committee. This report laid out the main lines of the political differences in Russia and drew up a detailed report of the influence of the "Pravdists" among the workers (which even Vandervelde had to admit was true). Though Armand was prevented from finishing the reading of this report by the indignant Russian opportunists and ISB members, she stated the Bolsheviks' terms for unity—clearly condemning the liquidationist and Menshevik lines of renouncing both their illegal party apparatus and all-around revolutionary work among the proletariat.

The Brussels Conference proceeded to approve a "unity resolution," drafted by Kautsky for the ISB, which stated that "at the present time there are no tactical disagreements among them [the Russian groups] which are sufficiently important to justify the split." The Bolsheviks and Latvian Social-Democrats refused to vote. The Bolsheviks were warned by the ISB that they would be held "responsible before

the entire International for the disruption of the effort to achieve unity." Encouraged by these threats, the Russian opportunists formed what was known as the "Brussels bloc" that in its short-lived existence drew up a letter addressed to workers in Russia attacking the Bolsheviks' "factionalism" and urging them to support the ISB's unity efforts.

It was expected that the upcoming International Socialist Congress scheduled to be held in August, 1914, in Vienna would make a "definite pronouncement" on the situation. However, war broke out in late July. The Second International collapsed, bringing to an end their ability to attack and try to liquidate the Bolshevik Party in the name of "international socialist unity." In the light of the criminal betrayal of the international proletariat committed by the leaders of the Second International, the conclusion of the Brussels resolution stands as a ringing indictment of the bankruptcy of "uniting" by burying differences:

"No greater crime can be committed against the proletariat of Russia than to interfere with and to hinder the rallying of its various groups into one single organism."¹⁰

Thus, the ability of the Bolshevik Party to take the revolutionary line that it did at the outbreak of World War I in the face of the massive collapse of the international socialist movement was itself a product of more than 20 years of struggle against petty-bourgeois, opportunist trends, battles which resulted in the formation and tempering of the Bolshevik Party both within Russia and the international socialist movement. Lenin referred to this experience repeatedly in his writings of 1915 and 1916 as a lesson to left-wing forces in other countries who were struggling against the social-chauvinist majorities in their own parties.

In explaining why the Bolshevik Party was prepared to play the international role that it did, Lenin also pointed to the fact that, of all the European countries, only Russia had experienced a revolution, the 1905 Revolution, which had separated out the revolutionary from the reformist trends in Russian Social Democracy. The coming world war was to do much the same thing in the international socialist movement as a whole.

Thus, on the eve of World War I, the Bolshevik Party, though still relatively unknown and looked at by most socialists in other countries as the most "sectarian" of the many warring Russian emigre groups, was prepared both politically and organizationally to uphold a revolutionary line, enabling it to seize power in Russia and to rally the

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revolutionary left-wing forces internationally in the critical years ahead.

II. The Outbreak of War Puts International Socialism to the Test

World War I was a war between two blocs of imperialist powers that broke out in 1914 over the existing division of colonies and large sections of Europe. With the complete division of the world among the "Great Powers" by the end of the 19th century, the rapidly developing German imperialists (who were joined by Austria-Hungary and Turkey in the "Triple Alliance") pushed outward and demanded a more favorable redivision of the world.

On the other hand the imperialists of Great Britain (which possessed a far-flung colonial empire and needed new outlets for the export of capital), France (which hungrily eyed the Alsace-Lorraine, a rich coal and iron region seized in 1870 by Germany) and of Russia (which wanted to seize parts of Turkey and Poland) put aside their own differences to form the "Triple Entente." (Italy joined this bloc in 1915, creating the "Quadru-

ple Entente"—followed by the U.S. imperialists in 1917.)

Both alliances of imperialist powers had been making feverish war preparations in the preceding years. In 1914, France had just started an extensive program of modernizing the Russian army, and Lenin often pointed out that this was one of the main reasons why the German imperialists decided to strike first. When Archduke Ferdinand of the Austro-Hungary Empire was assassinated in Serbia in the summer of 1914, and the Austrians, with German blessings, invaded Serbia to "extract reparations," the imperialist alliances as they then stood swung into combat.

With the outbreak of war, the socialist convictions of the leaders of the Second International were put to the test, and nearly all of them turned traitor to the international working class. The International Socialist Bureau held a flurry of meetings in the last days of July where they passed a number of weighty resolutions demanding disarmament, international courts of arbitration and called on their respective socialist parties to unite to prevent the outbreak of war. At this point, most of these great "leaders" still couldn't believe what was going on right before their eyes.

Only several days later, nearly all of them supported their own governments'

war measures on the ground of "self-defense." Each imperialist government set out to prove it had not attacked its neighbors, but had been attacked by them. The French Socialist Party declared that France was the victim of "German aggression." The party's deputies voted unanimously for war credits, and a few weeks later, Guesde and Sembat joined the "Government of National Defense." Albert Thomas became the "socialist" Minister of Munitions.

In Belgium, Vandervelde joined the government. The social-democratic parties in Austria-Hungary nearly unanimously surrendered to the government's declaration of war. In Britain, the Labour Party joined the war government, while the Independent Labour Party and British Socialist Party came out in opposition to the war (though with most of their leaders, this did not last long).

On August 4, the Reichstag delegation of the German Social-Democratic Party unanimously voted for war credits, claiming that "we are menaced by the terror of foreign invasion."¹¹ Fourteen deputies had voted against the credits in the Social-Democratic conference, but no one broke the unanimity principle until left-wing deputy Karl Liebknecht openly defied the party majority and

voted against the credits several months later.

Only in Russia and Serbia did a majority of the socialist parliamentary deputies refuse to vote for their government's war measures. In the Duma, the five Bolshevik and six Menshevik deputies refused to vote for war credits and walked out of the Duma. Only days later, however, the Mensheviks' concealed defencist position that they were to hold during the war was revealed. On behalf of the British and French bourgeoisies, Vandervelde (who was still the chairman of the International Socialist Bureau) was sent to Russia, where he made an urgent appeal to the Russian Social-Democrats to "suspend" their struggle against Tsarism. The Menshevik deputies immediately promised that "we shall not hinder the prosecution of the war," while the Bolsheviks drew up a reply denouncing the imperialist war and Vandervelde's trip, pledging to continue the revolutionary struggle against the Tsarist regime.

The socialist parties of the states not yet involved in the war did not face the necessity of deciding whether they would support their own governments' war measures. Without endangering their party organizations, the great majority of the Italian, Swiss, Dutch, U.S. and Scandinavian parties condemned the war with virtuous enthusiasm and demanded that their governments remain neutral.

With the treacherous actions of the leaders of the socialist parties in the belligerent countries, and with the rapid spread of the war itself, the Second International ceased to function organizationally. But it had already collapsed politically—by becoming, in Lenin's words, "an international alliance for international justification of national chauvinism."¹²

At this moment of widespread confusion, demoralization and even panic among socialists worldwide, the Russian Bolshevik Party led by Lenin stood firm against the tide. The Bolsheviks were the only party that not only refused to join their bourgeoisie's war councils, but openly called for transforming the imperialist war into a civil war.

Even at a time of unbridled patriotic fervor, the Bolshevik Party made a materialist analysis of the devastation and crisis that the masses would be forced to bear in the course of war and declared in its 1914 theses on the war, "However difficult that transformation [into civil war] may seem at any given moment, socialists will never relinquish systematic, persistent and undeviating preparatory work in this direction now that war has become a fact."¹³

The Bolsheviks branded the traitorous

leaders of the Second International as agents of the bourgeoisie, whose social-chauvinism was a direct outgrowth of the reformism and class collaboration they had pursued before the war. Pronouncing the Second International dead, the Bolshevik Party issued a call in November 1914 to build the proletarian Third International, on the basis of splitting with opportunism.

Even while mobilization was underway, illegal leaflets were put out in Petrograd and other cities denouncing the war and calling for the overthrow of Tsarism. The Bolshevik deputies in the Duma started touring the country, organizing meetings against the war. Within several months, the Bolshevik Party Committee in Petrograd started publishing the underground newspaper *Proletarsky Golos* (The Proletarian Voice). In spite of large-scale arrests and repression that broke contact between many party units and the Central Committee, the overwhelming majority of party organizations rallied behind the revolutionary line.

The fundamental line on the war and the revolutionary tasks of the proletariat in Russia and other countries that was to guide the activities of the Bolshevik Party during the war was laid out in two articles, both written by Lenin, in the fall of 1914. Lenin had been living near Cracow, Poland when war broke out and was arrested on espionage charges for several days, before he was released through the intervention of Polish and Austrian Social-Democratic deputies.

Within days after his arrival in Berne, Switzerland, a neutral country, on September 5, Lenin drew up his theses on the war, which were adopted by a group of exiled Party members who had joined Lenin and Zinoviev (the two remaining members of the Bolshevik Central Committee Abroad) in Switzerland.

These theses were smuggled into Russia and approved by the Central Committee. In October, Lenin wrote up "The War and Russian Social Democracy" as the definitive statement of the Bolshevik Party on the war. One of the first steps taken by Lenin and the Central Committee Abroad was to revive the publication of *Sotsial-Demokrat* as the central organ of the Party, and the historic issue #33 published on November 1, 1914 carried this statement on the war, as well as the Bolshevik deputies' reply to Vandervelde.

"The War and Russian Social Democracy" stated in no uncertain terms that the European war was an inevitable result of the imperialist stage of capitalist development. It declared that "the collapse of the Second International is the collapse of opportunism." More than that, Lenin did not confine himself

to denouncing the "socialists" who had openly joined their governments. He added that:

"The worst possible service is being rendered to the proletariat by those who vacillate between opportunism and revolutionary Social-Democracy (like the 'Centre' in the German Social-Democratic Party), by those who are trying to hush up the collapse of the Second International or to disguise it with diplomatic phrases." "On the contrary," he continued, "this collapse must be frankly recognized and its causes understood, so as to make it possible to build up a new and more lasting socialist unity of the workers of all countries."¹⁴

Only weeks after the war's outbreak, when tens of millions of workers had been delivered into the hands of their bourgeoisies for slaughter by their "socialist" leaders, Lenin wrote that "it must be the primary task of Social-Democrats in every country to combat that country's chauvinism." Still, he recognized that neither this pressing task nor the revolutionary work of preparing to turn the imperialist war into a civil war could be accomplished without conducting a ruthless ideological struggle against opportunism masquerading as socialism:

"The aims of socialism at the present time cannot be fulfilled, and real international unity of the workers cannot be achieved, without a decisive break with opportunism, and without explaining its inevitable fiasco to the masses."

And in this statement addressed to the workers and revolutionary Marxists of Russia and other countries in November 1914, the Bolsheviks declared with revolutionary optimism that was based on a dialectical materialist view of the forces at work that would propel millions into revolutionary struggle in the coming years,

"The proletarian International has not gone under and will not go under. Notwithstanding all obstacles, the masses of the workers will create a new International. Opportunism's present triumph will be short-lived."¹⁵

In late 1914 and early 1915, it was by no means smooth sailing for the Bolshevik Party to unite its ranks and start doing the difficult political work of preparing to turn the war into civil war. At one extreme, when war was declared, a section of the Paris Bolshevik exile group volunteered for the French army, claiming it was their "socialist duty." Plekhanov, who had become an open

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social-chauvinist, publicly praised their actions. Many other Bolshevik emigre groups were initially disoriented, as capitulation was the order of the day in most European socialist circles.

In reply to Lenin's original draft theses on the war which he circulated in September, 1914, Karpinsky, writing for a group of "rank and file" Bolsheviks in Switzerland, argued that "we are inclined to consider the events as a temporary capitulation before opportunism in this question, a capitulation which can be explained by an exceptional intricacy, confusion, acuteness, and enormity of circumstances. . . ." This misjudging of the strength of opportunism was no doubt widespread among the Bolsheviks, as well as among left-wing groups in other countries. It was particularly shocking to them that Karl Kautsky, the revered leader of the German Social-Democratic Party, who had led the struggle in the Second International against Bernstein's open revisionism, was defending the treacherous conduct of the socialist ministers. Many thought Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders were acting prematurely in pronouncing the old International dead.

There was also a certain amount of confusion and disorientation among the ranks of party workers inside Russia. The line of "revolutionary defeatism" was a particularly sharp question, particularly in the face of charges that the Bolsheviks were working for the victory of Germany. *Sotsial-Demokrat* No. 51 in February 1916 noted that the Bolshevik organization in Moscow adopted the 1914 war theses with the exception of the paragraph dealing with the defeat of one's own country in the war.

This inner-party struggle among the Bolsheviks at times got quite sharp in these first months of the war. At the Conference of RSDLP Groups Abroad (which was in fact a general conference of the Party, since a Party congress couldn't be held during the war) held in Berne from Feb. 27—March 4, 1915, several of the Bolshevik groups from France opposed the line of revolutionary defeatism and advanced their own slogan "fight for peace." In addition, Bukharin raised opposition from the "left" to the resolutions supporting the right of nations to self-determination and democratic demands in general, claiming they were contrary to socialist revolution. Both of these were to become important and critical questions, both in Russia and internationally, in developing a proletarian internationalist line

during the course of the war.

Despite this internal struggle and heavy repression (in fact, a large part of the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee, along with the Bolshevik Duma deputies, were arrested in November 1914 while they were holding a meeting to discuss the theses on the war), the Bolshevik Party survived this stiff test with a minimum of defections, holding aloft the revolutionary banner of proletarian internationalism among the masses in Russia—and also providing inspiration to left-wing socialists in other countries.

When war was declared, a generally correct position was taken by revolutionary forces in a number of other countries. Lenin pointed to the Dutch Tribunists (led by Gorter and Pannekoek), the Bulgarian "Tesnyaki" (Narrows) and the Polish Social-Democrats (led by Radek and others) who had all split with opportunist party majorities before the war—as taking a firm stand against the imperialist war, and against their governments and "socialist" tradition. Lenin also pointed to the left opposition in the Swedish party led by Hoglund, the internationalist wing of the British Socialist Party, and revolutionary elements within the Swiss and Italian parties.*

Lenin paid close attention to the ranks of the German Social-Democratic Party, for this had been the biggest and most influential party in the Second International. Furthermore, as Lenin commented in 1915, "Of all the big European parties, it is in the German party that a loud voice of protest was first raised by comrades who have remained loyal to the banner of socialism." In October, the German left wing, especially represented at that time by Franz Mehring, Karl Liebknecht, and Rosa Luxemburg, launched a public protest against the capitulation of the party majority to the government. In December, Liebknecht broke party discipline and voted against war credits. Within several months, the German leftists started producing illegal revolutionary manifestos in the face of the military censorship. In early 1915, the Liebknecht pamphlet, "The Chief Enemy is in Our own Country," and the journals—*Lichtstrahlen* (edited by Julian Borchadt of the International Socialist Group) and *Die Internationale* (produced by Mehring, Luxemburg and others) appeared. In commenting later in 1915 on the state of affairs in the German left, Lenin wrote that, "the German Lefts are still in a state of ferment, that considerable regroupings still await them, and that within them some elements are more resolute and others

less resolute."¹⁶ This was certainly true, in large degree, of the Bolsheviks themselves and the ranks of the left-wing internationalists in all countries as they were put to the test during these years.

At this time, Lenin estimated that "about nine-tenths of [the proletariat's] former leaders have gone over to the bourgeoisie" This was no exaggeration; it was a criminal and bleak situation. There was no international organization of left-wing forces ready made, though some of them knew of each other from the congresses of the Second International. This situation called for a serious struggle to be waged on all the major questions confronting the international socialist movement and clear lines of demarcation drawn to separate the revolutionary from the opportunist wings of Social-Democracy. This is what Lenin chiefly set out to do in late 1914 and 1915.

In the first nine months of 1915, Lenin wrote two major works and a number of important articles expanding on the Bolsheviks' original line on the war and the tasks of revolutionary social-democrats (communists). In these articles, especially *Socialism and War* (written together with Zinoviev) and *The Collapse of the Second International*, Lenin delved deeper into the key questions for revolutionary Marxists.

Lenin's starting point was determining the class character of the war which had broken out and what politics the war was continuing. In direct opposition to opportunist "socialists" who claimed that their governments were waging just wars of "national defense," Lenin demonstrated how the European war that had broken out was a continuation of the political and economic rivalries of the major imperialist powers that had developed and intensified as capitalism had reached its final stage of imperialism. Lenin's thoroughgoing analysis of imperialism was essential for unmasking the social-chauvinists of all stripes who were using the experience of the progressive wars waged against feudalism to form national bourgeois states in Europe in the 19th century—that is, in a pre-imperialist era—and even statements that Marx and Engels made in reference to those wars, to justify their rallying to the national flag and "defense of the fatherland." Lenin labelled this opportunism and rank sophistry, "the method of clutching at the outward similarity of instances, without considering the nexus between events."

In these works, Lenin stripped away

* In December 1914 the Italian party expelled a group of renegades (among them Benito Mussolini) for supporting the bour-

geoisie's imperialist policies and urging Italy's entry into the war.

every rationalization used by socialists for capitulation to their bourgeoisie. When Lenin emphasized that *all* the imperialist powers were predatory and rapacious and none of them were the "main evil," he was taking aim at the French and Russian social-chauvinists who argued that "German militarism" under Wilhelm II posed the biggest threat to "European democracy." He was also targeting the German opportunists who argued that "tsarist barbarism" was the main enemy of the European proletariat. One feature the social-chauvinists of all the European countries had in common was their refusal to systematically expose the predatory, imperialist nature of their own bourgeoisie, and to declare war on it. As Lenin summed up, the working class movement "will remain true to itself only if it joins neither one nor the other imperialist bourgeoisie, only if it says that the two sides are equally bad, and if it wishes the defeat of the imperialist bourgeoisie in every country."¹⁷

This principle was particularly important because there was a great deal of confusion and many pseudo-Marxist arguments were being advanced in Russia and internationally around this question of the defeat of one's own bourgeoisie. Some, like the Russian Menshevik Potresov, argued that the main question for social democrats was determining which countries' victory would be "more desirable" for the proletariat on an international scale. Others, like Trotsky (and even Rosa Luxemburg in the Junius pamphlet), came out with a line of "neither victory nor defeat" for their own country. For Lenin, this question concentrated the attitude taken by revolutionaries to their own bourgeoisies in the imperialist powers. He argued that the masses had to be trained to view their own bourgeoisie's military reverses as a *good thing*, because they weaken its rule and *facilitate its overthrow*. Lenin stressed that a wrong line on the defeat of one's own government would sooner or later paralyze *any* revolutionary anti-war work, for this in itself would weaken the bourgeoisie in wartime.

While Lenin continued to polemicize against the right-wing opportunists such as Plekhanov, Vandervelde, and Sudekum (a notorious German social-imperialist) it was becoming much more necessary to unmask the centrists—Kautsky and Hasse in Germany, Longuet and Pressmanne in France, etc. While they professed their opposition to the war (in Germany they started abstaining from voting for war credits in 1915 as anti-war sentiments spread among the masses), the centrists attempted to theoretically justify the traitorous conduct of their party majorities, as well as

to justify their own refusal to mobilize the masses in revolutionary struggle. As Lenin repeatedly emphasized, the "Marxist" arguments employed by Kautsky and Co. were more dangerous than open social-patriotism because they were aimed at reconciling the workers to the leaders who had openly betrayed them, thus preventing them from breaking away from the opportunist parties of the Second International.

In October 1914, Kautsky made the infamous argument that, "It is the right and duty of everyone to defend his fatherland; true internationalism consists in this right being recognized for the socialists of all nations, including those who are at war with my nation..."¹⁸ This was just one of the most transparent of Kautsky's attempts to reconcile the irreconcilable and to justify opportunism. But Kautsky, as opposed to the crude social-patriots, attempted to develop more systematic "Marxist" theoretical arguments that could be used to justify the *Burg Frieden* ("civil peace") declared by the socialist leaders during the war. Among these was the theory of "ultra-imperialism" (about which more below).

Another subterfuge employed by Kautsky was to claim that "the extreme Lefts" in Germany were calling for "the immediate achievement of socialism" in response to the war. He commented that "this seems very radical, but it can only serve to drive into the camp of imperialism, any one who does not believe in the immediate practical achievement of socialism." Lenin replied that Kautsky, like the Russian Mensheviks and other opportunists who leveled the same accusations of "adventurism" and "anarchism" against the Lefts in their countries, knew very well what the left-wing was calling for—not immediate socialism, but immediate propaganda and agitation to mobilize the masses in revolutionary struggle against their own bourgeoisie.

When Kautsky and other opportunists tried to justify their inactivity because their hopes of revolution had "proved illusory" (which they blamed on the masses' chauvinism), Lenin labelled this a "police-renegade attitude towards revolution" in *The Collapse of the Second International*. In response, Lenin explained that revolution is only possible with the development of a revolutionary situation—which he linked directly to objective changes (a severe crisis affecting all classes) and to subjective changes (the ability of the proletariat to take revolutionary action). Already in 1915, Lenin pointed out, even the millionaires' newspapers in Europe were admitting that the war had greatly increased the suffering of the masses and was leading to a change in their sen-

timents. Thus, in response to these opportunist "socialists" who loudly claimed that nothing could be done because there was no immediate prospect for revolution, Lenin noted that a revolutionary situation was definitely on the horizon in many European countries. But at the same time he said of the developing situation:

"Will it lead to revolution? This is something we do not know, and nobody can know. The answer can be provided only by the *experience* gained during the development of revolutionary sentiment and the transition to revolutionary action by the advanced class, the proletariat. There can be no talk in this connection about 'illusions' or their repudiation, since no socialist has ever guaranteed that this war (and not the next one), that today's revolutionary situation (and not tomorrow's) will produce a revolution."

Lenin then concluded:

"What we are discussing is the indisputable and fundamental duty of all socialists—that of revealing to the masses the existence of a revolutionary situation, explaining its scope and depth, arousing the proletariat's revolutionary consciousness and revolutionary determination, helping it to go over to revolutionary action, and forming, for that purpose, organizations suited to the revolutionary situation."¹⁹

And this is the heart of the question that Lenin drew out to distinguish genuine Marxists from open defencists and their opportunist cousins like Kautsky who developed a thousand and one "Marxist" justifications for not rousing the masses to take revolutionary action during the war and for refusing to support those in other countries who were carrying on the same work.

Lenin then turned to the question of restoring the Second International. Already there was talk of a "mutual amnesty" when the war ended—as he said, of agreeing that during peacetime we live as brothers, but during wartime we call on the French workers to exterminate the German workers and vice versa. Lenin repeatedly underscored the great danger this would represent to the working class and socialist cause worldwide if the opportunists' plans for restoring the International were to succeed.

He made an important point here—that the bourgeoisie actually *needed* parties like the one in Germany for the purpose of reining in the workers and preventing them from taking any independent revolutionary action. After reading a rare truthful article by an avowed social-patriot in a German newspaper; (who argued that it would be *bad* for the bourgeoisie if the German Social-

Democratic Party were to swing to the right—because in that case the workers would desert it), Lenin commented:

“The opportunists (and the bourgeoisie) need the party as it is today, a party combining the Right and the Left wings and officially represented by Kautsky, who will be able to reconcile everything in the world by means of smooth, thoroughly Marxist phrases. In words, socialism and the revolutionary spirit for the people, the masses, the workers; in deed, Sudokumism, adhering to the bourgeoisie in any grave crisis.”²⁰

The conclusion Lenin arrived at was

“We are firmly convinced that, in the present state of affairs, a split with the opportunists and chauvinists is the prime duty of revolutionaries. . . .”²¹

Moreover, Lenin emphasized that this political trend “will not die unless it is ‘killed’, i.e. overthrown, deprived of all influence on the socialist proletariat.”²² To charges that the Bolsheviks, the German Lefts and others were trying to split the ranks of the working class, Lenin replied that

“today, unity with the opportunists actually means subordinating the working class to their own national bourgeoisies, and an alliance with the latter for the purpose of oppressing other nations and of fighting for dominant nation privileges; it means *splitting* the revolutionary proletariat of all countries.”²³

This was what the Bolshevik Party, and the other left-wing groups and elements who rallied together during the war, upheld—the fundamental interests of the masses of the workers in all countries as against the imperialist bourgeoisie of all countries. For them, the Third International could only be built on that kind of revolutionary basis, and the struggle to draw sharp lines of demarcation and rally the class-conscious forces was the necessary precondition for this.

At this time, Lenin left open how rapidly and in what forms this split would occur in other countries; but he emphasized that this separation was necessary and inevitable, and that “the entire policy of the workers’ parties must be directed from this standpoint.”²⁴

Writing in the fall of 1915 in *Socialism and War*, on the eve of the first Zimmerwald Conference, Lenin laid out in no uncertain terms what he saw as the chief tasks of revolutionaries at that time:

“To rally these Marxist elements, however small their numbers may be at the outset: to reanimate, in their names, the now forgotten ideals of genuine socialism, and to call upon the workers

of all lands to break with the chauvinists and rally about the old banner of Marxism—such is the task of the day.”²⁵

III. The Bolsheviks and Zimmerwald

In late 1914 and early 1915, Lenin began to actively search out and rally the numerically small left-wing elements in other countries. These efforts were made particularly difficult and hazardous by the wartime situation. In the main belligerent countries, it was a treasonable offense to meet with “enemy socialists.” While the patriotic socialist leaders who had deserted to the side of the bourgeoisie were wined and dined, the revolutionary Social Democrats were hounded, imprisoned and driven underground by the political police. Still, by utilizing all potential forms that were at hand to promote revolutionary Marxism and internationalism, these difficulties were overcome step by step, especially through the untrifling efforts of Lenin and the Bureau of the Bolshevik Central Committee Abroad. From Switzerland, where they were based until early 1917, the Bolsheviks were well situated to keep abreast of war developments and trends among socialists in most of the belligerent and neutral countries.

In his article “What Next?” (January 1915), Lenin noted that the European socialist movement generally went through three stages in the wake of the tremendous crisis brought on by the war. He pointed out that it first resulted in enormous *confusion*; secondly, it led to a series of *new groupings* taking shape among representatives of various currents; and finally it raised the question of what changes in the *foundations* of socialist policy were demanded by the crisis.

In most countries, the left-wing elements were still getting reorganized and were just beginning to speak out and formulate their positions on the key questions. This made it all the more critical for the Bolsheviks to propagate their theses on the war and the situation in international social democracy as widely as possible. In the course of struggling to win over honest elements that were opposed to the war and to social-chauvinism over to a revolutionary internationalist line, the Bolsheviks paid close attention to the task of uniting a solid core of left-wing elements—both politically and organizationally—and moving as rapidly as possible towards the formation of a new International.

At the end of September 1914, the Bolshevik Central Committee Abroad sent a copy of its draft theses on the war to the joint meeting of the Swiss and

Italian socialist parties, who were influenced somewhat by the Bolsheviks’ clear analysis of the imperialist nature of the war that had broken out. The same month, a Bolshevik representative presented the Bolsheviks’ theses on the war to the Swedish Social-Democratic Party’s congress, and made contact with left-wing forces in the Swedish party.

In November 1914, Nadezhda Krupskaya, Inessa Armand and other leading Bolshevik women sent a letter to Clara Zetkin (who was the secretary of the International Socialist Women’s Conference) proposing the calling of an unofficial women’s conference to unite the left-wing forces. A month later, this letter (which contained the chief points of the Bolsheviks’ theses on the war and urged women of all countries “to draw the working women into the struggle against every kind of civil peace and in favor of a war against war”), was forwarded as a circular to left-wing and anti-war women’s organizations throughout Europe.

Though Zetkin and the organizers of the conference invited a much broader section of women, including several bourgeois pacifists from Britain, the Bolsheviks sent a delegation led by Krupskaya and Armand to the conference, which was held in Berne, Switzerland in late March 1915. In the course of the discussion, a sharp struggle broke out. In opposition to the clearly worded Bolsheviks’ resolutions, the delegates from the other countries—including Zetkin and the left-wing German women—voted for a “middle of the road” resolution that, while condemning the “defense of the fatherland,” called on the masses to “fight for peace.” The Bolshevik delegation, alone, voted against it.

In *Sotsial-Demokrat* #42 (June 1, 1915), Lenin reproached the left-wing German delegates for failing to take advantage of the first international socialist conference convened since the outbreak of the war to advance revolutionary tactics and tell the workers the truth about the treachery of the majority socialists. Lenin concluded this article by stating that the Bolsheviks preferred to remain in isolation for the time being “rather than join a bloc of this kind.”

“We know that there are many who would follow this path and confine themselves to several Left phrases. However, this road is not for us. We have followed a *different* road, and will go on following it. . . .”²⁶

It was with this orientation of seeking unity on a principled basis that the Bolsheviks continued to wage a vigorous political struggle for the next few months, including at the International

this preliminary meeting, he reported that "it is clear that the so-called conference of the Lefts will in reality be a conference of 'conciliators' of the 'Center' with social chauvinists. It is clear that no one cares seriously about the calling of the so-called Left conference."²⁹

Nevertheless, during the summer of 1915, Lenin strained every effort to rally the left-wing elements in a number of countries to attend the conference. He fired off letters to Kollontai in Norway to get in touch with the Scandinavian internationalists and to Inessa Armand in Paris to contact French opposition groups. In spite of the obvious reluctance of the conference organizers to actively involve the Lefts in the conference, this was a favorable opportunity for the internationalists to join forces, and together wage a struggle for their revolutionary line at the conference as a whole.

In letters to Kollontai in preparation for Zimmerwald in July, Lenin wrote: "A common international demonstration of the Left Marxists would be devilishly important! (A declaration of principles is the main thing, and for the time being the only possible thing!)" Several weeks later, Lenin emphasized to Kollontai that "the crux of the struggle will be: whether or not to declare a ruthless (up-to-a-breach) struggle against *opportunism* = 'social chauvinism.'"³⁰

By the middle of August, Lenin and the Bolshevik CC Abroad had drawn up a draft manifesto and resolution which they circulated among left-wing forces in Europe in order to develop the greatest possible unity among them in preparation for the conference. Two days before this historic conference opened, Lenin arrived in Berne and chaired a meeting of left-wing delegates who worked up a draft resolution and draft manifesto of the *Zimmerwald Left*. The eight founding members of the Zimmerwald Left were Lenin and Zinoviev from the Bolshevik CC, Karl Radek of the "Regional Presidium" of the Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania, Berzin of the Latvian Social Democrats, Hogland and Nerman from the Swedish and Norwegian Social-Democratic Lefts, Borchardt from the German International Socialist Party (which took a clear stand against Kautsky & Co., but had few ties with the masses and later disbanded) and Fritz Platten from the Left-wing of the Swiss Social-Democratic Party.

From the very beginning of the Zimmerwald conference, three distinct groups emerged among the 38 delegates from eleven countries. The right-wing of the conference (which Lenin characterized as "semi-Kautskyite") amounted

to 19 or 20 delegates—including most of the German delegation, the French, some of the Italians and Poles, and the Russian Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. They were only interested in a general appeal to launch a "struggle for peace," and they opposed an open break with the Second International. In the official report to the press it later made, the Zimmerwald leadership stated, "In no way should the suspicion be aroused that this Conference wished to bring about a breach and to form a new International."³¹

Between the right-wing majority and the left-wing group of eight of which Lenin was the most prominent member, there was a smaller "center" group of five or six, among whom were Grimm of the Swiss party, Trotsky from *Nashe Slovo*, and Roland-Holst from Holland, who all supported much of the program of the Zimmerwald Left but refused to call for an open break with the Second International's leaders and their conciliators. They played the role of attempting to unite the right-wing and the lefts at the Zimmerwald Conference.

The conference opened on a high note with the reading of a letter from Karl Liebknecht, who had been drafted in February 1915 and had been subsequently furloughed and forbidden to leave Berlin. Liebknecht wrote to the conference:

"You have two serious tasks, a hard task of grim duty and a sacred one of enthusiasm and hope.

"Settlement of accounts, inexorable settlement of accounts with the deserters and turncoats of the International in Germany, England, France, and elsewhere, is imperative.

"It is our duty to promote mutual understanding, encouragement, and inspiration among those who remain true to the flag, who are determined not to give way one inch before international imperialism, even if they fall victims to it, and to create order in the ranks of those who are determined to hold out. . .

"Civil war, not civil peace! Exercise international solidarity for the proletariat against pseudo-national, pseudo-patriotic class harmony, and for international class war for peace, for the socialist revolution. . .

"The new International will arise; it can arise on the ruins of the old, on a new and firmer foundation. Today, friends, socialists from all countries, you have to lay the foundation stone for the future structure."³²

Liebknecht's message ended with the call, "Proletarians of all countries—reunite!"

The conference applauded loudly, though the great majority of the delegates were actually opposed to his

line. The German delegation appeared to be openly distressed at the place of prominence given to Liebknecht at the conference.

After hearing reports on the situation in various countries, the conference received a joint declaration of the French and German delegations (except Borchardt) titled, "This War Is Not Our War!" In it they pledged to "repudiate the policy of civil peace" and launch a "peace movement" that would be "strong enough to force our governments to stop this slaughter."³³

Then the Left Zimmerwald group submitted its draft of a manifesto (in two parts) to the workers of all countries. The war was characterized as a predatory, imperialist war; it pointed to the treachery of the leaders of the Second International and called for a new International; over the heads of the leaders, a call was issued to the masses to compel the socialist deputies in parliament to vote against war credits and to recall socialist ministers from the bourgeois governments; and a call was issued to utilize every movement of the people produced by the war to fight for the overthrow of their own governments under the slogan of "civil war, not civil peace, between the classes."³⁴

This draft manifesto was rejected by the majority of the conference, most of whom tried to hide behind the official agenda of the conference to avoid discussing specific tactics to be employed against the belligerent governments and to avoid discussing Liebknecht's call for a new International to be built on the "debris" of the Second International. However, in the course of the debate, the delegation of German centrists headed by Ledebour was forced to explain why it was refusing to vote against war credits in the Reichstag. Ledebour and Co. justified abstaining from voting against the credits in order to prevent a split in the parliamentary group and the party as a whole, saying that only "patience" was necessary for the "Lefts" to obtain a majority in the Party. By violating party discipline and voting against credits, Liebknecht was accused of "helping the Rights." Later in the conference, Ledebour and most of the German delegation delivered an ultimatum that they would refuse to sign the Zimmerwald manifesto if there was a demand in it for voting against war credits.

The Zimmerwald Manifesto did not speak directly about the treachery of the parties of the Second International, nor did it call for a revolutionary struggle against the imperialist bourgeoisie which had already drafted and sent millions of soldiers to die in the trenches. Still, due to the strong showing made by the left wing, it was undoubtedly further

to the left than the Zimmerwald leaders had originally planned. (The final manifesto most closely followed the draft submitted by Trotsky for the "center" group.) While the Bolsheviks and other members of the Zimmerwald Left signed the manifesto, they attached their own independent statement to it which summarized its shortcomings.

Furthermore, while the Zimmerwald conference elected an International Socialist Committee (chaired by Robert Grimm and composed of centrists) to publicly represent the decisions of the conference, the left wing, before leaving Zimmerwald, organized its own Bureau of the Zimmerwald Left, which was composed of Lenin, Zinoviev and Radek. The Bureau immediately published the declarations of the Zimmerwald Left in *Internationales Flugblatt*, No. 1, which appeared on November 1, 1915. Along with the publication of these declarations in several other languages during the war, the Zimmerwald Left also initiated the publication of the German-language journal *Vorbote* (the Herald) in the early part of 1916.

In his article "The First Step," Lenin evaluated the struggle that had taken place at the conference and its results. Overall, he summed it up a success, with important shortcomings. First, he considered that the unity built among the left internationalists was "one of the most important facts and greatest achievements of the conference."³⁵ The conference as a whole did objectively represent a step forward in developing international opposition to the imperialist war and in breaking with the open traitors of the Second International.

Lenin also concluded that the Bolshevik Party and the Zimmerwald Left had been correct in signing the Zimmerwald Manifesto—in spite of its serious shortcomings—since it represented "a step forward towards a real struggle against opportunism, towards a rupture with it." "It would be sectarianism to refuse to take this step forward together with the minority of German, French, Swedish, Norwegian, and Swiss socialists, when we retain full freedom and full opportunity to criticize its inconsistency and to work for greater things."³⁶

Thus, Lenin made it clear that this could not have been done without the Zimmerwald Left's ability to openly express its views and disagreements with the centrist majority and maintain its organizational independence within the Zimmerwald movement. Lenin had no illusions about the right-wing Zimmerwald majority, but he emphasized what was *developing*, that social-chauvinism and Kautskyism on the one hand, and internationalism and revolutionary Marx-

ism on the other, were dividing more and more deeply.

In conclusion, Lenin, writing at the end of 1915, pointed to the great advances that had been made in uniting the revolutionary left-wing forces internationally and in developing the struggle against the imperialists and their "socialist" servants—both politically and organizationally. He pointed out that in September 1914, the Bolsheviks' Central Committee Manifesto "seemed almost isolated", but that a year later "we rallied in a whole group of the international Left wing" that had already begun to play an independent political role within the Zimmerwald movement.

IV. Zimmerwald to Kienthal

In the second half of 1915 there was a general shift among the masses of people in the main belligerent countries towards disillusionment with and outright opposition to the war. The chauvinist intoxication built up in the first few months of war had begun to wear off. Italy and Bulgaria had entered the war, and military operations had spread into the Middle East and Asia. As casualties mounted and inflation and shortages of necessities grew more severe, a growing section of the masses began to understand that this was a war of plunder in which millions of workers were being sent off to slaughter each other to enrich their capitalist masters. In defiance of martial law, street demonstrations broke out in Germany. The first political strikes in Russia began in April 1915; five months later, 113,000 workers took part in strikes in one month alone.

The Bolsheviks and left-wing forces in other countries stepped up their revolutionary agitation, extending their influence among the masses and among rank and file socialists who were coming into opposition to their traitorous party leaders. The Bolsheviks and the Zimmerwald Left rallied new forces who had become convinced that nothing could bring this criminal slaughter of millions to an end—and prevent such wars in the future—short of launching revolutionary struggle to overthrow capitalism itself.

The forces of the left wing internationally were bolstered by the formation in January 1916 of the Spartakusbund (Spartacist League), under the leadership of Liebknecht, Luxemburg, Mehring, Tzsyka and others, which rallied the main group of left-wing Social Democrats in Germany. It began to publish and circulate a series of *Political Letters* which were signed "Spartacus"—after the famous leader of an uprising of Roman slaves—and set out to organize anti-war strikes, demonstrations and

revolutionary struggle among the masses. The theses that the Spartakusbund adopted in January 1916 placed them in the camp of the Zimmerwald Left on most questions. However, they did not openly advocate civil war, and were not yet ready to make a final organizational break with the centrist section of the German Social-Democratic Party.

In Russia, the Bolshevik Party boldly developed the revolutionary struggle against the imperialist war and Tsarism, reconstituting its organizations among the workers, and setting up illegal revolutionary nuclei in the army and navy, at the front and in the rear. Already there were reports of fraternization and of whole units of troops refusing to fight, as the poorly trained and equipped Tsarist army sustained defeat after defeat, giving up Poland and part of the Baltic provinces to the German forces by 1916. Faced with these military reverses and fresh outbreaks of strikes and mass unrest, the Russian bourgeoisie set up War Industries Committees in July 1915, with seats set aside for "workers' representatives," to enlist the workers in the war effort. The Bolsheviks led a successful boycott of these committees. In Petrograd, the main industrial center in Russia, the Bolshevik workers who ran on the program of opposing the tsarist regime and boycotting these war committees received the votes of more than 100,000 workers, out-distancing the defencists and Mensheviks combined. The Bolsheviks' use of these elections did much to prepare the Petrograd workers politically for the decisive battles that lay ahead.

At the same time, the position of the Kautskyite center in the parties of the belligerent and neutral countries also grew in strength. The centrist leaders had to take a more openly anti-war stand in order to keep their influence over the increasingly war-weary masses, but they continued to refuse to take revolutionary action and to split with the openly social-chauvinist wings of their parties.

The most striking example of this shift was in Germany. Only three months earlier, Ledebour, Haase and other German delegates at Zimmerwald had adamantly refused to bind themselves into voting against war credits. Now, in December 1915, they were part of a group of 20 deputies who defied the unanimity principle of the party leadership and voted against credits in the Reichstag. According to their barely disguised chauvinist reasoning, due to the fact that "Germany's borders were secure" (the Triple Alliance had a favorable military position at that time) it was thus correct to vote against credits. In Britain, the most significant development was an open split in the

British Socialist Party, with the openly pro-war Hyndman group being expelled by a slight majority.

In response to these developments, Lenin devoted his attention all the more to the unmasking and exposure of the Kautskyite center. The line of the Bolsheviks and the left Zimmerwaldists was to *utilize* the masses' striving for peace to explain that the peace proposals that the centrists were advancing were nothing but the utmost hypocrisy, for all they amounted to were talk of renouncing annexations in general (without focusing on, even referring to, their *own* countries' annexations), and calling for disarmament—when the only correct position was to call for turning the guns around. More than that, Lenin and the Bolsheviks emphasized that the imperialist powers themselves could not grant a democratic peace (a peace without annexations, grabbing up colonies, etc.), for even a negotiated peace would only be a new imperialist division of the spoils of war. In "The Peace Programme" (March 1916), Lenin wrote that "Whoever promises the nations a democratic peace, without at the same time preaching the socialist revolution, or while repudiating the struggle for it—a struggle now, during the war—is deceiving the proletariat."³⁷

This was the main theme of the proposals drawn up by the Central Committee of the RSDLP and circulated among the Zimmerwald Left groups, in preparation for the second Zimmerwald conference, held at Kienthal, Switzerland in April 1916. The Bolsheviks' Central Committee statement made it clear that this "cheap peace programme... reinforces the subjection of the working class to the bourgeoisie by 'reconciling' the workers, who are beginning to develop a revolutionary struggle, with their chauvinist leaders... The fact that this 'Kautskyite' policy is clothed in plausible phrases and that it is being conducted not only in Germany but in all countries, makes it all the more dangerous for the proletariat."³⁸

It was during this period that Lenin wrote his work, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. He had been preparing to write such a pamphlet for some time, in order to provide an exposition and explanation of the development of imperialism. A correct understanding of this subject had become of pressing importance due to the outbreak of the war and the revolutionary tasks and possibilities of the proletariat in this new era. As Lenin explained, he wrote *Imperialism* in order to make clear

"...the fundamental economic question; viz., the question of the economic essence of imperialism, for unless this is studied, it will be impossible to under-

stand and appraise modern war and modern politics."

It was necessary to show the economic base of the fact that imperialism means war and that

"Peaceful alliances prepare the ground for wars, and in their turn grow out of wars; the one conditions the other, producing alternating forms of peaceful and non-peaceful struggle on *one and the same* basis of imperialist connections and relations within world economics and world politics."³⁹

Thus the imperialist peace which would follow the war would be inextricably linked to another war, unless proletarian revolution succeeded in putting an end to the whole imperialist system. It was of great necessity to demonstrate these facts because precisely the opposite expectation—of the possibility of a democratic and lasting peace—was being energetically fostered by the opportunists.

To combat these ideas, it was particularly important to refute Kautsky's pseudo-Marxist theory of "ultra-imperialism." Soon after the war broke out, Kautsky advanced the theory that imperialism was "a policy preferred by finance capital" and hypothesized that the major imperialist powers were being driven increasingly towards a "phase of joint exploitation of the world by internationally united finance capital... a phase when wars shall cease under capitalism." Lenin explained that this theory of "ultra-imperialism" was directed at obscuring and glossing over the enormous *intensification* of all the fundamental contradictions of capitalism with the development of imperialism—and thus denying the inevitability of inter-imperialist wars, revolutionary crises, and the conclusion that "imperialism is the eve of socialist revolution."

Lenin drove the point home that Kautsky's theory and practice were closely related, that his "ultra-imperialism" provided a Marxist-sounding theoretical cover for the social-chauvinism and class collaboration being practiced by the leaders of the Second International. After all, if the imperialists themselves are capable both of bringing the war to a "democratic" conclusion and solving the crisis which the war had intensified without being overthrown by the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, why not "fight for peace," and wait until the war ends, and then resume the "struggle for socialism," when the socialists of all countries can forgive each others' sins and reunite in the old International?

Amidst this background of rapidly spreading anti-war sentiments among the masses and the revolutionary work

and ideological struggle being carried forward by the Bolsheviks and other left-wing forces, the Second Zimmerwald Conference was set for Kienthal, Switzerland in April 1916. The Kienthal conference had actually been officially called in February by an expanded meeting of the International Socialist Committee established by the Zimmerwald conference. There was general agreement that the first conference had failed to map out a concrete course of action to bring about an end to the war.

At this meeting, the Zimmerwald left forces were able to put out a circular letter that went much further than the Zimmerwald resolutions in denouncing socialists who had voted for war credits or upheld civil peace. Still, Zinoviev's report on the meeting to other Bolsheviks abroad emphasized that there was intense struggle to come. "The Right Center of Zimmerwald is mobilizing its forces. We should mobilize ours."⁴⁰

Immediately, the Bolsheviks drew up their proposals to be submitted to the Second Zimmerwald Conference and circulated them in advance for discussion among Bolshevik organizations and left-wing elements abroad. These were to be the basis for the struggle waged by the left wing at Kienthal.

Of the forty-three delegates from ten countries, the left wing had a stable core of 12 (Lenin, Zinoviev and Armand for the Bolsheviks; three Poles, led by Radek; the Serbian deputy Kaclerovic; Serrati [editor of *Avanti*] from Italy; Frolich from the Bremen Radical group in Germany; and three Swiss, led by Platten). A number of left-wing elements were not able to attend, including those from Holland, Latvia, Scandinavia and Bulgaria. In addition to this core, there were at least seven other delegates, including the French syndicalist Guillbeaux and Munzenberg from the Socialist Youth International who were prepared to support the Left at times. This meant on some issues that they obtained nearly half the votes.

During the course of the Kienthal conference, the left wing held several meetings to discuss the Bolsheviks' proposals. The Zimmerwald Left's draft resolution at Kienthal on the question of peace was quite similar to the Bolsheviks' position except that it avoided a definite statement on the question of self-determination of nations and did not include any mention of revolutionary defeatism, both of which continued to be subjects of heated debate within the Zimmerwald Left. This resolution was basically adopted by the conference as a whole, condemning the peace programmes being advanced as a deception of the masses, but stopping short of explicitly condemning the

centrists and calling for civil war.

But even more controversial than the peace question, on which the right-wing majority had basically given in to the Lefts in order to avoid a breakdown of the conference (and because they knew they could vote for the resolution without carrying it out), was the struggle over reconvening the International Socialist Bureau (ISB) of the Second International. Not long after the first Zimmerwald Conference, the Zimmerwaldist leadership (which was dominated by centrists from the Swiss and Italian parties) had promised to dissolve itself as soon as the old International's Bureau started meeting again. Though all the ISB's efforts to get the French and British social-chauvinists to meet with their German counterparts continued to meet with failure, the right-wing majority at Kienthal continued to demand the right to jump back on board the sinking ship of the Second International. As opposed to the Left's demand for an immediate split with the social-chauvinists, the Zimmerwald majority proposed to call for the immediate convocation of the International Socialist Bureau, where the Zimmerwaldists would supposedly battle it out with the pro-war socialists for control of the Second International.

According to one report on the debate, the conference majority made two main arguments—the “principled” and the “practical” approach. Axelrod for the Russian Mensheviks admitted that the socialist leaders had indeed allowed patriotic sentiments to warp their socialist faith, but he insisted that if a split were avoided, with pressure from the masses, “their leaders” could be brought back to international socialist principles. “Not a single method of cure should remain untried when surgery is finally resorted to,” Axelrod appealed.⁴¹ The “practical” approach was advanced by the Italian and German centrists who argued that with the growing strength of the Zimmerwald movement, it would only be a matter of time before they could outvote the social-chauvinists on the International Socialist Bureau.

To all this the Bolsheviks and the Lefts replied that this was not the question at all. Instead there were two irreconcilable camps and programs that made it an urgent necessity to brand the old International as political detachments of the imperialist bourgeoisie and to call for a new proletarian International.

Furthermore, Lenin emphasized that those who were refusing to break with the “International Social-Chauvinist Bureau” as he called it, were not carrying out the actual work of class struggle against their own bourgeoisie that was called for in the Zimmerwald Manifesto

they had themselves signed, while the “actual work in the spirit of Zimmerwald” (and here Lenin pointed to the work of the left wing in Germany in carrying on revolutionary agitation against the will of the party majority) “is bound up throughout the world with the split that is becoming deeper and wider.”⁴²

Later in 1916, Lenin wrote an open letter to a French centrist, B. Souvarine, who had asked, “What useful purpose could now be served by the foundation of a new International? Its activity would be blighted by sterility, for numerically it would be very weak.” Lenin replied that the activities of the French centrists and Kautsky and Ledebour in Germany were *already* blighted by sterility, “precisely because they are afraid of a split.” Referring once more to the revolutionary example set by the two left deputies in the German Reichstag, Liebknecht and Rühle, Lenin explained that

“their activity is of vast importance for the proletariat, *despite their numerical weakness* . . . [Though they were] only two against 108 . . . these two represent millions, the exploited mass, the overwhelming majority of the population, the future of mankind, the revolution that is mounting and maturing with every passing day. The 108, on the other hand, represent only the servile spirit of a handful of bourgeois flunkies within the proletariat.”⁴³

The Second Zimmerwald Conference represented a further step forward for the left-wing internationalists. The conference resolutions hit especially hard at social-pacifism. Kienthal had also been an advance over Zimmerwald by indicating more specifically the actual forms of class struggle—strikes, street demonstrations, fraternization—that were to be employed against the war and the bourgeois governments, thus further exposing the Zimmerwald right wing for not carrying out this program of “class struggle.” In addition, among the Zimmerwald parties and groups, the question of reviving the Second International vs. forming the Third International was further sharpened up.

Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks were quite clear that, in spite of these important steps forward, the majority of the parties at Kienthal were “fellow travelers” at best, and unity with them was conditional on their continued opposition to social-chauvinism. Thus, while the Bolsheviks continued to struggle within the Zimmerwald movement to win over wavering forces and to expose and isolate the right-wing majority, it was all the more critical to strengthen the forces of the left wing and unite them more firmly around a revolutionary Marxist line in order to lay the

basis for the formation of the Third International.

V. Struggle Among the Left-Wing Forces

Lenin and the Bolshevik Party paid a great deal of attention during this period to waging comradely but sharp political and ideological struggle around several key questions among the Zimmerwald Left and other internationalist forces. The sharpest among these were the right of self-determination of oppressed nations, revolutionary defeatism, the use of the disarmament slogan, and the strategy and tactics to be employed in the building of a new proletarian International. Within the ranks of the Zimmerwald Left, there were important differences of line on these and other questions that had to be resolved correctly in order to maintain a revolutionary course.

For example, though the groups making up the Zimmerwald Left all advocated revolutionary struggle to overthrow their own bourgeoisies during the war, only the Bolshevik Party actively propagated *revolutionary defeatism*, welcoming the military defeats and general weakening of their own ruling class in order to provide more favorable conditions for the proletariat to seize power. Among other revolutionaries, the argument was made repeatedly that this line would only open up the revolutionary forces to charges that they favored the victory of the other side. Thus, at this time, most of the left-wing forces were quite confused on this question, and as a rule held positions similar to that taken by the Spartakusbund in 1915—“both victory and defeat in the present war are equally fatal for the German people.”⁴⁴

It was only in 1917, when the Bolsheviks' revolutionary line and tactics were tested and proven correct in practice, that the prevailing confusion among the Lefts was cleared up on this critical question—which had everything to do with whether the proletariat and the masses of people in each country would be politically trained to take advantage of the crises caused by the war and the defeats suffered by their own bourgeoisie to advance their revolutionary struggle to the greatest degree possible.

At this time, Lenin paid a great deal of attention to the German revolutionaries, particularly to the Spartakusbund. The left wing in Germany occupied an important position due to the fact that Germany was one of the main belligerent countries and the German Social-Democratic Party had been by far the biggest and most influential party in the Second International. Every step forward taken by the German Lefts was an important blow to the imperialist bourgeoisie and the Second Interna-

tional.

The German Spartacus group had been much slower to break, both politically and organizationally, with the Kautskyite Center than the groups that formed the Zimmerwald Left. At the first Zimmerwald conference in late 1915, the *Internationale* representatives (as they were then known) voted at times with Ledebour and Co. against the left wing. Lenin commented directly on the theoretical and practical errors that the German Lefts were making, particularly in response to the "Junius pamphlet" written by Rosa Luxemburg in 1915. While welcoming this pamphlet as a new blow to the "ex-Social Democratic Party of Germany," Lenin criticized Luxemburg for not openly exposing the centrists and for attempting to replace the slogan of civil war with an eclectic "national programme." The Junius pamphlet called on the proletariat to fight for demands such as immediate arming of the people, a permanent parliament to allow the people to decide questions of war and peace, all in order to demonstrate that the proletariat can best defend the true interests of the fatherland. In response to Luxemburg's argument that "there is complete harmony between the interests of the country and the class interests of the proletariat International," Lenin demonstrated that in an imperialist country such as Germany, the proletariat had no national interests to defend, and that to raise demands suggesting a stage short of socialist revolution in an imperialist country could only lead to directing revolutionary program of waging civil war against the bourgeoisie.

In conclusion, Lenin pointed out that the errors of the Junius pamphlet reflected the fact that the German left as a whole was still operating in the "environment" of rotten German Social Democracy, and thus was hesitant to split with the party. Lenin noted that "a very great defect in revolutionary Marxism in Germany as a whole is its lack of a compact illegal organization that would systematically pursue its own line and educate the masses in the spirit of the new tasks"⁴⁵—which in turn reinforced the German left's tendencies towards vacillation on key political questions. Nevertheless, Lenin hailed the illegal revolutionary work that the German Lefts had started to carry out and expressed confidence that, in the course of struggle, they would correct these errors.

Another weakness of the Spartakusbund (and most likely a reason why it did not join the Zimmerwald Left) was that it tended to downplay the importance of the political struggle on the international level and the progress being made, largely through this struggle, in uniting the left-wing forces from a

number of countries. After the Kienthal conference, the Spartakusbund wrote that

"the participation in the May demonstration in Berlin (1916)... was more important than the dignified participation in the Second Zimmerwald Conference, and Karl Liebknecht in his quiet prison cell is doing more for the restoration of the International in all countries than ten yards of the Zimmerwald manifesto."⁴⁶

The resolution that the Spartakusbund submitted to Kienthal stated that the new International would rise "from below," that "it can be born only of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletarian masses in the most important capitalist countries."⁴⁷

During this same period, the Bolshevik Party worked resolutely to fan every spark of resistance against the war into conscious revolutionary struggle against the tsarist regime, but the Bolsheviks had a more dialectical and correct understanding that this struggle, in Russia and other countries, could not continue to advance *without* waging a ruthless struggle against international opportunism that still had a grip on millions of workers, and without uniting with other left-wing forces to carry out this task. Still, in 1916, when the Zimmerwald right-wing majority talked more militantly than ever about class struggle and socialism, but studiously avoided carrying out such a program in practice, there was much to be united with in the Spartakusbund's emphasis on revolutionary action.

Within the Zimmerwald Left, sharp struggle also broke out around upholding the right of all oppressed nations to self-determination. This question had been the subject of sharp disagreement between the Bolshevik Party and the Polish Social-Democrats (including Radek, Luxemburg and others)* all the way back to the RSDLP Second Congress in 1903. At Zimmerwald, the Polish Social-Democrats had indicated their opposition to the demand for the right to self-determination in a separate resolution. In this they were joined by the left-wing Dutch Tribunists, who refused to sign the Manifesto on this basis. At that time, in early 1916, an open debate was carried out in the pages of the journal *Vorbote*, the Zimmerwald Left's journal (only two issues of which appeared).

* Due to the repeated carving up of Poland by German and Russian imperialism, many Polish revolutionaries were at various times members of the social-democratic parties of Poland, Germany and Russia. (Thus, Luxemburg became a prominent member of the German Spartakusbund and Radek went on to join the Bolshevik Party.)

In this debate, Radek (under the name of Parabellum)—representing the position of the Polish and Dutch Social-Democrats—argued that raising the slogan of the right of self-determination for all oppressed nations in the era of imperialism was a concession to bourgeois nationalism and could only be an impediment to socialist revolution. This thinking was widespread among the German lefts as well. The *Internationale* group held the position that "national liberation wars are no longer possible in the era of unbridled imperialism."⁴⁸ In the Junius pamphlet, Luxemburg had argued that every national war against one imperialist power leads to the intervention of a rival great power, and thus every national war is turned into an imperialist war.

In his reply, Lenin laid bare the rightest essence of this "left"-sounding line. He demonstrated that national wars in certain parts of Europe and in the colonies are not only "possible" but are inevitable, progressive, and revolutionary, and that they were taking place right before Radek's and Luxemburg's eyes—in the Irish Rebellion of 1916, in the bourgeois-democratic revolutions that started before the war in China, Persia, and Mexico, and in the colonial rebellions that flared up during the war in Morocco, India, Indochina, etc. While the struggle over the question of the right of self-determination was not a new one, the importance of the question had become all the sharper with the outbreak of the world war and the collapse of the Second International into the swamp of social-chauvinism. Revolutionary Marxists had to base themselves particularly firmly on a line of opposition to the social-chauvinism of the imperialist great powers, who had gone to war precisely for the purpose of determining who would gain the right to plunder and oppress the nations that made up the vast majority of the world's population.

Lenin noted that the Polish and Dutch Social Democrats were arguing for this position in reaction to the misuse of the slogan of the right of self-determination by the opportunist socialists in the imperialist countries to justify the "defense" of their own fatherlands and the "liberation" of the nations annexed and oppressed by their *rivals'* bourgeoisies. But by discarding this slogan altogether, Lenin emphasized, the Polish and Dutch revolutionaries were in fact playing right into the hands of the social-chauvinists and making a serious theoretical error with counterrevolutionary consequences. In reference to Luxemburg's denial of the possibility of national war under imperialism, Lenin replied that this was "tantamount to European chauvinism in practice: we

who belong to nations that oppress hundreds of millions in Europe, Africa, Asia etc. are invited to tell the oppressed peoples that it is 'impossible' for them to wage war against 'our' nations."⁴⁹

For Lenin and the Bolshevik Party, in order to educate the workers in the spirit of proletarian internationalism, it was absolutely necessary to recognize that with the development of imperialism, the world had been divided into oppressor and oppressed nations. Lenin summed up very sharply that any Social Democrat who failed to recognize this fundamental fact and failed to raise the right to self-determination of the nations oppressed by his own bourgeoisie, and did not grasp the revolutionary potential of a national struggle waged by these oppressed nations, "would be a ridiculous doctrinaire in theory and an abettor of imperialism in practice."

Lenin was blunt with the Polish and Dutch Social Democrats, whom he considered to be among the best revolutionary elements in international social democracy, for good reason. The utmost clarity was needed on this question to unmask the hypocritical promises of "peace without annexations" being made by the imperialist powers and their socialist apologists. Moreover, it was necessary to wage this battle at this time in order to clarify both theoretically and practically what the new International's position on this question would be in order for it to be a revolutionary instrument in the struggle against imperialism.

Lenin not only demonstrated how the Polish-Dutch position was a mass of errors, but explained that it had arisen out of "the specific objective conditions in their countries." Both Poland and Holland were small nations caught in the middle of the fierce rivalries between imperialist great powers, both were at one time great powers themselves (Holland still possessed colonies). Thus Lenin noted that the Polish and Dutch revolutionaries' opposition to the use of the slogan of self-determination by their own bourgeoisies so they could defend and expand their own oppression of other nations (Indonesia, Ukraine) was quite correct. But by generalizing it onto an international scale, Lenin emphasized, this "caricature of Marxism" could only play into the hands of the great nation chauvinism of the imperialist countries, ignoring the development of national revolutionary wars against imperialism—all in the name of a "pure" struggle for socialism. Instead, Lenin wrote:

"The social revolution can come about only in the form of an epoch in which are combined civil war by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie in the advanced



German and Russian soldiers fraternize on the Eastern front. Due to the determined work of the Bolsheviks and German revolutionaries, a great many of these soldiers not only refused to fight and often killed their officers, but also returned home to fight on the front lines of the civil war against the bourgeoisie.

countries and a whole series of democratic and revolutionary movements, including the national liberation movement, in the undeveloped, backward and oppressed nations.

"Why? Because capitalism develops unevenly, and objective reality gives us highly developed capitalist nations side by side with a number of economically slightly developed, or totally undeveloped, nations...."⁵⁰

These polemics within the Zimmerwald Left became very heated, and undoubtedly limited the role it was able to play as an organized tendency. A higher level of organization could not be developed until a greater degree of political unity had been achieved. Thus, Lenin was convinced (and rightly so) that it was necessary to openly debate these critical political questions in order to guide the revolutionary work of the left-wing forces in their countries (for which greater opportunities were rapidly developing); to carry through the ideological struggle against the reformist, social-chauvinist leaders of the Second International to the end; and to lay the firmest possible theoretical basis for the formation of the Third International.

VI. Bankruptcy of Zimmerwald Movement—Onward to the October Revolution and the Third International

Throughout 1916 and early 1917 the revolutionary left-wing forces were steadily gaining in strength in a number of countries. The Spartakusbund had set up an extensive illegal network for the distribution of revolutionary literature to the workers and soldiers throughout Germany. Recognizing this new threat, the German government arrested Liebknecht at the May Day rally in 1916 in Berlin, sentencing him to a long prison term. In 1917, the Swedish Lefts (along with many pacifists) founded the Left Social-Democratic Party of Sweden. In Britain, a group of internationalists in the British Socialist Party who had split with the party's right wing carried out active revolutionary anti-war work. The Scottish socialist McLean was arrested for organizing mass strikes at munitions works and sentenced to a hard labor prison term.

In France, where the Zimmerwald-affiliated Committee for the Resumption of International Relations continued to

oppose the revolutionary line of the Zimmerwald Left, the Bolsheviks' Paris representative, Inessa Armand, paid close attention to developing contacts with newly formed groups of left-wing youth, dock workers and soldiers. The Bolsheviks and French Left Zimmerwaldists in 1916 together established a secret printing plant which issued and distributed illegal leaflets and literature, including the French translation of Lenin's *Socialism and War*. By the spring of 1917, a considerable part of the Committee, led by F. Loriot, had adopted the Left Zimmerwald program—openly declaring that “the masses must utilize the war for a revolution” and calling for a Third International.⁵¹

As was the case in France in 1916 and early 1917, the contact of the Zimmerwald Left with American socialists was largely through Bolsheviks such as Alexandra Kollontai, who visited the U.S. twice during this period. Lenin often referred approvingly to Debs' anti-war speeches, but he was in closer contact with the Boston-based Socialist Propaganda League, composed of intellectuals and workers of foreign birth or descent who had adopted the program of the Zimmerwald Left when they received it in early 1916 and had begun to publish *The Internationalist*.⁵²

In her letters to Lenin, Kollontai also described the activities of the “New York Opposition,” which was influenced by Trotsky (who was living in the U.S. in the winter of 1916-17) and inclined towards the Zimmerwald Center. They drafted a manifesto attacking Wilson's 1916 peace proposal, exposing the imperialist character of the war, and called on the workers to struggle against militarism and for immediate peace. After the declaration of war by the U.S. in April 1917, the American Socialist Party held an emergency meeting in St. Louis, which resulted in a split with the most chauvinist pro-war elements. In the following months, the Socialist Party divided more clearly between the right wing led by Hillquit and a small but growing left wing that agitated for opposing the war and continuing the class struggle against the bourgeoisie during the war.

Lenin, in late 1916, particularly centered his fire on ISC chairman Robert Grimm, who had moved towards an openly social-pacifist position and proved to be a past master at issuing revolutionary and internationalist salutations to socialists of other countries while doing absolutely nothing to oppose the bourgeoisie in his own country, Switzerland, which was preparing to enter the war. This struggle came to a head in January 1917, when the leaders of the Swiss party indefinitely postponed a party congress that was being

demanding by the left wing to hammer out a revolutionary, anti-war program. Grimm, the leading international representative of the Zimmerwald movement, claimed that the Swiss workers were not “prepared” to decide these questions and agreed that it was more important to launch a big campaign against the high cost of living!

The end of 1916 was in fact a major crossroads for the Zimmerwald movement, after which the differences between the rightist majority and the left wing steadily deepened and developed into open opposition. In December 1916, a set of vague peace proposals were advanced by the German government, which at the time was in a relatively strong position (occupying Belgium, Poland and part of France) to start up peace negotiations. Moreover, the German bourgeoisie and the ruling classes of the other belligerent countries, especially the tsarist regime in Russia, were concerned about the spread of anti-war sentiments among the workers and soldiers. The same month, President Wilson of the U.S., which was in fact preparing to enter the war against Germany, offered to act as intermediary between the belligerent powers. These peace programs were quickly picked up by the leaders of the Swiss and Italian parties as well as other Zimmerwald-affiliated parties, who began to actively promote these bourgeois pacifist promises of a “democratic peace,” disarmament, no annexations, etc.

The Zimmerwald Right was capitulating to the social-chauvinist leaders on a joint platform of empty pacifist phrases—a program that was being advanced in order to derail the growing anti-war sentiment and revolutionary struggle in many countries, and to provide a cover for further escalating the war in order to divide up the spoils on the most favorable terms in the coming imperialist peace. Now more than ever, Lenin emphasized, the left-wing forces had to center their activity on the struggle against reformism—“namely: reliance on the reforms the bourgeoisie is supposed to carry out after the war!”

In an appeal written to Grimm and the ISC in December 1916, Lenin made it clear that the Bolshevik Party was prepared to leave Zimmerwald if it continued on the reactionary course it was taking. Only several months later, Lenin reached the conclusion that the Zimmerwald movement had collapsed politically, and that staying within it could only hamper the formation of the Third International.

At the beginning of 1917, the attention of Lenin and the Bolshevik CC Abroad turned increasingly to Russia, where conditions for revolution were ripening at a rapid pace. In Russia, the

disintegration at the front and in the country as a whole was most severe; there was an exceptionally class-conscious proletariat; and the old tsarist regime was itself in a greatly weakened position (all the more so due to the fact that, as Lenin noted, the Anglo-French imperialists, in league with the Russian bourgeoisie, hatched a plot against the Tsar to ensure that the Russian government would continue to wage war against Germany). All this provided the conditions for the revolution in Russia which exploded in February 1917, the great uprising of workers, peasants and soldiers that swept away the rotten tsarist regime in the space of a few days. The result was a situation of dual power that was shared by the bourgeoisie's Provisional Government and the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers.

With this electrifying development, the eyes of the world turned to Russia. In April 1917, Lenin and other Bolsheviks who had been exiled abroad for so many years returned to Russia. Everywhere the Bolshevik Party conducted revolutionary agitation, exposing the class nature of the Provisional Government and its predatory war aims, and explaining to the masses that this capitalist government could not and would not satisfy their basic demands for bread, land and peace.

The Bolshevik Party's revolutionary internationalist line, strategy and tactics were put to a severe test. For a period of several months, particularly between February and the collapse of the Kerensky government's June military offensive, the Bolsheviks had to combat the rapid spread of “revolutionary defencism,” which Lenin called “the worst enemy of the further progress and success of the Russian revolution.”⁵³

With the downfall of the hated Tsar, the Russian bourgeoisie did its all to tap the patriotic sentiments among the Russian masses by announcing that, with the revolution, Russia was no longer waging an imperialist war. The bourgeoisie received valuable assistance from the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries (S-Rs) in gaining renewed support for the war. They told the workers, peasants and soldiers that it was their “internationalist duty” to keep fighting “to defend the gains of the revolution.” According to these opportunists, it was now necessary to work with the bourgeoisie's Provisional Government to “move it to the left” and bring pressure on it to conclude peace. In early May, the Mensheviks and S-Rs bailed the Provisional Government out of an acute crisis (brought on by the government's agreement to keep the secret treaties with Britain and France in effect) by joining the government and

supplying six "socialist" ministers to better hold back the rising tide of street demonstrations and strikes against the war.

In Lenin's speech on the war at the Seventh (April) All-Russian Conference of the RSDLP, he reported that revolutionary defencism is "an extremely broad mass movement which has now united against us the overwhelming majority of the nation."⁵⁴ The pull to capitulate to bourgeois nationalism was indeed strong at this juncture—all the more so because the Bolsheviks were in a decided minority in nearly all the Soviets, even in Petrograd, the stronghold of the revolutionary proletariat.

At this time, even defencists like Plekhanov in Russia were calling themselves "internationalists," and the right-wing and centrist socialists throughout Europe were launching new attempts to convene a major conference to discuss "international peace actions" and the restoration of "international socialist unity." In his report to the Bolsheviks' April Conference, Lenin wrote that this "internationalism in words" was nothing but a cover for class collaborationism and cowardly opportunism unless a revolutionary struggle were carried out against one's own bourgeoisie *in deeds*. For Lenin, this was the crux of the matter:

"There is one, and only one, kind of real internationalism, and this is—working wholeheartedly for the development of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle in *one's own* country, and supporting (by propaganda, sympathy, and material aid) *this struggle*, this, and only this, line, in every country without exception."⁵⁵

Lenin went on to point out that "it is not easy to be an internationalist in deed during a terrible imperialist war. Such people are few; but it is on such people *alone* that the future of socialism depends."

Thus, in response to the charges hurled by the bourgeoisie and echoed by the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries that the Bolsheviks' line of revolutionary defeatism was "disintegrating the army" and aiding the German imperialists, the Bolsheviks explained to the masses that genuine revolutionaries desired and were working for the defeat of the bourgeoisie in Russia and in all the other imperialist countries, and that a revolutionary Russian worker could only support the Liebknechts in Germany—the revolutionaries who were fighting to overthrow their own rulers. In their work at the front, the Bolsheviks openly called on the Russian and German troops to fraternize, not just to stop fighting each

other, but to carry the struggle back to overthrow their own warmongering capitalists.

Against this background of sharpening class struggle and the spread of revolutionary consciousness and organization in Russia, the traitor socialists of the Second International went to work in the service of their capitalist masters. Delegation after delegation of French and British socialist leaders arrived in Russia in the spring of 1917 to try to persuade the Provisional Government to reinforce its war effort and to refuse to consider a separate peace with Germany. With the entry of U.S. imperialism into the war in April 1917, the British and French were hoping to break the military stalemate and win a decisive victory.

At this point, the majority socialist leaders in Holland and the Scandinavian countries, among whom were several leaders of the still-paralyzed International Socialist Bureau, decided that conditions were favorable to convene an international conference of belligerent and neutral socialists—to be held in Stockholm in the spring of 1917—in order to reach agreement on a joint peace platform. The Dutch-Scandinavian committee dispatched Bjordberg, a Danish right-wing socialist who favored Germany (which wanted to negotiate a separate peace with Russia) to Petrograd in late April 1917 to gain the cooperation of the Petrograd Soviet, where the Mensheviks and S-Rs had a sizeable majority at that time. The Bolsheviks, together with the Poles and Latvians, were the only parties in the Soviet who came out in opposition to this conference.

At the same time, the Zimmerwald ISC, while continuing to uphold the Zimmerwald program of class struggle in words, totally hinged its work around this proposed conference of social-patriots. Grimm and the ISC moved their headquarters to Stockholm and called for a Third Zimmerwald Conference to be held in Stockholm several days before the main event began. The stated purpose of this conference was to determine the Zimmerwald parties' attitude towards Stockholm, but in fact the rightist Zimmerwald majority had already made up their minds to attend the Stockholm conference anyway—where they were pinning their hopes for "a just [imperialist] peace" and a speedy restoration of the Second International.

The Bolsheviks and the other Left Zimmerwaldists worked as closely as possible to expose the real aims of the proposed Stockholm conference, issuing a joint statement denouncing it on July 20. This was signed by the Bolshevik Party, the Polish Social Democrats, the Bulgarian Social Democrats

("Tesnyaki"), the Swedish Left Social-Democratic Party, and the Swedish Youth League. The German Spartakusbund released its own statement in opposition to the conference.

As it turned out, the Stockholm conference never met, due chiefly to the opposition of the British and French imperialists to any moves toward peace when their armies were beginning to take the military offensive, and because the majority of the Anglo-French socialists approved of this "victory to the end" policy. The Third Zimmerwald Conference did finally meet, September 5-12, 1917, in Stockholm, more out of desperation than anything else. It was split so sharply among rightist, centrist, and left-wing elements that it could only agree on an appeal for an international general strike in favor of peace (that is, if the Zimmerwald parties in all the belligerent parties agreed to it—which was unlikely, to say the least).

The conference manifesto could not even be made public, for the German Independent Social-Democratic Party (which had been formed in early 1917 by the German centrists)—accused of inciting mutinies in the German fleet and afraid of losing their legal status—demanded that publication be held up until they could regain the trust of the German government. After the conference refused to condemn the Mensheviks' active participation in the repression of the Bolshevik Party since July (which the two Bolshevik representatives brought up before the delegates), another long nail was driven into the coffin of the Zimmerwald movement.

In the spring of 1917, there had been a sharp struggle within the Bolshevik Party over how to deal with the Zimmerwald movement and its proposed third conference. At the Seventh (April) Conference of the RSDLP, this subject was debated vigorously. Lenin argued in his article, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution," written in preparation for this important conference, that the Zimmerwald movement had already collapsed politically by the beginning of 1917, and that it was necessary to break with Zimmerwald immediately. His position was that the Bolsheviks should remain inside Zimmerwald *only* for purposes of information, for keeping open the possibility "to use Zimmerwald should circumstances make it possible." Particularly in view of the waiting game being played by the Zimmerwald Kautskyite majority in relation to the Stockholm conference, Lenin argued that the Bolshevik Party could not wait, but that it was now their *duty* to make use of the position the revolution had placed the Party in to move directly towards convening "the first international conference of Lefts."⁵⁶ Lenin saw

this as the first step in actually founding the Third International.

However, this Party Conference overruled Lenin's position and decided to stay in Zimmerwald and attend the Third conference when it was held. This, apparently, was the position held by Zinoviev and others. (Kamenev, Zinoviev's close associate, was publicly advocating at this time that the Bolsheviks should participate in the social-patriots' Stockholm conference as well!) Lenin was clearly aware of the amount of opposition within the Party to leaving Zimmerwald and founding the Third International as rapidly as possible, for he concluded the section in his report to the April Conference with these words: "Whoever wants to help the waverers must first stop wavering himself."⁵⁷

A month later Lenin commented that the Central Committee went "half-way towards correcting the mistakes" on May 12 by resolving to walk out of the Third Zimmerwald Conference if it decided to participate in the Stockholm conference. Still, Lenin was clearly not satisfied, being of the opinion in late May that by remaining in Zimmerwald, the Bolsheviks were tying their hands and were "indirectly hampering" the foundation of the Third International.⁵⁸

However, the struggle in the Bolshevik Party over the question of forming the Third International was soon overshadowed by the rising tide of revolutionary struggle throughout Russia.

In the next few months, the war dragged on and the revolutionary crisis further intensified. All other parties had compromised themselves in the eyes of the class-conscious proletariat. As conditions for the proletariat to seize power rapidly ripened, the Bolshevik Party, led by Lenin, made active preparations to launch an armed insurrection—the crowning point of the revolutionary internationalist line it had taken just three years earlier when the war broke out. The Russian contingent of the new "international of deeds," as Lenin called it, was on the verge of an earthshaking victory, the first socialist revolution in the world.

Indeed, the new International was receiving its most powerful impetus in the streets of Petrograd in October 1917. The salvos of the October Revolution brought Marxism-Leninism to hundreds of millions of the exploited and oppressed worldwide. The balance of forces in the world changed radically, as did the situation among those who called themselves socialists. With new determination, the left-wing forces pressed ahead in the revolutionary struggle against their own ruling classes. In country after country, they split with the old bankrupt socialist parties and

founded new communist parties. All over the world, revolutionaries actively opposed the imperialists' attempts to strangle the proletarian dictatorship in Russia.

The attempt to seize power in defeated Germany in the winter of 1918-19 (in which Liebknecht and Luxemburg fought heroically until their last breath, being executed by a right-wing "socialist" government), and those in Austria, Hungary, Finland and elsewhere—although unsuccessful—were an important fruit of the revolutionary internationalist line fought for by the Bolshevik Party and other left-wing forces during the war, and left their mark on the future. In the year and a half following the October Revolution, the Bolshevik Party itself laid an even firmer basis for the founding of the Third International in March 1919 by putting its internationalist line into practice, by aiding the revolution that was maturing and breaking out in much of Europe by propaganda, material aid and sympathy, and by leading the masses of workers and peasants in Russia to defend their political power against the counter-revolution and imperialist intervention.

Meanwhile, the social-chauvinists and Kautskyite parties' paralysis lasted until the war was finally over. It was only in February 1919 that they were able to agree on meeting once again to revive the Second International. With Kautsky, the world-renowned "Marxist," leading the way, the "yellow" International proceeded to denounce the Bolshevik "dictatorship" in Russia, declare itself for "democracy" and do everything short of openly supporting the imperialist intervention to overthrow Soviet power. For the handful of parties who couldn't stomach these open attacks on the dictatorship of the proletariat and who still hoped to reunite the ranks of "socialists" internationally, (!) there was the short-lived "2½ International."

But the revolutionary interests of the proletariat and oppressed masses were finding expression in neither of these bankrupt "Internationals." These interests were embodied in the dictatorship of the proletariat which had been established in one sixth of the world, in the further development of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat and oppressed peoples of the world, in the formation of communist parties in many countries, and in the founding of the Communist International in 1919 in Moscow.

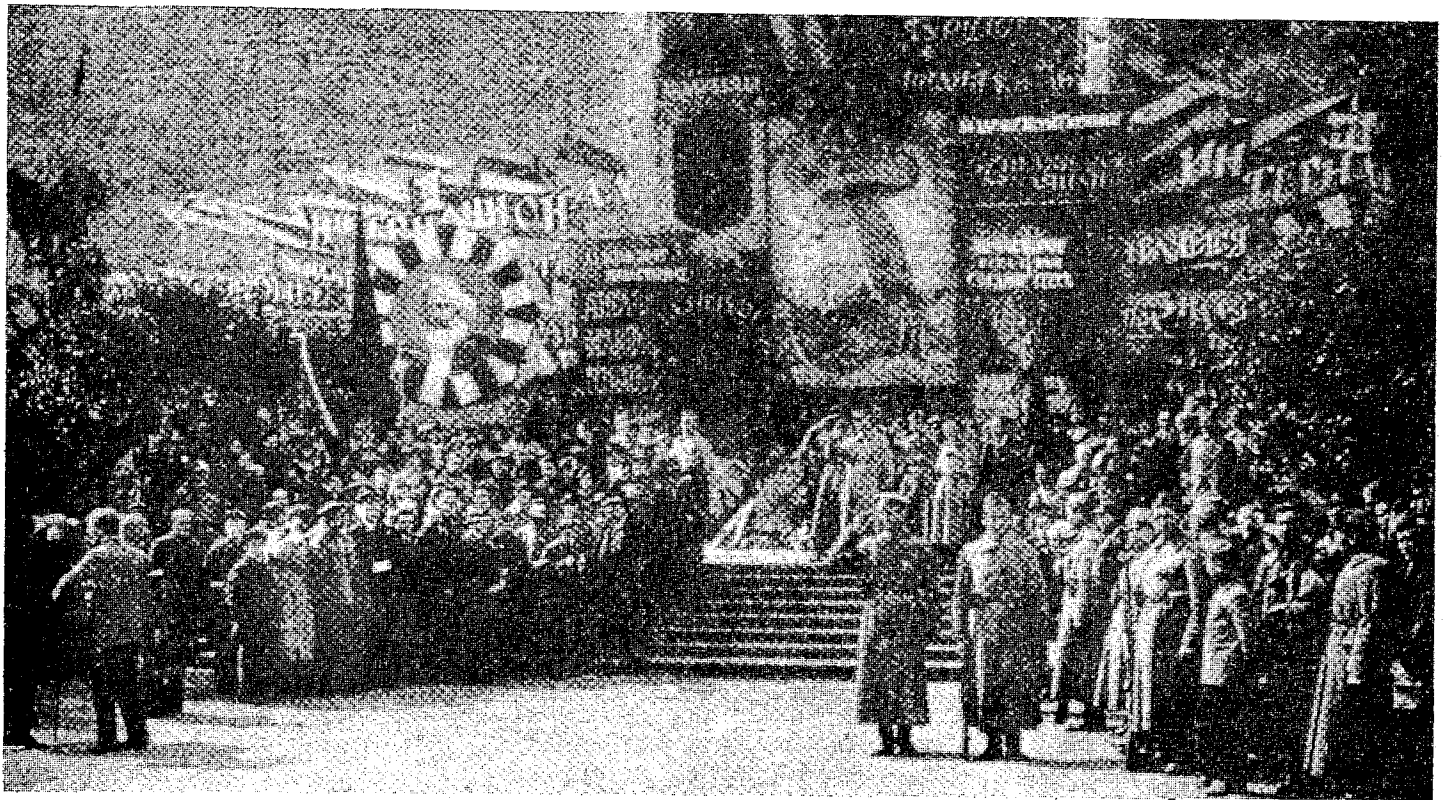
Conclusion

What appeared to be an extremely unfavorable situation for Marxism and rev-

olutionary Marxists in August 1914 was in fact not so bad. In 1912, the German Social-Democratic Party had 1,000,000 members, yet only several years later it was a stinking corpse that had placed itself at the service of the German bourgeoisie in suppressing the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. In 1912, the Bolshevik Party in Russia probably had less than 1% of the German Party's membership, yet five years later it placed itself at the head of a revolutionary torrent and led the proletariat in seizing power.

The opportunists—who prided themselves on being "practical men," who called the Bolsheviks' aim of turning the imperialist war into a civil war a "far-fetched dream"—based everything on the idea that the relative strength of the bourgeoisie and weakness of the revolutionary proletariat at the beginning of the war would remain unchanged. The whirlwind that arose tore their house of cards to bits. The Bolsheviks, who based themselves on the fundamental and long-range interests of the masses and on what was rising and developing within that situation, were able to play the crucial role in bringing out of this crisis a profound change in the relative strength and weakness of the two opposing classes on a world level, by upholding the banner of revolutionary Marxism and enabling it to become a material force in the hands of the masses of people themselves in transforming the world. It is especially during the most severe crises that "what is outmoded and rotten in socialism" is in fact "shown up in the sharpest light," and new and clearer lines of demarcation must be drawn between Marxism and revisionism to defend and further develop the science of revolution that alone can lead the masses to revolution.

This historical experience, and especially the uncompromising ideological and political struggle waged by Lenin and the Bolshevik Party in defense of revolutionary Marxism, is now more than ever extremely relevant. Since Khrushchev, pro-Soviet "communist" parties have spread revisionism and willingly offered themselves in service to the once socialist Soviet Union, now an imperialist superpower and a chief contender for world domination. More recently, after a clique of revisionist capitalist-roaders seized power from the Chinese proletariat in 1976, there has been another rush among what made up the international communist movement to conciliate, either directly or indirectly, with imperialism. Today, as in Lenin's time, the ranks of genuine communists who uphold Marxism-Leninism and the contributions of Mao Tsetung are, on an international scale, although



The historic founding meeting of the Third (Communist) International in Moscow in March, 1919, just five years after Lenin first declared, "Notwithstanding all obstacles the masses of workers will create a new International."

growing, relatively weak. All the more reason to stand firm. While no party today occupies the same position as that of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in his time, still, without a doubt, the outcome of the current struggle between Marxism and revisionism will be decisive in determining whether the international proletariat will be able to seize the great opportunities that will arise in the years ahead—as conditions for revolution ripen in many parts of the world.

The defense of Marxism-Leninism on an international level and the practice of internationalism has a very real material effect on the revolutionary struggle in various countries. This was all the more dramatically demonstrated during World War 1, when it was particularly important for the workers in one country to see the workers inside their "enemy" putting the same revolutionary defeatist line into practice and turning their guns around on their own rulers. Without applying such a line, as the Bolsheviks did in Russia, it would have been impossible to keep socialism alive among the masses. Otherwise, it would have been viewed, as it was viewed by many, as a good idea during peacetime, but an impossible dream during times of war.

Over and above the immediate effect the development of internationalist unity does have on the masses and the revolutionary forces themselves within a particular country, this struggle against

opportunism and to forge unity among revolutionaries worldwide is a duty that falls on all genuine communists, exactly because the proletariat is one class, worldwide, whose historic mission is the achievement of communism. In order to advance as rapidly as possible to this goal, the proletariat must be educated in the spirit of internationalism, must live and breathe it. While revolution is made country by country, and the genuine communists must mobilize and prepare the masses to make revolution in their own countries, the revolutionary struggle in each country has to be conducted with the goal of promoting the international struggle of the proletariat in mind. Every victory won by the proletariat, every country ripped out of the hands of the imperialist bourgeoisie, belongs to the international proletariat—a lesson that must be kept in mind particularly by communists inside the imperialist countries themselves. For in fact, communism can only be achieved when capitalism is overthrown and uprooted thoroughly and finally all over the world—when the international working class will be the human race.

This was the stand that guided Lenin's struggle to lead the revolutionary forces to break with opportunism, regroup under the red banner, and march forward to found a new era in history. ■

Footnotes

1. Lenin, "The Question of the Unity of Internationalists", *Collected Works (CW)*, Vol. 21, p. 188.
2. Lenin, "The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart", *CW*, Vol. 13, p. 81.
3. Quoted in *The Bolsheviks and the World War* by Olga Hess Gankin and H. H. Fisher (Stanford University Press, 1940), p. 54.
4. Stuttgart resolution "On Militarism and International Conflict", reprinted in *The Bolsheviks and the World War*, p. 59.
5. Lenin, "Bellicose Militarism and the Anti-Militarist Tactics of Social-Democracy", *CW*, Vol. 15, p. 194.
6. Quoted in *The Bolsheviks and the World War*, pp. 64-65.
7. Quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.
8. Basle Manifesto "On the International Situation", reprinted in *ibid.*, p. 84.
9. Lenin, "What Has Been Revealed by the Trial of the R.S.D.L. Duma Group", *CW*, Vol. 21, p. 176.
10. "Resolution on Russian Unification", reprinted in *The Bolsheviks and the World War*, p. 132.
11. "The Socialist Party Declaration on Voting for the War Loan", reprinted in *The Socialists and the War*, by W. E. Walling (New York, 1915), p. 144.
12. Lenin, "A German Voice on the War", *CW*, Vol. 21, p. 93.
13. Lenin, "The War and Russian Social-Democracy", *CW*, Vol. 21, p. 34.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
16. Lenin, "Socialism and War", *CW*, Vol. 21, p. 326.
17. Lenin, "Under a False Flag", *CW*, Vol. 21, p. 144.
18. Quoted by Lenin in "The Collapse of the Second International", *CW*, Vol. 21, p. 219.
19. Lenin, *ibid.*, pp. 216-17.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 249.
21. Lenin, "Socialism and War", *CW*, Vol. 21, p. 329.
22. Lenin, "The Voice of an Honest French Socialist", *CW*, Vol. 21, p. 356.
23. Lenin, "Socialism and War", *CW*, Vol. 21, p. 311.
24. Lenin, "The Collapse of the Second International", *CW*, Vol. 21, p. 250.
25. Lenin, "Socialism and War", *CW*, Vol. 21, p. 328.
26. Lenin, "On the Struggle Against Social-Chauvinism", *CW*, Vol. 21, p. 203.
27. Lenin, "The Collapse of Platonic Internationalism", *CW*, Vol. 21, p. 198.
28. "Project to Call an International Socialist Congress", reprinted in *The Bolsheviks and the World War*, p. 312.
29. Reprinted in *ibid.*, p. 315.
30. Reprinted in *ibid.*, pp. 316, 318.
31. Reprinted in *ibid.*, p. 324.
32. Reprinted in *ibid.*, pp. 327-28.
33. Reprinted in *ibid.*, p. 329.
34. "Draft Manifesto of the Zimmerwald Left" and "Draft Resolution of the Zimmerwald Left", reprinted in *ibid.*, pp. 349-53. Published in *Sotsial-Demokrat*, No. 45-46, October 11, 1915.
35. Lenin, "Revolutionary Marxists at the International Socialist Conference", *CW*, Vol. 21, p. 389.
36. Lenin, "The First Step", *CW*, Vol. 21, p. 387.
37. Lenin, "The Peace Programme", *CW*, Vol. 22, p. 168.
38. Lenin, "Proposals Submitted by the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P. to the Second Socialist Conference", *CW*, Vol. 22, p. 174.
39. Lenin, "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism", *CW*, Vol. 22, p. 295.
40. Reprinted in *The Bolsheviks and the World War*, p. 383.
41. Zinoviev's report on Kienthal, reprinted in *ibid.*, p. 445.
42. Lenin, "Proposals of the Central Committee of the RSDLP", *CW*, Vol. 22, p. 178.
43. Lenin, "An Open Letter to Boris Souvarine", *CW*, Vol. 23, p. 199.
44. Lenin, "The Junius Pamphlet", *CW*, Vol. 23, p. 314.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 307.
46. Quoted in *The Bolsheviks and the World War*, p. 413.
47. Reprinted in *ibid.*, p. 435.
48. January 1916 theses of the *Internationale* group reprinted in *ibid.*, p. 395.
49. Lenin, "The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution", *CW*, Vol. 24, p. 78.
50. Lenin, "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism", *CW*, Vol. 23, p. 60.
51. Quoted in *The Bolsheviks and the World War*, p. 565.
52. See *ibid.*, pp. 566-67.
53. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution", *CW*, Vol. 24, p. 64.
54. Lenin, "The Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B): Speech in Favour of the Resolution on the War", *CW*, Vol. 24, p. 257.
55. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution", *CW*, Vol. 24, p. 75.
56. Lenin, "Postscript" to *ibid.*, p. 90.
57. Lenin, *ibid.*, p. 84.
58. Lenin, "Postscript" to *ibid.*, p. 89.