

The necessity of socialist building in one country in connection with building a communist world movement, of which the Soviet Union was an international bulwark; the importance of the Comintern

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Dear friends and comrades!

A hundred years ago, the socialist revolution took place in Russia; the working class took over power. In the big country of Russia, which comprises one sixth of the Earth, the dictatorship of the proletariat was established.

In his article "The Principles of Communism" from 1847 Frederick Engels wrote "*It follows that the communist revolution will not merely be a national phenomenon but must take place simultaneously in all civilized countries – that is to say, at least in England, America, France, and Germany.*

It will develop in each of these countries more or less rapidly, according as one country or the other has a more developed industry, greater wealth, a more significant mass of productive forces."¹

But the epoch of imperialism made corrections necessary. Because of the uneven development of capitalism the most favorable conditions for the revolution did not emerge in the most advanced countries, but in Russia. In a country at the fringes of imperialism, where the contradictions between the ruling class and the working class were more severe because the tasks of the bourgeois revolution had not been resolved.

As response to questions about the principles of building the political system in the new society, Lenin tried to give an answer in the preparatory phase of the October Revolution, in summer 1917, with his work *The State and Revolution*. He described here a society where the people is armed instead of a regular army. A model to which the Bolsheviks tried to give roots, but which did not prove effective and which the leadership of Soviet Russia refrained from.

It was similar with the economy. The first Soviet government had to proceed according to the method of trial and error. From October 1917 until summer 1918, policies were pursued in Soviet

Russia called "Attacks of the Red Guards on Capital". This is how Lenin called a number of measures taken by the new power; for instance, the organization of workers' control, nationalization of banks and industry, introduction of the monopoly on export trade and the implementation of the decree on land. The transformation in agriculture took place by abolishing the private ownership of land and handing over the landed property of the estate owners, the monasteries and the churches to the control of the land committees and district soviets of the peasant deputies, who were authorized to distribute the confiscated land. The land confiscated from the estate owners was distributed among the peasants according to work or consumer norm, number of family members, without the right to buy or sell land, and with a periodical change of the boundaries of the property. This measure secured the alliance with the peasants and their support during the civil war, which was very important for an agrarian country like Russia where two thirds of the population are peasants, the main allies of the industrial proletariat. Lenin himself called the methods of leading the economy in the transitional period not socialist but state capitalist.

In November 1917 the "Law on Workers' Control" was adopted. Their elected organs, the factory committees, were established in all enterprises with wage labor. Workers' control significantly accelerated the implementation of nationalization. In the first months after the October Revolution, only a few factories which had great importance for the state passed over to being controlled by the state power, along with factories whose owners did not subordinate themselves to the decisions of the state organs.

Under the conditions of the civil war, destruction was spreading, the country was subject to an economic blockade, and the cities were threatened by famine. Measures of the government to intervene in the economy were increasing; this policy was called "war communism". In January 1919 the general nationalization of industrial enterprises began. The government established a monopoly on bread and forcibly confiscated what was left at fixed prices or even without paying. A general obligation to work was introduced. Food was rationed by the government and distributed to the consumers based on class condition and social importance of his/her profession. The entire leadership of the economy was realized by the Council of People's Commissars, who decided on the most important issues. The various sides of the economy were managed by the people's commissions for the industrial sectors.

We can say that "war communism" was economic measures to defend the dictatorship of the proletariat was under the conditions of the armed struggle against counterrevolution and foreign intervention.

All methods of mobilizing the economy, state intervention in the economy, and food rationing were also applied by other countries at war during the war years, though without nationalization of the banks and industrial enterprises. The Tsarist government too had the peasants' excess supplies of grain confiscated by military units in order to prevent famine in the cities.

It is necessary to note another important aspect. During the "war communism" period, when the class of the urban bourgeoisie ceased to exist with the transition of the means of production into the hands of the state, the agrarian bourgeoisie, the class of the kulaks, which exploited wage workers, was preserved. The agrarian reform, which distributed the land of the estate owners and the church among the peasants, did not touch the farms of those larger peasants which had developed from the communities during the agrarian reform under the Tsarist Prime Minister Stolypin.

It was the representatives of this class of the kulaks who became organizers of a series of peasant uprisings in 1921 (Kronstadt rebellion, peasant rebellion in Tambov), after victory over the armies of the Whites had been achieved. Lenin called them more dangerous than all White army soldiers. At this point in time it was not possible to produce sufficient goods based solely on the forces of the state sector of the economy, in ruins after the war, so that it would be possible to exchange them equivalently for the peasants' food products, and to supply the cities with food. The Bolsheviks were forced to take a step backwards and allow smaller private enterprises. At the same time the obligation to deliver grain – the confiscation of the peasants' food surplus – was abolished. It was replaced by the introduction of a food tax and free trade was allowed. These steps, introduced to stimulate the economy, were taken while paying the price of partly allowing a private economy; they were called "New Economic Policy".

The markets were filled with goods, followed, however, by the emergence of a new stratum of industrial and merchant bourgeoisie, called NEP men. On the one hand, the political power was still in the hands of the party of the working class as it was before; it relied on the state economic sector and was about to build socialism; on the other hand, there existed in society a significant class of the rural and urban bourgeoisie, which renounced armed uprisings against the new class, but commanded significant resources and was striving to influence the political situation in the country.

Even in 1920, under the conditions of great destruction, the Council of People's Commissars, under direct leadership of Lenin, laid down the tasks of the industrial development of the country in the GOELRO plan. The plan provided for the construction of thermal power stations, engineering works, metallurgical and chemical plants, as well as the extension of the railways. In the course of ten years industrial production should nearly be doubled. The construction of 30 big power stations was planned.

Until 1923 the task of building up socialism was joined to the victory of the proletarian revolution in Europe and especially in Germany. The victorious proletariat of the European countries was presumed to help fraternally to overcome the destruction and backwardness as well as to support the mutual building of socialist society.

But after the defeat of the attempted revolution of 1923 in Germany it was clear that one could not count on victorious revolutions in the developed countries in Europe in the near future. And in order to escape the revenge of the exploiting classes remaining in Russia, it was necessary to build up socialist society independently and not to wait for the world revolution.

At that time within the Bolshevik party a fierce dispute arose about the question of building of socialism in one country. Trotsky and his followers denied the possibility of building communism in a single country and claimed socialism to be only possible as a worldwide system. The slogans of the Trotskyites formally sounded ultra revolutionary; they talked about the necessity of a permanent revolution, but actually their position was one of historical pessimism and lack of faith in the inner strength of the proletarian revolution in Russia. This would also mean that in view of the failure of revolution in Europe the Russian revolution would be lost. Later a right opportunist movement appeared in the party led by Bukharin. His supporters did not deny formally the possibility of socialism in the USSR. They were against the collectivization and the accelerated industrialization of the country and were against steps against the agricultural bourgeoisie, the Kulaks. In Bukharin's opinion these agricultural capitalists should step by step integrate into socialist society, grow into

socialism; the state should not take any measures to reduce their political and property rights because this could provoke a new spiral of civil war.

The party of the Bolsheviks headed by comrade Stalin fought resolutely against these petty-bourgeois and opportunist currents.

Stalin has never dissociated from the world revolution. In his work “The Foundations of Leninism” from 1924 he wrote in particular: *“But the overthrow of the power of the bourgeoisie and establishment of the power of the proletariat in one country does not yet mean that the complete victory of socialism has been ensured. After consolidating its power and leading the peasantry in its wake the proletariat of the victorious country can and must build a socialist society. But does this mean that it will thereby achieve the complete and final victory of socialism, i.e. does it mean that with the forces of only one country it can finally consolidate socialism and fully guarantee that country against intervention and, consequently, also against restoration? No, it does not. For this the victory of the revolution in at least several countries is needed.”*²²

In his speech at the 7th enlarged plenum of the ECCI (Executive Committee of the Communist International) Stalin formulated a double task facing the Soviet Union: to build socialism in one’s own country and to fight for the victory of the world revolution. *“Precisely for this reason, the victory of the proletarian revolution in one country is not an end in itself, but a means and an aid for the development and victory of the revolution in all countries. Hence building socialism in the U.S.S.R. means furthering the common cause of the proletarians of all countries, it means forging the victory over capital not only in the U.S.S.R., but in all the capitalist countries, for the revolution in the U.S.S.R. is part of the world revolution—its beginning and the base for its development.”*

In the year 1943 the Comintern was dissolved due to the resolution of the state defense committee. This was a purely pragmatic measure; it was necessary to convince the capitalist countries which were fighting against Nazism together with the USSR that the Soviet allies would not carry out subversive activities in their countries. What is more, that because of the war the work of the Comintern in Europe was no longer possible to the former extent.

Long live the revolution!

1MECW, volume 4, p. ?

2, Stalin, Works, volume 6, p. 110ff